

Questions on shakespeare's work

Merchant of venice

Antonio, a merchant of Venice, and Bassanio are very close friends. Bassanio needs money to marry a wealthy lady in Belmont named Portia. He borrows money from a cunning, Jewish moneylender called Shylock. Shylock lends him a heavy sum but makes Antonio sign a bond that if the money is not repaid within three months, he would cut a pound of flesh from Antonio's body.

Meanwhile, Portia, who has to face many suitors, waits for the arrival of her beloved, Bassanio. Before he died, Portia's father, realising her difficulty in choosing the right man, had left a test for her suitors. Each man was to be presented with three caskets, of gold, silver and lead. Inside one of them was Portia's picture, and whoever chose this casket would become her husband.

The Prince of Morocco chooses the gold casket but finds inside it a skull and a warning. The Prince of Aragon chooses the silver casket and finds the portrait of an idiot and another warning. Bassanio chooses the lead casket, the one with Portia's picture, and claims her as his wife. And his friend Gratiano marries Nerissa, Portia's maid.

As the merry-making commences, there comes a letter from Antonio. His ships are lost at sea, and hence unable to pay his debt, he has to keep his word with Shylock, and offer him a pound of his flesh. Portia offers money but Shylock insists on a pound of Antonio's flesh as mentioned in the bond. When their husbands leave for Venice, Portia and Nerissa too follow them in disguise. Portia disguises herself as a (male) lawyer with Nerissa as her clerk. Portia leaves her house in the care of Jessica, Shylock's daughter who has left her father and married Lorenzo.

All the great men of Venice gather at the Duke's court but Shylock is unmoved by their arguments. He feels that the law is on his side and demands justice according to the bond. Portia enters the court and changes the entire nature of the argument. She speaks not of justice but of mercy.

Portia wins the battle of wits and Shylock is forced to leave the courtroom in defeat. Thanks to the brilliance of Portia's reasoning, the misfortunes of Antonio, the merchant of Venice, are finally ended, and the married couples are ready for a life of happiness.

Note: The following is an extract from the court scene, Act IV .

Place: the court of justice in venice.

Enter Portia dressed like a doctor of laws.

- DUKE : You are welcome: take your place.
you acquainted with the difference
That holds this present question in the court?
- Portia : I am informed thoroughly of the cause.
Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?
- DUKE : Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.
- Portia : Is your name Shylock?
- Shylock : Shylock is my name.

Portia : Of a strange nature is the suit you follow;
Yet in such rule, that the Venetian law
Cannot impugn you as you do proceed.
(To Antonio) You stand within his danger, do you not?

Antonio: Ay, so he says.

Portia : Do you confess the bond?

Antonio: I do.

Portia : Then must the Jew be merciful.

Shylock : On what compulsion must I? Tell me that.

Portia: The quality of mercy is not strain'd
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this
That, in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation; we do pray for mercy,
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much
To mitigate the justice of thy plea,
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.

Shylock: My deeds upon my head! I crave the law,
The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

Portia: Is he not able to discharge the money?

Bassanio: Yes, here I tender it for him in the court;
yea, twice the sum, if that will not suffice,
I will be bound to pay it ten times o'er,

Portia: I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

Shylock: Here 'tis, most reverend Doctor, here it is.

Portia: Shylock, there's thrice thy money offer'd thee.

Portia: Why, this bond is forfeit;
And lawfully by this the Jew may claim
A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off
Nearest the merchant's heart. Be merciful.
Take thrice the money; bid me tear the bond.

Shylock: There is no power in the tongue of man
To alter me. I stay here on my bond.

Antonio: Most heartily I do beseech the court

To give the judgment.
Portia: Why then, thus it is:
 You must prepare your bosom for his knife.
Shylock: O noble judge! O excellent young man
Portia: Therefore, lay bare your bosom.
Shylock: Ay, his breast -
 So says the bond: doth it not, noble judge?
 "Nearest his heart;" those are the very words,
Portia: It is so. Are there balance here to weigh The flesh?
Shylock: I have them ready.
Portia : Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your Charge,
 To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death.
Shylock: Is it so nominated in the bond?
Portia: It is not so expressed, but what of that?
 ` T were good you do so much for charity.
Shylock: I cannot find it; 'tis not in the bond.
Portia: A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine.
 The court awards it, and the law doth give it.
Shylock: Most rightful judge!
Portia: And you must cut this flesh from off his breast.
 The law allows it, and the court awards it.
Shylock: Most learned judge! A sentence! Come, prepare.
Portia: Tarry a little; there is something else.
 This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood;
 The words expressly are "a pound of flesh:"
 Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh;
 But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed
 One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
 Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate
 Unto the state of Venice
Shylock: Is that the law?
Portia: Thyself shalt see the act;
 For, as thou urgest justice, be assured
 Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desir'st
Shylock: I take this offer then: pay the bond thrice,
 And let the Christian go.
Bassanio: Here is the money
Portia: Soft!
 The Jew shall have all justice. Soft! No haste:
 He shall have nothing but the penalty.

Glossary:

1. **Difference** - dispute
2. **jew** - A race who presently live in Israel.
during shakespeare's times, the jews were ruthless
moneylenders and were hated by the Christians.they hated
Christians too.

3. **stand forth** - come forward
4. **strange nature** - unusual because he demands a pound of flesh even when he is offered ten times the original sum of money
5. **impugn** - oppose or resist
6. **ay** - yes
7. **bond** - agreement
8. **strain'd** - forced
9. **twice blessed** - Mercy has a double blessing. It blesses him that gives and him that receives it
10. **it becomes . . . his crown** - The King earns greater respect when he is merciful.
11. **Temporal** - worldly
12. **His sceptre . . . fear of kings** - The king's sceptre (royal staff) is a symbol of his
13. **But mercy. .. God himself** - But mercy is above this earthly power. It resides in hearts of kings and is an attribute of God.
14. **And earthly power... seasons justice** - Earthly power is revealed like God's power when justice is tempered with mercy.
15. **seasons** - tempers, strengthens
16. **In the course of justice** - if strict justice were to take its course
17. **Mitigate** - lessen
18. **I crave the law** - I pray for what the law entitles me to.
19. **forfeit** - give up as penalty for doing something wrong
20. **suffice** - be sufficient
21. **beseech** - earnestly ask for
22. **nominated** - mentioned
23. **tarry** - wait
24. **expressly** - directly shown
25. **confiscate** - take or seize
26. **soft** - wait

Question taken from book:

1. What was the agreement between Antonio and Shylock?
Antonio should repay the money within three months. If he could not do that, Shylock would cut a pound of flesh from Antonio's body.
2. Why did Portia's father leave a test for the suitors?
Portia's father thought that it was difficult to choose the right man for his daughter. So he left a test for the suitors.
3. Why was Antonio unable to pay his debt?
Antonio's ships were lost at sea. So he could not pay his debt.
4. Who was Nerissa and whom did she marry?
Nerissa was Portia's maid. She married Bassanio's friend, Gratiano.
5. How according to Portia, is mercy 'twice blessed'?
Mercy blesses the giver and the receiver. Thus it is 'twice blessed'.

Important details:

1. Antonio borrow money from shylock to give to his friend
2. Shylock lend the money after getting a bond from Antonio.
3. The bond says "if the money was not paid within three months shylock would cut a pound of flesh from Antonio's body.
4. Bassanio need the money to marry Portia

5. Antonio unable to pay back the money because his ships were lost in the sea.
6. Shylock insists on pound of flesh from Antonio's body.
7. Portia appeal to shylock to be merciful. Portia change the entire nature of the argument by spoke not of justice but of mercy.
8. Gentle rain from heaven which flows spontaneously is compared to mercy.
9. The mercy bless giver and receiver.
10. We seek mercy from god for our salvation
11. Mercy is considered as an attribute of god himself.
12. Portia advise to shylock to take thrice the money and tear the bond.
13. Portia 's law point according to the bond was shylock can cut a pound of flesh but should not shed even a drop of blood from antonio's body.
14. Portia won the suit.
15. Antonio's ship arrived safely on the harbor.

JULIUS CAESAR (FROM ACT III SCENE 2)

The play opens with Julius Caesar's victorious return to Rome after defeating the sons of Pompey. While people rejoice, there is a group which fears that all these victories would get into Caesar's head and he would cease to be democratic. Cassius, Brutus and others plot to kill Caesar.

A soothsayer (astrologer) warns Caesar about the "ides of March". Calphurnia, Caesar's wife, forbids him from going to the Senate House as she has had bad dreams. Decius Brutus, one of the conspirators, convinces Caesar to come to the Senate House. At the Senate House, the conspirators surround Caesar. Casca is the first to stab him. Caesar is shocked when he sees his friend Marcus Brutus with a sword. With an anguished cry of Et tu, Brute? (You too Brutus) he dies.

Mark Antony, Caesar's trusted friend, meets the murderers and requests them to allow him to take Caesar's body to the market place. Marcus Brutus agrees, but warns Antony not to blame them in his funeral speech.

In Act III Scene 2, Brutus justifies the murder of Caesar. But Mark Antony, with his eloquence, wins the public over to his side. The result is that a riot breaks out and people are moved to a frenzy to avenge the murder of Caesar. Cassius and Brutus flee Rome, and Mark Antony, Octavius Caesar and Aurelius Lepidus become the 'triumvirs'. At the battle of Philippi, the forces of Cassius and Marcus Brutus are defeated, and true to his word, Brutus kills himself with his sword.

BRUTUS: Be patient till the last.

Romans, countrymen, and lovers! hear me for my cause,
and be silent, that you may hear: believe me for mine
honour, and have respect to mine honour, that you may
believe: censure me in your wisdom, and awake your
senses, that you may the better judge. If there be any in this
assembly, any dear friend of Caesar's, to him I say that
Brutus' love to Caesar was no less than his. If, then, that
friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my
answer, not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved
Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living, and die

all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men?
 As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate,
 I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him; but, as he
 was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his 15
 love; joy for his fortune; honour for his valour; and death
 for his ambition. Who is here so base that would be a
 bondman? If any, speak; for him have I offended.
 Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any,
 speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that 20
 will not love his country? If any, speak; for him have I
 offended. I pause for a reply.

Citizens: None, Brutus, none.

Brutus : Then none have I offended. I have done no 25
 more to Caesar than you shall do to Brutus.
 Enter ANTONY and others, with CAESAR'S body
 Here comes his body, mourned by Mark Antony, who,
 though he had no hand in his death, shall receive the benefit
 of his dying, a place in the commonwealth; as which of
 you shall not? With this I depart, that, as I slew my best
 lover for the good of Rome, I have the same 30
 dagger for myself, when it shall please my country
 to need my death.

Antony: Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
 I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. 35
 The Good is oft interred with their bones
 So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
 Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
 If it were so, it was a grievous fault; 40
 And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
 Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest,—
 For Brutus is an honourable man;
 So are they all; all honourable men,—
 Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral. 45
 He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
 But Brutus says he was ambitious;
 And Brutus is an honourable man.
 He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
 Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill: 50
 Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
 When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
 And Brutus is an honourable man. 55
 You all did see that on the Lupercal
 I thrice present in a kingly crown
 Which HE did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;

And, sure, he is an honourable man. 60
 I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
 But here I am to speak what I do know.
 You all did love him once,—not without cause:
 What cause withholds you, then, to mourn for him?
 O judg'ment! Thou art fled to brutish beasts, 65
 and men have lost their reason!—Bear with me;
 My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
 And I must pause till it come back to me.
First Citizen: Methinks there is much reason in his sayings. 70
Second Citizen: If thou consider rightly of the matter,
 Caesar has had great wrong.
Third Citizen: Has he, masters?
 I fear there will a worse come in his place.
Fourth Citizen: Mark'd ye his words? He would not 75
 take the crown;
 Therefore 'tis certain he was not ambitious.
First Citizen: If it be found so, some will dear abide it.
Second Citizen: Poor soul! his eyes are red as fire
 with weeping. 80
Third Citizen: There's not a nobler man in Rome
 than Antony.
Fourth Citizen: Now mark him, he begins again to speak.
 Antony. But yesterday the word of Caesar might
 Have stood against the world: now lies he there, 85
 And none so poor to do him reverence.
 O masters, if I were dispos'd to stir
 Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
 I should do Brutus wrong and Cassius wrong,
 Who, you all know, are honourable men: 90
 I will not do them wrong; I rather choose
 To wrong the dead, to wrong myself, and you,
 Than I will wrong such honourable men.
 But here's a parchment with the seal of Caesar;
 I found it in his closet,—'tis his will: 95
 Let but the commons hear this testament,—
 Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read,—
 And they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds,
 And dip their napkins in his sacred blood;
 Yea, beg a hair of him for memory, 100
 And, dying, mention it within their wills,
 Bequeathing it as a rich legacy
 Unto their issue
Antony: If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
 You all do know this mantle: I remember 105
 The first time ever Caesar put it on;
 'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,
 That day he overcame the Nervii:—

Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
 See what a rent the envious Casca made: 110
 Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
 And, as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
 Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it,
 As rushing out of doors, to be resolv'd
 If Brutus so unkindly knock'd, or no; 115
 For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel:
 Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar lov'd him!
 This was the most unkindest cut of all;
 For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
 Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms, 120
 Quite vanquished him: then burst his mighty heart;
 And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
 Even at the base of Pompey's statue,
 Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell.
 O, what a fall was there, my countrymen! 125
Antony : Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up
 To such a sudden flood of mutiny:
 I am no orator, as Brutus is;
 But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man,
 That love my friend; and that they know full well 130
 That gave me public leave to speak of him:
 For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
 Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,
 To stir men's blood: I only speak right on;
 I tell you that which you yourselves do know; 135
 Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,
 And bid them speak for me: but were I Brutus,
 And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
 Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue
 In every wound of Caesar, that should move 140
 The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny.

Glossary (line numbers are given for easy reference)

- 2 lovers: close friends
- 5 censure: judge
- 6 senses: reason (Brutus appeals to the head and not to the heart, as Antony does)
- 14 valiant: very brave and determined
- 15 slew: killed
- 17 base: depraved; mean
- 20 vile: morally base, disgusting
- 30-31 I have the same dagger: I will kill myself (Brutus later dies for myself by his own sword)
- 37 of: often
- 37 interred: buried, i.e. let the good qualities of Caesar rest with him in his grave
- 40 grievous fault: serious mistake

- 41 Caesar answered it: Caesar paid for it (his mistakes)with his life
42 under leave: under permission
43 honourable: honest, upright. Notice the repetition of the word in his speech. From a compliment it turns into a taunt.
49 captives: prisoners
50 ransoms: payment for the release of prisoners
50 coffers: state treasury
53 Ambition should be : an ambitious person made of sterner stuff would be strict (but Caesar, points out Mark Antony, was one with the masses)
56 Lupercal : Lupercalia—an ancient fertility festival in honour of Pan, the god of the shepherds
63 cause reason
64 what cause withholds you, : what prevents you from then, to mourn for him? Mourning for Caesar?
65 O judgment! Thou art: men have lost their fled to brutish beasts capacity to judge and reason
69 methinks: it seems to me (that)
74 I fear there will a worse: a person worse than come in his place Caesar might rule
75 Mark'd ye his words? : Did you pay attention to his (Antony's) words?
78 abide it: pay for it (someone will have to pay for Caesar's death)
83 mark him: listen to him
86 so poor: lowly in rank; even in death the lowly placed citizen does not honour Caesar
88 mutiny: revolt
94 parchment: animal skin used as writing surface
95 his will: Caesar's will
99 napkins: handkerchiefs
102 bequeathing: leave to a person by a will
102 legacy: gift left in a will
103 issue: children
105 mantle: cloak. Antony displays the bloodstained cloak of Caesar.
108 Nervii: The battle of the Sambre, 57 B.C. Caesar defeated the Nervii, a tribe of Gaul.
108-123: By uncovering the body of Caesar and revealing the stab wounds, Antony plays on the emotions of the crowd and inflames them.
109-110: Cassius and Casca - along with Brutus, Cassius and Casca stabbed Caesar.
110 rent: tear; cut (Note: Antony was not there when Caesar was murdered but he uses his imagination.)
112 pluck'd his cursed steel: pulled out the cursed away sword
114 as: as though
114 resolved: informed
118 unkindest cut: cruel, unnatural because Caesar loved Brutus and Brutus repaid his love by stabbing him. (Pay attention to Shakespeare's language—most unkindest cut)
120-121 Ingratitude: Personification. More strong than traitors' Ingratitude is personified arms/ Quite vanquished him here.
121 vanquished: defeated
121-122 Then burst his: When Caesar saw Brutus mighty heart/And, in his with the sword, he did mantle muffling up his face not resist; instead he covered his face with his mantle.
123 Pompey: the Roman general whom Caesar had defeated
126-128: The crowd does not see the irony in Antony's speech.
132 wit: intelligence
132 worth: reputation. Antony says that he does not have the skills needed for an orator.
134 to stir men's blood: to stir up emotions

136 poor poor dumb mouths: as the wounds cannot speak Antony expresses their agony.

139 rue: disturb, upset

140-141: Antony had all along said that he did not want to incite the crowd but his eloquent speech does just that.

Questions taken from book:

1. Why and how was Caesar killed? By whom?
Caesar's popularity rise when he defeated Pompey's sons. People rejoiced Caesar's victories. A group fears he would cease to be democratic. The conspirators are, Marcus Brutus, Decius Brutus, Casca.
2. How does Mark Antony make the crowd believe that Caesar was not ambitious?
He told that Julius Caesar was not ambitious and Caesar brought many captives to Rome, He filled the state treasury with the ransom and when poor cried, Caesar wept for them. Caesar refused the crown thrice. Antony was a skilled speaker, he used figure of speeches. He won the hearts of the people.
3. Whom does Mark Antony call "honourable men"?
Brutus and other conspirators
4. Why was Brutus stab "the most unkindest cut of all"? How did Caesar react when Brutus stabbed him?
Brutus is beloved friend of Caesar. But when Caesar sees his friend Brutus with a sword, he was shocked. With an anguished cry you too Brutus he died.
5. How does Mark Antony win the public of Rome over to his side?
By his eloquence of speech, He said about the glory and greatness of dead Caesar. He referred to the will. He kept in suspense by not reading it. He showed the wounds of the Caesar. He aroused their sympathy. The public got their emotion aroused and they moved against Brutus.

Other important details:

- Caesar was murdered in senate house.
- Antony meets the murderers
- They allow Antony to take Caesar's body. But on a condition he should not blame them for the murder.
- Antony takes the body to market place. People were moved by Antony's speech. Antony showed the wounds and arouses the sympathy. The result of the oration is riots breaks out.
- Cassius and Brutus fled Rome.
- At the battle of Philippi, the force of Cassius and Brutus were defeated.
- True to his words Brutus killed himself after he was defeated.

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Important details:

- Impediments = obstacle
- False love alters with time
- True love does not yield to threat.
- Light house compared to everfixed mark
- Tempest compared to strong opposition against lovers.
- He compared true love to light house because it guides through the voyage of life.

- Light house is the star to wandering bark.
- Altitude of stars can be measured by man.
- His height refers to altitude of stars.
- The poet challenge the readers to disapprove his idea on true love.

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