

Money in *The Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare

Student worksheets

Warmer – Speaking: different kinds of value

Discuss these questions in groups in groups.

1. Imagine that your home was on fire. Which three objects would you save?
2. Compare your ideas with a partner. Are the objects you have chosen of monetary or sentimental value?

**Task 1 – Speaking: talking about money**

Read the newspaper advertisement. What do you think a payday loan is?

1. What do you think these phrases from the advert mean?
 - a. *feeling the pinch*
 - b. *keep the wolf from the door*
 - c. *stay afloat*
2. In what situation would you take out a payday loan?
 - a. You have seen an amazing pair of shoes – you can't live without them!
 - b. You don't have enough money to feed your family for the rest of the month.
 - c. It's cold and rainy outside and you want to book a holiday to somewhere warm and sunny.
 - d. You have fallen in love! You want to get married ASAP, and need money to pay for your wedding.
 - e. You have fallen behind with your rent. Your landlord is threatening to throw you out.



3. Many people think that payday loans should be made illegal. Do you agree? Why/Why not?

Task 2 – Reading: *The Merchant of Venice* in emails

Read the emails written by characters from Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*, and answer the questions.

1. Who wants to borrow money, and why?
2. Who's going to lend the money?
3. What are the terms of the loan?



Hey Antonio,

Sorry I haven't been in touch – how are things with you? All well here – I've fallen in love with the most beautiful woman, Portia. She's clever and pretty – who could ask for more? I was just wondering – you wouldn't be a mate and lend me some money would you? The thing is, I'm **seriously in the red** – if I could only get Portia to marry me all my worries would be over – not only is she a looker, but she's **minted** too!

Cheers,

Bassanio

Yo Bassanio,

Sorry, I'm a bit **skint** myself. Why don't you borrow money from Shylock? I know he's a bit dodgy but needs must and I think you'll easily pay him back once you get your hands on Portia's **dosh**. And if I can help you to get the loan, just let me know.

Later,

Antonio

P.S. Old Shylock isn't just rich – he also has a really gorgeous daughter called Jessica. I think our good friend, Lorenzo, is in love with her! Watch this space ...

Hi Nerissa,

You know how my dad's dying wish was that I get married? Well, I just don't fancy any of the lads who've turned up so far. Not only that – dear old Dad fixed it that anyone who does turn up to marry me needs to choose from three caskets – the one who picks the gold one wins me as his wife! I can only hope the winner isn't a total loser ... a lot of the guys who're coming round are nothing but **gold-diggers**.

Come over and help me out, will you?

Portia

Dear Mr Shylock,

I would like to apply to borrow some money from you (3000 ducats) as I have debts to pay. Please let me know how I can go about applying for a loan with your company. I would promise to pay you back in full after three months. I have a **good credit rating** and a friend, Antonio, who will be my **guarantor**.

Yours sincerely,

Bassanio

Dear Bassanio,

I must admit I am surprised to hear from you. Isn't it you and your friends who spit at me in the street and call me dog just because of my religion? Do you have something against Jewish people?

That said, business is business. I will lend you the money – **interest-free** – on one condition. If you are late with your repayments, I will take a pound of flesh from your friend Antonio as my payment.

Please find attached a contract for you to sign and return to me.

Kind regards,

Shylock

My darling Lorenzo.

Tonight is the night! I cannot wait to escape with you and begin a new life away from my **miserly** father. I'll make sure I bring some of the family jewels to help us on our way!

With all my love,

Jessica

XXXXX

Task 3 – Reading: checking understanding

Match the characters' names with the information about them.

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| 1. Nerissa | a. He is a money lender who is often insulted because of his religion. |
| 2. Portia | b. He wants to marry Portia because she is beautiful and rich. |
| 3. Antonio | c. She is a friend of Portia's. |
| 4. Bassanio | d. She is Shylock's daughter, is a Jew and is in love with a non-Jew. |
| 5. Jessica | e. He doesn't have enough money to lend his friend Bassanio, but tries to help him anyway. |
| 6. Shylock | f. She is a rich woman. Lots of men want to marry her. |

Task 4 – Money vocabulary

Match the words in bold in the text (1–9) with their meanings (a–i).

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| 1. <i>seriously in the red</i> | a. owing a lot of money |
| 2. <i>minted</i> | b. someone who is mean and doesn't like spending money |
| 3. <i>skint</i> | c. having no money |
| 4. <i>dosh</i> | d. money |
| 5. <i>gold-diggers</i> | e. an extra charge you pay when you borrow money |
| 6. <i>good credit rating</i> | f. people who are only interested in other people for their money |
| 7. <i>guarantor</i> | g. very rich |
| 8. <i>interest</i> | h. a person who guarantees that another person will pay back a loan |
| 9. <i>miserly</i> | i. a score which shows that you can safely borrow money and will pay it back |

Task 5 – Listening and speaking: ordering events

Listen to your teacher read a summary of the play. Put the events in order.

- a. Shylock is accused of murder.
- b. Bassanio and Portia get engaged.
- c. Two princes try and fail to marry Portia.
- d. Bassanio needs to borrow money to marry Portia.
- e. Portia appears at Shylock's trial, dressed as a male lawyer.
- f. Lorenzo and Shylock's daughter, Jessica, run away together.
- g. Antonio can't repay Shylock the money, so must pay with his flesh.
- h. Bassanio borrows money from Shylock, but Shylock will have the right to take a pound of Antonio's flesh if the loan is not repaid.



THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

Shylock's trial, from *The Merchant of Venice*

Task 6 – Speaking: money proverbs

Read these proverbs about money. What do they mean? Which do you agree with?

- a. 'All that glitters is not gold.' Act II, scene vii *The Merchant of Venice*
- b. 'The best things in life are free.'
- c. 'There's no such thing as a free lunch.'
- d. 'Money is the root of all evil.'

Choose one of the proverbs. Work with a group to make a short role play about it. The rest of the class must guess which proverb you have chosen.