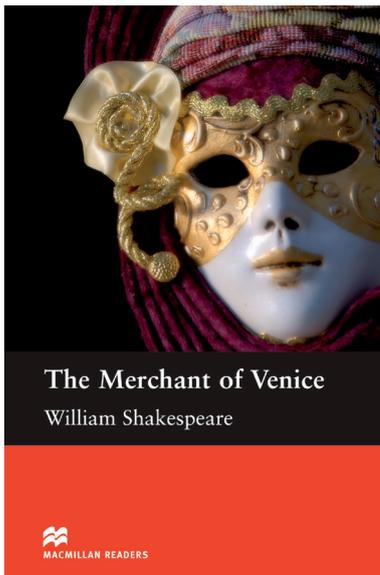


THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

By William Shakespeare



This lesson was inspired by the Macmillan Readers adaption of William Shakespeare's original playscript. The language has been adapted and graded to make it suitable for readers at Intermediate level. It also features extracts of key speeches from the original text along with explanatory notes, plus glossaries and exercises designed to reinforce understanding post reading.

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THE MERCHANT OF VENICE



TEACHER'S NOTES

LESSON OVERVIEW

Level: Intermediate

Length: Approximately 40 minutes (excluding Speaking tasks)

Language focus: Idioms related to money

Learning objectives: In this lesson the students will have the opportunity to:

- Learn a selection of commonly used idioms related to money
- Practice using these idioms in a personalised speaking task
- Reflect on decision-making and build life skills
- Recite and discuss a key speech from the play

CONTENTS

- Idiom task 1
- Idiom task 2
- Decision-making
- Pronunciation Practice: Syllables & Speak Shakespeare



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OVERVIEW OF THE PLAY

Key themes: money, mercy, justice

Key characters:

- Antonio: A rich merchant of Venice (the merchant of the play's title) who occasionally lends others money.
- Shylock: Shylock is a Jewish moneylender in Venice and one of Shakespeare's most memorable characters. Widely seen as a villain but does have a human side too!
- Bassanio: Antonio's friend who loves Portia and owes money to Shylock.
- Portia: Beautiful, quick-witted and resourceful – the typical Shakespeare heroine.

SYNOPSIS

Antonio, the merchant of Venice, lends three thousand ducats (money used at that time) to his friend Bassanio to help him charm the rich and beautiful Portia of Belmont. But Antonio's own money is invested in business projects so he borrows the money from Shylock, a Jewish moneylender. Shylock lends him the money but says that if he does not pay it back at the right time, he can take a pound of Antonio's flesh.

Portia's father has demanded that she marry the man who makes the correct choice when presented with three caskets, made of gold, silver and lead. Bassanio correctly chooses lead. His friend Gratiano marries Portia's lady-in-waiting Nerissa at the same time.

News arrives that Antonio's ships have been lost and he is unable to pay his debt. Shylock takes him to court. Unknown to their husbands, Portia disguises herself as a young male lawyer working for Antonio, Nerissa as a clerk.



Portia's clever defence is that Shylock can have his pound of flesh but cannot take any of Antonio's blood.

The duke pardons Shylock on the condition that he gives half his money to Antonio and half to the state. Antonio agrees to give up his claim if Shylock converts to Christianity and leaves his property to his daughter Jessica, whom he has disinherited for running away with her lover Lorenzo. Portia and Nerissa then assert their power over Bassanio and Gratiano with a trick involving rings that the men have promised never to part with. Finally there is good news about Antonio's ships.



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1 IDIOMS TASK 1

INTRODUCTION

Write "All that glitters is not gold" on the board. Explain to your students that this is a famous line from *The Merchant of Venice* and is just one of Shakespeare's idioms that are still in use today. (For reference, the line is spoken by the Prince of Morocco, Act 2 Scene 7 – page 50 of the Macmillan Reader)

Ask your students if they know what it means. If they need help, you could explain the meaning of 'glitters' using an object, image or in your own words.

Ask them if they know any other idioms related to money and wealth, before asking them to complete the task:

Match the idioms below to their definitions

1. cost an arm and a leg
 2. make ends meet
 3. cheapskate
 4. time is money
 5. money doesn't grow on trees
 6. money talks
 7. loaded
 8. make a killing
- A. someone who does not like to spend money
 - B. to make a lot of money very quickly
 - C. used for saying that time should not be wasted because you lose money as a result
 - D. very rich
 - E. to cost a lot of money
 - F. used for saying that money gives you power
 - G. used for telling someone that they should not waste money, as it is not easy to get
 - H. to have just enough money to buy the things you need

Answers: 1E, 2H, 3A, 4C, 5G, 6F, 7D, 8B



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2 IDIOMS TASK 2

Fill in the gaps using the correct idiom from the list below.

1. Come on hurry up - _____!
 2. He can definitely afford it, he's _____.
 3. You're such a _____, surely you can afford to buy a new pair of shoes!
 4. We're not buying you another skateboard. _____!
 5. Of course Donald Trump is powerful, after all _____.
 6. Her business is very successful, she's _____.
 7. If we book our holiday in the school holidays it will _____.
 8. Life is very expensive in London but we're _____.
- A. cost an arm and a leg
B. making ends meet
C. cheapskate
D. time is money
E. money doesn't grow on trees
F. money talks
G. loaded
H. making a killing

Answers: 1D, 2G, 3C, 4E, 5F, 6H, 7A, 8B



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3 DECISION-MAKING

The Merchant of Venice features a scene that has been compared to a TV game show. In the play, the 'contestants' are men and the 'prize' is to marry to the rich and beautiful Portia. In order to 'win' her, the men must choose one of three caskets: one made of gold, one of silver and one of lead. If they choose the correct one, they will marry Portia.

The decisions they make could change their life forever. Through this scene, Shakespeare teaches us to consider our choices and think before we speak and act.

In real life, we make decisions every day – some more important than others. Discuss with a partner what you would do in the following situations, using **I would + verb**:

1. You arrive at class and realise you have forgotten to do your homework.
e.g. I would tell my teacher I had left it on the bus, I would tell my teacher the truth and promise to do it for the next day.
2. You are going to be late to meet your friend at the cinema.
3. You find a piece of paper on the floor of your classroom. The paper contains the answers to your next exam.
4. You win £10,000.
5. Your parents have gone away for the weekend and left you in charge of the house.
6. You've been invited to a friend's party but someone who you don't like is going to be there.
7. Your friend has lost weight and started to get obsessed with exercise.
8. You are offered two jobs. One is your dream job but pays only £20,000. The other is a less interesting job but you would earn £30,000.



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4 SHAKESPEARE'S SYLLABLES

Shakespeare wrote his sonnets in something called the iambic pentameter.

Essentially:

- each line of the sonnet contains ten syllables.
- The syllables are then grouped into pairs, called iambs or iambic feet. Each iamb contains one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable e.g. good (unstressed) + BYE (stressed) = goodbye = one syllable!
- A line of iambic pentameter sounds like this - a bit like a heartbeat:
baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM

And here's an example from the Bard himself – a line from Sonnet 18:

- Thou ART / more LOVE / ly AND / more TEM / per ATE

Don't worry if this doesn't make sense to you or your students: the main thing is they use this opportunity to practise their pronunciation!

ACTIVITY

The number of syllables in each line of text was important in Shakespeare's writing. Understanding the structure of words and how many syllables they contain could help you to improve your pronunciation, so have a go at this task.

For each of the following words:

- Write how many syllables the word it contains
- Underline the syllable that is stressed
- Practise saying it out loud with your classmate

1. Gentleman (3 – GEN-TLE-MAN)
2. Embarrassed
3. Daughter
4. Frightened
5. Behaviour
6. Awful
7. Thieves
8. Lawyer

Answers: 1. Gentleman = 3 syllables: GEN-TLE-MAN, 2. Embarrassed = 3 syllables: EM-BA-RRASSED
3. Daughter = 2 syllables: DAUGH-TER, 4. Frightened = 2 syllables: FRIGH-TENED
5. Behaviour = 3 syllables: BE-HA-VIOUR, 6. Awful = 2 syllables: AW-FUL, 7. Thieves = 1 syllable: THIEVES
8. Lawyer = 2 syllables: LAW-YER



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SPEAK SHAKESPEARE

The speech below is an extract from Macmillan Readers adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*. It shows the original version and the adapted version. Explain to your students that it is spoken by Jessica who is standing on a balcony passing a chest to Lorenzo.

Ask your students to read both versions and then discuss its meaning as a class.

Ask your students if they agree with Jessica. Do they think 'love is blind' and if so can they give examples?

As an extra challenge, you could ask them to re-write it the speech in modern and less formal language e.g.: "Catch this! I'm so glad you can't see me right now – I look so silly dressed up as a boy! Love makes us do such crazy things!"

ORIGINAL

Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains.
I am glad 'tis night, you do not look on me,
For I am much asham'd of my exchange:
But love is blind, and lovers cannot see
The pretty follies that they themselves commit;
For if they could, Cupid himself would blush
To see me thus transformed to a boy.

Casket = chest
Asham'd = ashamed
Follies = foolish things
Blush = to go red in the face with embarrassment
Thus = in this way

ADAPTATION

Here, catch this chest. It will be worth the trouble.
I am glad it is night and you cannot see me,
for I am embarrassed to be seen in these boys'
clothes. But love is blind, and lovers cannot see
how foolish they are. If they could, Cupid himself
would turn red to see me dressed up as a boy!



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