

The Merchant of Venice



GCSE Language and Literature Coursework

The Merchant of Venice
Scheme of Work for GCSE

Aims:

- To encourage an active reading of a Shakespeare play
- To offer opportunities for speaking and listening assessment
- To revise certain skills needed in both the language and literature examinations.
- To encourage pupils to write in a variety of forms.

Objectives:

- To write one piece of coursework.
- To write in a variety of forms: letters/newspaper reports/ analytical writing/ monologues.
- To have at least one speaking and listening assessment.

LESSON ONE

Aim: To introduce pupils to the names and key plot moments in the play.

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Explain that the play about to be read is set in Venice which was one of the leading commercial centres of the Elizabethan/Jacobean world.
- It was very cosmopolitan and people from different countries lived and traded there.
- Explain the activity. In groups of three/four, pupils will be given a number of cards to read and understand. They should try and work out what the plot is.
- After a few minutes a description of the four main characters will be put on the OHP.

Group work (15 minutes)

- Pupils look at the cards in front of them and work out the meanings.
- Using the names as guidelines they discuss what the play will be about.

Call activity (5 - 10 minutes)

- Feedback on what they have thought about the play so far.

Group work (15 minutes)

- Look at the riddles on the caskets. Explain that one of the caskets will contain a picture of Portia which will allow the chooser of that one to marry her.
- Pupils decide which one contains her picture.
- Don't tell them the correct answer.
- Give out the riddles within each of the caskets and they have to decide which riddle belongs in which casket and what it means.

Plenary (5 minutes)

- Discuss their findings on the riddles.
- What would they expect the main themes of the play to be about?

Homework: Pupils should write out the three riddles in modern English and prepare for a display.

LESSON TWO

Aim: To get an understanding of Bassanio's and Antonio's characters from the first scene.

Introduction

- Explain that pupils be reading short extracts from the first scene to try and work out the characters of two of the leading men in the play.
- Discuss what worries they might have reading Shakespeare and then encourage them to read to the punctuation, not necessarily to the end of the line (and to read slowly)

Class Activity.

- Pick a volunteer to read the first speech given by Antonio - (lines 1 - 7)
- What do they know about Antonio's mood? Ask the to find proof in what they have read.
- Read Salerio's speech that follows and ask the class to work out what reason Salerio offers Antonio for his mood.
- Explain that Antonio denies it is his ships that are making him sad, nor is it love as Solanio suggests.
- Pupils will now read from line 119 (Antonio says *'Well, tell me now, what lady...'*) to the end. This is quite a long extract. Once they've read through it once, discuss with the pupils what they have learnt about Bassanio's fortune. (Re read the statements for them). The main quotes can be put on the board. Then discuss Bassanio's philosophy of how to get back his money. Why does he want money and what Antonio's reaction is.
- Encourage pupils to put ideas in their own words and then find the quotes that back them up.

Pair work (10 - 15 minutes)

- Half the class prepares a brainstorm on Antonio, the other half on Bassanio. Warn them that one person will be picked to present their findings to the class. This can be done on the board or OHT for the other half to copy up or to add to.
- Feedback.

Plenary

Explain that the next scene is about Portia. Summarise what they have learnt so far about Portia.

LESSON THREE

Aim: To learn more about Portia's character and then to read scene iii in detail.

Introduction

- Explain that they will be reading only certain parts of scene ii to come to some understanding about how Portia feels. Recap on what they know already about her.
- Explain that she is already fed up of the men who have come to try and win her but that she already has feelings for one man and that was Bassanio.

Class Activity

- Give pupils worksheet with information on the Background to Shylock. Read through it and prepare the exercises on the sheet.
- There might be an opportunity to discuss stereotyping here. It could focus on Shylock, but encourage discussion of stereotypes of women and men as well.

Shared Reading.

- Scene iii opens with Shylock in mid conversation with Bassanio. Read as far as Antonio enters the scene and discuss what further has been learnt about Antonio's character.
- How would they have Shylock acted in this scene: cold/ friendly/ sinister?
- Read as far as line 101 and discuss how Antonio is talking to Shylock. Is he respectful/ annoyed / contemptuous? How do they know?
- Read Shylock's next speech and discuss what kinds of prejudice Antonio has shown towards Shylock. Does that alter their opinion of Antonio? Do they have sympathy for Shylock? Can they understand his hatred?
- Read to the end of the scene.

Individual work

- Complete sheet.

Plenary

- Recap on what they have learnt about Jewish people and how Shylock fits into the stereotype.

Homework: Complete sheet and add to brainstorm on Antonio.

LESSON FOUR / FIVE

Aim: To look at further stereotypes found in the play.

Introduction

- Act Two begins in Belmont with one of Portia's suitors, the Prince of Morocco. The Prince has a dark skin and would fit into Shakespearean perceptions of the Moors. Explain who the Moors were and what kind of people they were believed to be: arrogant, fierce, blood thirsty and greedy.

Shared Reading

- Read the whole of scene i (it's very short).
- List the characteristics of the Moors on the board and ask pupils to find examples in the text which would fit into each characteristic.
- Do they think it likely that the Prince will choose the correct casket? Which one do they think he'll choose, based on the stereotypes learnt about Moors so far.

Class Activity

- Two new characters are about to be introduced: Jessica and Lorenzo. This is one of the other love stories within the play. Jessica is the daughter of Shylock and Lorenzo is a Christian.
- Pupils discuss whether they think this pairing will be a successful one, based on what they know about Shakespearean attitudes to Jews and Shylock's attitude to Christians.

Shared Reading

- Read scene iii and iv (Scene ii can be explained briefly first if desired.) Explain that Launcelot had worked for Shylock and had been friends with Jessica, but now, on Shylock's recommendation, will work for Bassanio.
- After reading, pupils explain how Jessica and Lorenzo will be together.

Individual activity

- Pupils prepare to write Jessica's letter to Lorenzo.
- Discuss what kind of things she would put in it. It would be a good idea to encourage them to comment on the social prejudices towards Jews, her opinion of her father and the instructions on how they will escape together. It might also be a good idea to encourage them to comment on how Jessica thinks her father will react.

Homework: Finish Jessica's letter.

LESSON SIX

Aim: To discuss the term irony and look at how dramatic irony is employed in Act 2 scene v

Introduction

- Discuss the term irony. Discuss various forms of irony, especially dramatic irony.
- Recap on what is happening that night: Shylock's movements as well as Jessica's.

Shared Reading

- Read Act 2 scene v. Discuss the use of dramatic irony in this scene as well as what else has been learnt about Shylock from the scene.
- Shakespeare has also used some humour in this scene. Most if it involves Launcelot. This could be touched on and why humour is used here. Is this purely comic or is it intended to relieve some of the tension?
- Read act vi from Jessica's entry to Antonio's entry.

Pair work

- Pupils should prepare notes on what they have learnt about Jessica so far. Is she ashamed of her actions? What proof is there?
- Feedback.

Plenary

- Predict what Shylock's reaction will be.

LESSON SEVEN

Aim: To look at Shylock's reaction to Jessica's departure. To begin considering whether Shylock is a villain or if he's a victim.

Introduction

- The rest of Act Two doesn't all need to be read if you don't wish it. Summarise what has been happening - mainly the Prince of Morocco and the Prince of Arragon's failed attempts to win Portia.
- Shylock's reaction to Jessica's departure is seen through the words of Salerio and Solanio.

Shared Reading

- Read scene viii. Look closely at how Solanio describes Shylock's reactions and how the people of Venice have responded to Shylock's loss.
- Can they sympathise with Shylock? Does Shakespeare want them to? Are Solanio and Salerio reliable witnesses?
- Read the rest of the scene. How does Shakespeare raise the tension?

Individual Work

- Discuss the term monologue. Pupils will be writing a monologue in the character of Antonio, explaining his thoughts and fears about what is going to happen.
- Go through the following aspects in detail with the pupils - this could be in the form of a brainstorm: his relationship with Bassanio, why he borrowed the money from Shylock, what he feels about Salerio's news about a sunken ship and what will happen in the future. Would he feel any regrets? Remind them also of what was learnt about Antonio in the first scene and how he might talk about Shylock.

Homework: Complete the monologue. This should be marked for Best writing.

LESSON EIGHT

Aim: To discuss prejudice in more detail and look at how it is portrayed in the play.

To look closely at Shylock's character and his motivations.

To discuss any sympathy they might have for Shylock.

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Discuss Shylock's reaction as told by Salerio and Solanio. Recap on whether they would be sympathetic in anyway.
- Explain that Shakespeare now allows the audience to see the betrayal through Shylock's eyes.

Shared Reading (20 minutes)

- Read from Shylock's entrance in Act 3 scene i to the end of Shylock's 'if you prick us do we not bleed?' speech. This is a very important one for discussing Shylock's character - from his pain/ his greed/ his need for revenge. Also look at Jessica's betrayal and make them consider why he might be so upset. Remind them of all they know about the Jews and the prejudice they faced.
- Look closely at Shylock's speech about how he feels. This can be analysed on the worksheet. Discuss this with them.

Pair /Group work. (20 minutes)

- Working in pairs/groups, pupils read the quotations from the play on the worksheet about Jessica. Then they work out the discussion points below.
- Explain they will have a few minutes only to discuss and make notes on both points of view. (These notes should be done on one piece of paper) then one member of the group will take the notes and swap places with a member from a different group. They will explain to that group what they have decided on and then that group will add to what they have written.
- Decide how many swaps take place, depending on how much they are writing. After a while, most of the points will have been made.
- The scribe returns to the group and shares the information. This should be copied into their books.

Homework: Pupils make sure they have all the information on Jessica discussed in class.

LESSON NINE

Aim: Prepare for a written assignment on Jessica.

Introduction

- Prepare pupils for a debate on Jessica. This should not take up too much time - a lesson at most as the preparation has been done.
- Divide the class up depending on which point of view they agree with.
- Ask for a volunteer to present a defence of Jessica and one to offer a prosecution of her.
- One person will be the chairperson and the others should all be prepared to take notes.

Group

- Put the class into fairly small groups depending on which side of the argument they come down on. Each group is to prepare a statement that could be read out in the debate.
- Remind the class that those not speaking will be expected to ask questions at the end to try and dissuade the speakers from their points of view.

Class activity

- Debate Jessica's actions. Make sure the class takes notes on what is said.

Plenary

- Explain the class is going to be writing an assignment on: Jessica: Victim or Villain?
- If this is their first literature assignment, explain the process of writing - it must be objective as far as possible and the text must be referred to in detail.

LESSON TEN

Aim: To set up the assignment.

Introduction

- Recap on how to write an analytical assignment. Explain about the need to quote to offer proof and how to explain how the quotes back up the point made. Give a couple examples based on what they've done so far.

Class activity

- Ask the class to offer ideas on how to write an essay plan for this assignment, making sure they understand about introductions and conclusions if this is their first piece of analytical writing.
- Think about proof and useful quotes. (As this is the first critical assignment offer as much guidance as necessary)

Pair work

- Pupils prepare a detailed plan of their assignments.

Individual work

- Pupils begin to write up their answer. This probably won't be too long, but the aim is to get them practising before they write their main assignment.

LESSON ELEVEN

Introduction

- Recap on Shylock's reaction to Jessica's elopement and his opinion of Antonio. Considering all they have read so far, how would they expect Shylock to react when he learns the ships have sunk? Would they consider him justified in his opinions?

Shared Reading

- Read to the end of Act 3 scene i. Look at Shylock's reactions to the news brought by Tubal.
- Discuss what has happened in the scene, particularly Shylock's character.

Class Activity

- Begin a brainstorm on Shylock's character. Once most ideas have been written up, ask them to begin to find useful quotes to show his character.
- Feedback to the class. Encourage them to add more information to this as they read through the play.

LESSON TWELVE

Aim: focus on Portia's character.

Introduction

- Recap on what they know about Portia. It might be worth adding that she did not like her father's will because she wanted to choose her own husband. Discuss the traditional role of women at this time. They were subservient etc. Portia does not fit the role.

Shared Reading.

- Read the opening of scene ii as far as line 40.
- Discuss Portia's character as shown here.
- Explain that Bassanio chooses correctly and then look at Portia's next speech to him (line 149 *You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,*)
- Discuss her character and focus on the symbolism of the ring especially Bassanio's response to receiving it.
- Look at Portia's response to the letter Bassanio receives from Antonio. (Line 297 (what, no more?) to the end of the scene.

Pair work

- In pairs, pupils fill out the worksheet on Portia.
- Feedback to the class.

Homework: Finish the sheet.

LESSON THIRTEEN

Introduction

- Ask pupils to explain what has happened to Antonio, Bassanio's response and what Shylock might do next.

Shared Reading

- Read all of scene iii.
- Look closely at the language of Shylock and how he speaks to Antonio. Add to the brainstorm done earlier on him.

Individual work

- Write a newspaper report based on the events leading up to the trial of Act 4 scene i.
- Discuss headlines and layout.
- Give out sheet to help with planning only. Encourage them to use useful quotes from the play for their 'witness/source statements'. Salerio and Solanio will be helpful to use here.

Homework: Finish newspaper report

LESSON FOURTEEN

Introduction

- Explain that the next scene takes place in a courtroom. Ask pupils to volunteer to read the parts of Antonio, Shylock, Bassanio and the Duke.
- They are going to read the statements made by Shylock and Antonio and the Duke's attempt to persuade Shylock to show mercy.

Shared Reading

- Pupils read from the entrance of Shylock to Shylock's speech ending '*I stand from Judgement. Answer - shall I have it?*'
- Check for understanding.

Group work (15 minutes)

- Ask groups translate one of the Character's speeches into modern English. Allocate speeches so all are covered. Remind them to use the notes on the side of the books to help them. Explain that the overall meaning is more important than a word for word translation.

Class Activity

- Set the classroom up as a courtroom so that the translations can be read out in an appropriate setting.
- Act out the opening of the scene.

Plenary

- What has been learnt about Shylock? Is he behaving fairly? Can any defence be offered for his behaviour?

LESSON FIFTEEN / SIXTEEN

Introduction

- Set the classroom up as before.
- Explain that Portia has arrived disguised as a lawyer to defend Antonio. Allocate parts: Duke, Portia, Antonio, Bassanio, Shylock, Nerissa and Gratiano.
- Read through/ act out the scene.

Class Activity

- Pupils read the scene to the end. Those not reading should be ready to answer questions on it at the end. This is a long scene and it might be worth breaking it up so that they are clear on what is going on as they read.
- Ask those not reading out loud to make notes of how many times Shylock is asked to show mercy and how many times he refuses.

Individual work

- Pupils should fill out the worksheet on The Trial.

Homework: Make notes under the following headings: **Shylock the Villain** and **Shylock the Victim**. They should make at least five points, that can be proved, under each heading.

LESSON SEVENTEEN

Introduction

- Summarise the end of the play or show it on video.

Group Work

- Put class into groups and give each group a piece of A3 paper. Half the groups will be gathering all information necessary to defend Shylock's action and how he was treated by the state. The other half will prepare the opposing side of the argument.
- Give the groups ten minutes to jot down what they already know. They must make sure at least one member of the group is finding suitable quotes. Make sure each group has a list of the important plot moments.
- Once all the groups have been visited, ask the scribes to take their sheets to the groups who have been looking at the other side of the argument. They should explain what they have discovered and see if the other groups can add to it.

Class Activity

- Feedback to the class from a couple of the groups. Make sure all pupils copy down the information in their exercise books.

LESSON EIGHTEEN

Aim: To prepare for coursework

Give pupils the title: In your opinion, is Shylock a villain or a victim of the society he lives in.

- ❖ Discuss what information they will need to provide a background to the assignment.
- ❖ Go through an essay plan with the class.
- ❖ Pupils complete assignment.