

**GCSE (9–1)**

*Exemplar Candidate Work*

# **ENGLISH LITERATURE**

J352  
For first teaching in 2015

## ***Merchant of Venice* – Shakespeare**

Version 1



## Contents

Script A – Level 4	4
Script B – Level 1	7
Script C – Levels 5	9
Script D – Level 4	13
Script E – Level 2	17
Script F – Level 3	20



## Extract-based questions

It is important when answering these questions to maintain a balance between the Assessment Objectives. These are:

AO1: Read, understand and respond to texts: maintain a critical style; develop an informed personal response; use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.

AO2: Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant terminology where appropriate.

AO3: Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written.

AO4: Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

AOs 1 and 2 are dominant. This means that responses need to be well-argued and carefully supported in relation to the whole question. It is a good idea to divide time equally between the extract, which allows AO2 to be addressed through careful attention to language and dramatic structure, and the rest of the play, which allows candidates to construct a whole-text response based on reference and argument. It helps to have a particular scene or couple of scenes in mind for comparison/connection. AO3 will be implicit in the question, and may be addressed by exploring the differences between the expectations of Shakespeare's audience and the way modern-day directors and audiences might respond.

In the specimen paper this extract from the first scene shows that the friendship of Antonio and Bassanio is the mainspring of the plot. Antonio asks Bassanio about Portia and about a 'secret pilgrimage' of love. Bassanio instead replies by talking about money, and he combines both love and money when explaining all he owes to Antonio. From the beginning of the play, different kinds of love and money have become entangled, and Antonio's promise to unlock his 'purse' and his 'person' to aid Bassanio's adventures leads directly to the bond, and its near-fatal consequences.

## Discursive essay questions

This type of question gives candidates an opportunity to explore a key character, relationship or theme by exploring at least two moments in the play in detail. As the Assessments Objectives are the same as for the extract-based question, it is also important to explore contextual influences and to look closely at Shakespeare's language and dramatic techniques. Effective quotation is important to show knowledge and understanding.

This question is actually very specific, and not just a global question on Shylock. It is important to be aware of why money is so important to Shylock, and to be aware of the restrictions on Jews in the sixteenth century and why usury is the opportunity for him to achieve security. Shylock's preoccupation with his house, his jewels, his money and his possessions reflect his existence on the margins of Venetian society, as the laws expounded by Portia make very clear. Good scenes to choose would have been Shylock's first appearance in 1.3, his response to Jessica's flight in 3.3 and/or the trial scene, 4.1.



## Script A

## Page 1 of 2



## Question 6.

The depth and importance of Antonio and Bassanio's close friendship is shown to us many times during the play as we see the almost brotherly companionship stand through all the obstacles thrown at them. At key points in the play like Act 4 Scene 1 in the Court when Bassanio states he would give everything, even his newly wedded wife, to save his friend, it is clear that this is not just a normal friendship, and the sexuality of Antonio can sometimes be questioned at some points in the play as the friendship can sometimes seem one sided with Antonio sacrificing significantly more.

In the Merchant of Venice, the friendship between Antonio and Bassanio, although very strong, can be seen as very one sided. Antonio sacrifices many things for Bassanio but Bassanio does not seem to reciprocate. In Act one Scene 3 Antonio tells Bassanio, "My purse, my person, my extremist means lie unlocked to you occasions", telling his friend that he will always help him no matter what he is in need of. The Alliteration of Purse and Person brings attention to the two words, making sure the reader is made aware that Antonio's selflessness. Two Scenes later, Antonio's overture to donate a pound of his flesh shows again his commitment to the friendship, "Content in Faith! Ill seal to such a bond ." The two commitments that Antonio makes show that he is dearly loves Bassanio, but in the play we are not convinced that Bassanio feels the same way, he does not actually sacrifice anything for Antonio, only states that "life itself, my wife, and all the world[...] would lose all, ay, to sacrifice you." If this is sincere, Bassanio surely loves Antonio but no acts of passion or sacrifice are actually shown to prove that the thoughts are really genuine.

Throughout the play, it is sometimes suggested that Antonio's' feelings for Bassanio are more than ones of admiration and adoration, but rather feelings of strong love for him. It would be easy to assume that this would mean Antonio is confused about his sexuality but there is also another dynamic to be considered, Antonio may see himself as a father figure to Bassanio, and be prepared to give anything for him. At the beginning of the play, Bassanio is trying to secure his fortune through marriage and Antonio bail him out so he can pursue his desires, this does not seem to be the first time that this has happened, Bassanio states "I owe you much, but like a wilful youth, that which I owe is lost" the word "youth" further backs up the idea that Antonio plays the father figure in Bassanio's life, giving anything to make sure he is content.

In contrast to this there is also evidence for the point formerly mentioned above, Antonio may be in love with Bassanio, and therefore is being used by Bassanio for money and favours. In Act 1 Scene 1, Antonio is upset and Salanio and Salarino are questioning him about why this is, Salarino asks him if it has something to do with his ships being at sea, Antonio explains that it has nothing to do with that but does not disclose what the problem is. Salanio then suggests that the only other thing that could upset him is love "Why then, you are in love". Antonio quickly protests "Fie

... continued



## Script A

## Page 2 of 2

Fiel” This is a very common scenario when a teenager is asked if they have a crush on someone or if they have feelings for someone, they often quickly protest and are quick to change the subject, much like Antonio. This along with the fact that Antonio is prepared to die for Bassanio and does not even place any blame on him, despite the fact it was his lack of financial know how that got Antonio to this point. Finally we look at the letter that Antonio sent Bassanio while he was at Portia’s mansion. Antonio informs Bassanio that he has forfeit the bond and will be killed soon, he finishes with “If your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter”. Antonio is dying, and this suggests that his dying wish is to finally find out after all these years if Bassanio feels the same love for him as he does for Bassanio, this along with the other pieces evidence point heavily to Antonio loving Bassanio. Would he sacrifice everything he has just for a close friend?

Antonio and Bassano’s friendship can be portrayed in many different ways and there is evidence that could prove each one of these dynamics. The question we keep asking ourselves is what the link between love and friendship and what separates them. The friendship is important as it forces the reader to explore, in depth, the difference between love and friendship.





## Script A

### Examiner commentary

Script A begins by identifying the ‘brotherly companionship’ of Antonio and Bassanio, and immediately references another key scene (Act 4 Scene 1, the ‘trial’ scene). AO1 is powerfully addressed by highlighting the moment when Bassanio says he would sacrifice his wife for his friendship. AO2 might have been addressed too, if a quotation had been used as an example of Bassanio’s characteristically hyperbolic form of expression. This would also have been a good moment to introduce AO3. The ‘sexuality of Antonio’ is brought into the debate, as an explanation for a friendship which often seems one-sided. However, it would be wise to explain that there is a difference between the convention of sentimental friendships between men in the Renaissance and the way modern directors might treat the relationship today.

The one-sided nature of the friendship becomes a good way for the candidate to explore language, notably Antonio’s reference to ‘my purse, my person’. Here AO2 is addressed, as are the consequences when this is translated into the ‘bond’ (AO1). There is a direct link to Antonio’s willingness to deal with Shylock and there is a comparison between what Bassanio later swears, and how much he really sacrifices for Antonio.

The next paragraph addresses sexuality in terms that are historically appropriate and supported by the language of the text, pointing out Bassanio’s relative youth through an appropriate reference to the language of his extended simile in the passage (AO2). For more acknowledgement of AO3, it might have been a good idea to pick up on the aristocratic pursuits of the penniless ‘Lord’ Bassanio in contrast to Antonio’s new money private enterprise.

Cross-reference to earlier moments in the scene lead to further explorations of the ways in which Bassanio might be exploiting Antonio’s love for him. There is a very apt personal response to Antonio’s evasive response in the lines of the play. The evidence of Antonio’s love for Bassanio is evaluated critically, as is the way Bassanio demonstrates his love for Antonio by responding to his letter and being prepared to ‘sacrifice everything’ in order to try to save his friend. This point is well-made and supported (AO1), and it would have been even stronger if it had been emphasised that Portia hears what Bassanio says to Antonio in the trial scene, and makes her own comment.

The final comment shows the candidate has an open mind on the dynamics of this friendship and how it could be portrayed. The ‘difference between love and friendship’ might have been explored more deeply through a closer look at the language of money which surrounds it in this scene and later (AO2) and more reference to the ways in which the friendship drives the ‘merry bond’ and ‘ring’ plots, having intervened just after the ‘casket’ scene. The play can’t close until Portia has once again ‘bound’ Antonio to reassure herself of Bassanio’s loyalty.

All the requirements of Level 3 are covered by this response. Indeed it edges into low **Level 4**: there is some critical style and relevant textual references are well-chosen to support the argument. More analytical comment on poetic language and dramatic structure, using the extract as a springboard to explore patterns later in the play, and more use of subject terminology and understanding of context would have given this response the ‘credible critical style’ required for higher Level 4.



## Script B

## Page 1 of 1

(B)

The Merchant of Venice25/4/16

6) Explore the importance of Antonio and Bassanio's friendship. Refer to this extract and elsewhere in the play.

In the play, the importance of Antonio and Bassanio's friendship is explored.

For example, in Act 1 Scene 1, Bassanio, asked Antonio if he could borrow some money from Antonio, as he needs enough money to marry Portia. However, Antonio had already previously lent Bassanio some money, which he didn't return. This passage is about friendships, love and money and how all the relationships in the play, are based around money. This is an example of money and friendship.

Another example is when Antonio risked his life for Bassanio, when he made a deal with Shylock. This is an example of love as Antonio was almost killed by Shylock, but luckily managed to not.

Going back to my first point, the ~~main~~ <sup>main</sup> reason Bassanio needed ~~the~~ money to marry Portia is because she is rich. But Antonio is reluctant to lend money to Bassanio as he invested his last amount of money, that Bassanio Antonio let to him, in his boats, but, however, didn't managed to get the money back to him, so he is already in debt to his friend.

In conclusion, I think that Bassanio is only friends with Antonio, for his money, which is the same reason he wants to marry Portia. This is a good example of friendship, love and money.



## Script B

### Examiner commentary

Script B is a more straightforward response but nevertheless shows good knowledge and understanding. The nature of the bond is understood, and the ways in which it interweaves friendships, love and money (AO1). Once again the trial scene is referenced, although a quotation is lacking.

There is some exploration of the nature of the debts owed by both Bassanio and Antonio, and it would have been good to have linked those financial debts to emotional debts. There seems to be a bit of confusion about Antonio's financial affairs and it would have been better to have linked these to the need to borrow from Shylock in order to establish the importance of the friendship for that element of the play.

The major weakness of this response is that it does not address AO2, which should have been possible through some study of the language of the extract. A secondary weakness is the lack of explicit contextual comment (AO3). This could easily have been added with reference to the social conventions of courtship, which is the reason why Bassanio needs a loan, or the Christian objection to usury, which is why Antonio is reluctant to go to Shylock.

This response meets all the criteria for Level 1, and meets some Level 2 criteria for AO1, despite the lack of quotation. However, it would be awarded a mark at the top of **Level 1** because of the lack of any explicit comment on AO2 and AO3. Although AO3 is weighted less heavily and does not need to be explicitly referenced for Level 2, AO2 does, and candidates must be advised to make good use of the extract printed on the paper.





## Script C

## Page 1 of 3

©  
The Merchant of Venice

6. Antonio and Bassanio serve as two of the protagonists of the play, whose love for each other is rivalled only with Portia's love with Bassanio. Their friendship is tested thoroughly throughout 'The Merchant of Venice' such as when Antonio almost perishes at the hands of Shylock. However, the blame could arguably ~~have~~ be aimed at Bassanio for being the man Antonio signed the bond for in the first place, and so we must question whether Bassanio had Antonio's best interests in mind when using him to get to Portia, or whether Bassanio was looking out for his own selfish needs.

Bassanio, being a prodigal spender, has relied countless times on Antonio to bail him out of debt, and so in this way, their friendship may prove important for Bassanio as a means of accessing vast amounts of money. Both of them are aware of Bassanio's dependancy, as to Antonio, he 'Owes the most, in money and in love'. The prioritisation of 'Money' suggests Bassanio could be using Antonio primarily for the money, as opposed to the unquestioning love such friends are supposed to have. This isn't the only time we can challenge Bassanio's motives, as when he begins to narrate his newfound love for Portia, his first description of her is of a 'lady richly left'. This relation of money to love further reinforces the idea that wealth is a major attribute Bassanio looks for in a person.

On the other hand, Antonio's unwavering love for Bassanio is unquestionable as Antonio commits 100% to the relationship, offering his "pursu", his 'person' and his 'extremest means' to Bassanio's 'occasions'. Antonio seems to be the giver while Bassanio the receiver in the relationship, perhaps with Antonio giving too much. Giving his 'person' and unbinding himself just for Bassanio implies Antonio may have stronger feelings towards Bassanio, maybe even wanting to become more than just friends. However he knows this cannot happen, Bassanio seeking Portia's hand being one of many reasons, and so it could explain Antonio's apparent sadness at

... continued

## Script C

## Page 2 of 3

the very start of the play, marked by 'in sooth, I know not why I'm so sad.'<sup>1</sup>

By the trial scene, Bassanio finally sees Antonio solely as a dear companion, no longer his own bank account or a means to achieve an end. Bassanio expresses this love in what may be his final moment with Antonio, exclaiming 'life itself, my wife and all the world are not with me esteemed above thy life: I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all here to this devil to deliver you'.<sup>2</sup> Bassanio has now got it all: money, love, friends. But in having all these, he is in a position to realise it wasn't worth risking his best friend's life in order to fulfil his own needs. Bassanio did not have this understanding in the beginning as he was partially influenced by greed for an affluent Antonio and a prepossessing Portia, but now he realises Antonio is the one he cares the most for, and would 'lose all' just to 'deliver' him.

At this point, Antonio should be distraught over his losses and misfortune (and particularly his imminent death), and yet seems to be only slightly bothered, at most. He acts defeated prematurely and even implies his friends to give up, saying 'think you question with the Jew.' Perhaps this attitude derives from how he could be happy with dying or at least partly satisfied, knowing he helped Bassanio in his endeavours. When in his seemingly, last moment, he tells Bassanio not to worry of his debt, for if the Jew do 'let but deep enough, [he] will pay it instantly with all his heart'.<sup>2</sup> Antonio's love has been pushed to the limit, and he is even ready to accept death for the man he loves so dearly. This lack of hesitation, this willingness to do and the absence of bitterness in doing so with "all his heart", all portrays his devotion and unconditional love for Bassanio. Further evidence of how Antonio dies in peace is how he tells Bassanio to 'say how I loved you'. Antonio knows Bassanio is torn between Antonio and Portia, and so in dying, he can

... continued

## Script C

## Page 3 of 3

almost guarantee his love is secured knowing he paid the ultimate price and how Portia can never compete with that, and so Bassanio would forevermore hold Antonio dear to his heart. This could explain why Antonio wasn't against the notion of dying.

I believe their amity has progressed tremendously over the play, particularly on the part of Bassanio. He, at first, did have a strong friendship with Antonio, but he did not cherish it enough - the feeling of unconditional love that Antonio presented was not mutual. It also doesn't come as a surprise that the two most prominent figures in his life, Antonio and Portia, are exceedingly prosperous. This is no coincidence, but it only highlights how overvalued monetary value as a quality when looking for friends. Although, as we advance through the play, Bassanio begins to adopt and display an unconditional love, ~~showing~~ shown by how <sup>he</sup> is ready to lose all for Antonio. However, it is a shame it took something as drastic as a near death experience to evoke these feelings from Bassanio.



## Script C

### Examiner commentary

Script C is a well-written and very fluent response which immediately addresses the question in a discursive style. It presents a strongly personal, well-argued and carefully supported response showing good all-round knowledge of the play. It is especially effective as a character study of Bassanio, but its penultimate paragraph also investigates the self-sacrificing nature of Antonio. Two elements might strengthen the response further: a greater sense of theatricality, with an appreciation of the ways in which honour and friendship are expressed in the play through extravagant language – which is especially evident in this scene – and more awareness of how audiences today and in Shakespeare’s day might judge the friendship, bringing the opportunity to address AO3 much more explicitly.

This response immediately opens up the question to ask whether Bassanio is ‘looking out for his own selfish needs’. This confident approach to the wider issues raised by the task (AO1) is exactly what is needed, but should spring more directly from the language of the extract, perhaps by making more direct reference to how Bassanio admits to having ‘disabled mine estate’. This would allow Bassanio’s aristocratic status to be addressed (AO3). There is scope to contrast with the more mercantile vocabulary of ‘a noble rate’, ‘warranty’ and ‘adventuring’ which suggest an appeal to Antonio’s status as a venture capitalist rather than as a friend.

The second paragraph acknowledges that he is a ‘prodigal spender’ and makes a sharp comment on the way Bassanio prioritises ‘money’ when he enumerates what he owes Bassanio (AO2). The comparison to his first description of Portia is an apt one. The next paragraph neatly contrasts the ‘unwavering’ nature of Antonio’s love for Bassanio. Offering his ‘person’ is certainly interesting, and suggests the strength of his feelings. This is also sensitively linked to his words at the opening of the play. It might have been linked explicitly to the ‘pound of flesh’ and Antonio’s willingness to put himself at the mercy of Shylock.

The theme of the bond is developed in a paragraph on the trial scene which tellingly suggests that Antonio is now finally seen by Bassanio as a ‘dear companion’ rather than a ‘personal bank account’. His willingness to ‘lose all’ is now feelingly analysed, although again its dramatic context, in front of the disguised Portia, might have been acknowledged.

Exploration of Antonio’s language (AO2), especially the imagery of ‘all of his heart’ is especially effective, and leads to a judgement on Bassanio which is severe on his initial motivation but generous to his development as a character through his friendship with Antonio and therefore identifies ways in which the drama progresses.

This response certainly merits a mark at the top of **Level 5**. With a wider range of references and more focused use of subject terminology (AO2) to address the theatrical context and hyperbolic expression of the language of friendship, this would have achieved Level 6.



## Script D

## Page 1 of 3

①

## Merchant of Venice English Essay for OCR

pg1

Throughout the whole of *The Merchant of Venice* we can explore the friendship of Antonio and Bassanio, and we can begin to understand the importance and strength of their friendship. Two scenes to highlight this friendship are Act 1 Scene 1 and Act 4 Scene 1, both are similar in that Antonio is ~~is~~ sacrificing himself on more for his beloved Bassanio and that he would try anything so long as Bassanio is happy. \* Also they speak of how they are the greatest of friends and how they can trust in each other anything. However the mood of the 2 scenes is very different and this brings out different sides of the friendship.

In Act 1 Scene 1 we see of the importance of the friendship for Bassanio's sake. When greeting Antonio he is talking of the mistakes he has made with his money and then announces "To sure, Antonio, I owe the most in money and love: This quote highlights the friendship as Bassanio would be in a bad way without the help he has received from Antonio. This phrase is used by Bassanio to show how good a friend he has and he would be lost without him. He uses personal pronouns and Antonio's name to show how what he says he means and how he thanks his friend for his help. The use of the word 'love' also symbolises that their friendship maybe be something slightly more to their friendship and that maybe it is a bit of a loving friendship. This tells us more why Antonio is so willing to give up his wealth and hand it on a platter for Bassanio who on the part has just melted his money away.

\* In both scenes we can also see their friendship maybe more of a loving friendship.

... continued





## Script D

## Page 3 of 3

pg 3

However we see in Act 4 Scene 1 a dramatic change of mood. In this scene the mood is very tense and it maybe the end of Antonio we can see how the friendship is tested but ~~there~~ we see the importance of their friendship when Bassanio says 'But life itself, my wife and all the world... I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all ~~to~~ here to the devil to deliver you'. This ~~was~~ phrase highlights the intensity of the mood as Antonio would 'sacrifice them all', ~~to~~ to save his Antonio and this shows the importance of their friendship. He uses personal possessions when talking about sacrifice as this ~~emphasises~~ the mood as he is willing to give everything away for Antonio. The mood is so dramatic that he would even sacrifice himself. This shows the change in language between the pair in different situations.

<sup>Summary</sup>  
In ~~the end~~ we can see that Antonio and Bassanio's friendship is key to each of their lives. They have both risked their lives for each other and we can see their friendship maybe more of a loving friendship than what it first seems. Also from the text we can see that Antonio has more of a love for ~~Bassanio~~ Bassanio than Bassanio maybe does for him. ~~Also~~ Antonio is always prepared to die for Bassanio and we see the importance of the ~~relationship~~ friendship as without it we would have a very different plot.



## Script D

### Examiner commentary

Script D begins by identifying Act 4 Scene 1 for comparison, and while the discursive approach shown by Script C is the best, selection of an individual scene and perhaps a particular speech or exchange is a good way to move out from the printed extract. The two scenes are singled out for the way in which they present friendship and sacrifice.

There is detailed analysis of a single phrase ‘I owe the most in money and in love’, with some very effective word-level analysis (AO2). Here too, language might have been more explicitly linked to the language of financial transaction. There is some exploration of what Bassanio might mean by ‘love’ but this needs more awareness of context. The same applies to the analysis of what Antonio is prepared to sacrifice in the trial scene, where the religious references are significant (AO3). However, quotation supports an individual argument very effectively indeed here (AO1).

The sharp contrast with the lighter, bantering mood of Act 1 Scene 1 is noted, and used to explore the extract further and analyse what it reveals about the nature of their friendship. The ‘dramatic change of mood’ in the trial scene is aptly noted, along with the increase in intensity of language (AO2). The unequal nature of the friendship up to this point is certainly noted, but it changes at this moment, and the implications for Bassanio’s marriage to Portia and consequently for the ending of the play might have been pursued further. Otherwise the centrality of the friendship to the plot, and its complex nature is well understood.

This is a mid **Level 4** response with a credible critical style, showing a detailed personal response to both text and task, although both analysis and clarity of understanding of context could be improved.



## Script E

Page 1 of 2

(E)

28/04/16

Merchant of Venice test

7) In this play money is one of the main themes presented by William Shakespeare, not only in this play but other of his works.

At the time this was set in the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the society was extremely anti-semitic and against the Jewish people for religious reasons. At many places and companies it was impossible for someone like Shylock who was a Jew to get any sort of job. The only sort of job that Shylock could get was ~~was~~ lending money to people and charging interest. Although Christians and Jews didn't believe in this they still did it because they needed it.

Shylock becomes obsessed with ~~Antonio's~~ <sup>Antonio's</sup> when he doesn't pay back his loan because for Shylock that was everything he had especially when some of it was stolen by Jessica, his daughter when she ran away. Also the only reason why people knew him is because he lends money and with out a penny to his name he is worthless and won't be able to do anything and possibly die because he has no money left.

Because it is the only thing he has after the loss of his daughter he becomes attached to it and gets obsessed when it doesn't come back, especially the gets so obsessed he refuses to take offer for the money eight fold and demands the 3000 ducats from Antonio or he would kill him. The money is also portrayed as his dignity so if he loses it he will be nothing. He seeks security and success by money-lending, which he calls 'well won drift'. He becomes obsessed with Antonio's loan because he is one of the people who treats him with the least respect and so Shylock sees this as an opportunity for revenge and takes it. Shylock's anger, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~obsessed~~ <sup>obsessed</sup> with the loan became worse when Jessica leaves to become a Christian and this furthermore makes Shylock very emotionally unstable and as is when he legal and emotional battle with Antonio.

...continued





## Script E

### Examiner commentary

Script E shows some explicit understanding of context and appreciation of the topic of usury (AO3). The second paragraph points out that Shylock's wealth is essential to his self-respect. Like many modern directors, the student locates Shylock's growing obsession with revenge on Antonio in 3.3, and links it to his grief at Jessica's desertion (with some of his money) (AO1). This is a good start and should have been followed up by some explicit consideration of Shylock's language and its effect on the audience (AO2). The exchange with Tubal is especially revealing here.

The next paragraph alludes to the trial scene and Shylock's refusal of Portia's offer. The obsession with Antonio is evident here, and the point might have been made that in this instance the money is actually less important to Shylock than justice, or he would not have insisted on the bond (AO1). There is an understanding that the 'legal and emotional' battle with Antonio is about more than money, and here too an explanation of the importance of settling scores, and justifying usury might have led to reference back to 1.3.

This is the beginning of a response, lacking development and detail. However, there is enough understanding of not only the plot but key (and complex) issues for the top of **Level 2**. Relevant textual references and quotations are essential for Level 3.



## Script F

## Page 1 of 2

(F)

## Merchant of Venice GCSE question

7. Shylock is portrayed as a typical Shakespearean Jew. He has many stereotypes shown in his character traits that would be commonly held beliefs of the time, such as Jews being evil and craving money.

The best example of Shylock's love for money in the play is shown when Jessica ~~not~~ elopes with ~~her~~ <sup>Giovanio</sup> and steals Shylock's wedding ring and a proportion of his money. Shylock, instead of grieving for Jessica, runs onto the street shouting about his "ducats", and repeats the word "ducats" throughout ~~the~~ this scene. This shows that Shylock values his money more than he values his own daughter (at this point in the play). This could ~~be~~ perhaps be the reason Jessica ran away ~~in the first place~~ with ~~Giovanio~~.

Earlier in the play, when Shylock just reveals why he has a hatred for Antonio, he explains that he "(hates) him for he is a Christian, but more for that, in low simplicity he lends out money gratis and loses the rate of usance here with us in Venice". Although Shylock originally claims that he hates Antonio due to his religion, he quickly reveals that he has an ulterior motive for hating Antonio. Shylock attempts to cover up his action of usance (perceived as a crime at the time) by implying that Antonio cannot control his lending habits.

Shylock goes on to explain why he would like to kill Antonio at the end of the play, by saying he would like the pound of flesh "to bait fish withal, (Antonio) hath disguised me and hindered me truly a million, mocked at my gains, laughed at my losses and scorned my nation". Here, once again Shylock shows his hatred for Antonio is primarily due to his ~~low~~ policy of charging no interest on his loans. The use of the word "nation" at the end refers to Shylock's religion and ~~could be broadened to say that~~ the fact that is

Written

so closely to Shylock's speech about money could, show how central Shylock be broadened to

... continued



## Script F

## Page 2 of 2

believes money is to Judaism. Shakespeare is perhaps using this to reinforce Jewish stereotypes at the time.

Overall, I think that the mere fact that Shylock is shown to prioritise money over his own daughter is enough to show how important money is to him. I think Shakespeare portrays him as a vengeful, money obsessed Jew, to try and attempt to make the viewers at the time regard him as a common enemy, like a scaled down portmanteau at the time. Although ~~the~~ Shylock's obsession with money would be perceived as racist in the 21<sup>st</sup> ~~century~~ century, it would have been commonplace in Elizabethan England, and Shakespeare used this to his advantage.



## Script F

### Examiner commentary

Script F presents an argument based around the racial stereotypes common in Shakespeare's day (AO3). There is a brief and supported overview of 3.3 in order to provide specific examples. Reference back to 1.3 is also effective, with an explanation of 'usance'. Quotation supports the argument (AO1) but there is a need for more analysis of details of the writing (AO2), or of dramatic form. For example, the alternative interpretations of scripture might have been explored to give evidence of Shylock's delight in seeing money 'breed'.

The candidate then returns to 3.3, and the structure of this response might have been more considered. There is appreciation of Shylock's rhetoric in 3.3 and of his claim that he is defending his nation. A contrast with Tubal's attitude might have balanced this. While it is true that Shakespeare supports certain stereotypes of the time, he also challenges them, not least in the portrayal of Tubal and Jessica, whose attitude towards money seems less tight fisted and who consequently have a better sense of humour.

A forceful and individual argument emerges with textual support (AO1), and there is an appropriate contrast with attitudes to racism today. Shakespeare's portrayal of Shylock is a little more complex than is presented here, but his obsession with money at the expense of personal relationships is certainly at odds with the comic conventions within which the play must operate.

This is a **Level 3** response, as it is reasonably developed, relevantly supported and informed by context.





We'd like to know your view on the resources we produce. By clicking on the 'Like' or 'Dislike' button you can help us to ensure that our resources work for you. When the email template pops up please add additional comments if you wish and then just click 'Send'. Thank you.

Whether you already offer OCR qualifications, are new to OCR, or are considering switching from your current provider/awarding organisation, you can request more information by completing the Expression of Interest form which can be found here:

[www.ocr.org.uk/expression-of-interest](http://www.ocr.org.uk/expression-of-interest)

#### **OCR Resources:** *the small print*

OCR's resources are provided to support the delivery of OCR qualifications, but in no way constitute an endorsed teaching method that is required by OCR. Whilst every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the content, OCR cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions within these resources. We update our resources on a regular basis, so please check the OCR website to ensure you have the most up to date version.

This resource may be freely copied and distributed, as long as the OCR logo and this small print remain intact and OCR is acknowledged as the originator of this work.

OCR acknowledges the use of the following content:  
Square down and Square up: alexwhite/Shutterstock.com

Please get in touch if you want to discuss the accessibility of resources we offer to support delivery of our qualifications:  
[resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk](mailto:resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk)

#### **Looking for a resource?**

There is now a quick and easy search tool to help find **free** resources for your qualification:

[www.ocr.org.uk/i-want-to-find-resources/](http://www.ocr.org.uk/i-want-to-find-resources/)

[www.ocr.org.uk/gcsereform](http://www.ocr.org.uk/gcsereform)

OCR Customer Contact Centre

#### **General qualifications**

Telephone 01223 553998

Facsimile 01223 552627

Email [general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk)

OCR is part of Cambridge Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge. *For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored.*

© **OCR 2016** Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England. Registered office 1 Hills Road, Cambridge CB1 2EU. Registered company number 3484466. OCR is an exempt charity.

