

Common Module: Texts and Human Experiences

The Merchant of Venice

William Shakespeare

Syllabus content (Common Mod – *Texts and Human Experiences*):

- How do texts express **individual and collective human experiences** through **universal themes**
- How do texts provide insight into **anomalies, paradoxes and inconsistencies** in human behaviour and **motivations**
- How do texts use **stylistic devices** and **form** to **shape meaning**

Themes in The Merchant of Venice:

- Racism and prejudice
- Power, justice and mercy
- Strength of friendship
- Depth of hatred

Form, Purpose & Audience of The Merchant of Venice:

MOV is a play written in 1598 to explore themes of agency and hatred.

To engage a diverse audience with complex text which provides a compelling story to all who interact with it. This text was written to engage both the lower classes with bawdy humour and the upper classes with complex plots.

Vocabulary list:

Context:	- Monocultural values - Christocentric values: - o Opposition between Jewish Old Testament values of 'an eye for an eye' and Christian New Testament values of forgiveness/mercy. - Elizabethan society: - o Strong gender norms which dictated societal function (especially appearance)
Ideas:	- Semite - Usury

Subplots within The Merchant of Venice:

- Story of the bond (Antonio vs Shylock)
- Story of the caskets (Portia's future husband)
- Story of the elopement (Lorenzo & Jessica)
- Story of the rings (Bassanio, Gratiano vs Portia, Nerissa)

	Quote	Themes	Techniques	Analysis
An. A1S1	<i>A stage where every man must play a part/And mine a sad one.</i>	Inference	Allusion	Refers to Shakespeare's <i>As You Like It</i> , details how hopeless his life is and how he feels he is now always sad.
An. A1S1	<i>Within the eye of honour, be assured/My purse, my person, my extremist means/Lie all unlocked to your occasions</i>	Friendship	Metaphor (Synecdoche) Possessive pronoun Anaphora	Details how much faith and trust Antonio has in Bassanio, how he would give all his money to help Bassanio.
An. A1S1	<i>And out of doubt you do me now more wrong/In making question of my uttermost/Than if you had made waste of all I have.</i>	Friendship	Emotive language	Antonio says that his relationship with Bassanio is more important than any money, and that it is important to never have a strained friendship over having large wealth.
Po. A1S2	<i>so is the will of a living daughter curbed/by the will of a dead father.</i>	Control	Juxtaposition Irony	Explains how Portia feels like she is chained to her father's wishes, even though he is dead. It is also ironic as the 'will' is from a dead person.
Ne. A1S2	<i>His meaning chooses you, will, no doubt, never be chosen by any/rightly but one who shall rightly love.</i>	Control	Foreshadowing	Nerissa tells Portia to trust her father's devices to chose the correct husband.
Sh. A1S3	<i>I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you,/walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat/with you, drink with you, nor pray with you.</i>	Intolerance	Anaphora Juxtaposition	Shylock is responded to all the anti-Semitism, by placing key boundaries and reinforcing his distaste for Christians.
Sh. A1S3	<i>I hate him for he is a Christian.</i>	Intolerance	High modality Truncated sentences	Shylock lists his one main reason for hating Antonio due to religion, and all the wrongs that Christians have done.
Sh. A1S3	<i>I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.</i>	Intolerance	Metaphor Foreshadowing Personification	The use of personifying the grudge demonstrates how Shylock will willingly 'feed' the hatred and do anything to get back at Christians.
An. A1S3	<i>The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.</i>	Inference Intolerance	Allusion/Intertextuality (Biblical) Imagery	Uses biblical allusion to refer to how Shylock is a devil and how he twists the Bible for his own 'evil' gains.
Sh. A1S3	<i>You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,/And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,</i>	Intolerance	Imagery Symbol	Refers to Antonio as a dog, which flips the script (as Shylock is referred to as a dog), and lists Antonio's evils towards him.
An. A1S3	<i>But lend it rather to thine enemy,/Exact the penalty.</i>	Control	Foreshadowing	Antonio foreshadows his own fate where Shylock will take advantage of his misfortune and take revenge on his "enemy".
Act 2				
Mor. A2S1	<i>Mislike me not for my complexion.</i>	Intolerance	Irony	The prince apologises for his complexion, demonstrates how he is also entrenched in the racist Elizabethan culture.
Mor. A2S1	<i>I would not change this hue/Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen.</i>	Control	Possessive pronoun	The prince would only change his culture if it were to get him control of Portia referred to how he already uses a possessive pronoun to refer to her.
La. A2S2	<i>Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnation</i>	Intolerance	Allusion (Biblical) Hyperbole	Lancelot thinks that Shylock is a devil on account of the fact that he is treated poorly by Shylock and feels hatred towards Jews.
La. A2S2	<i>Give him a present? Give him a halter!</i>	Intolerance	Hyperbole Anaphora	Lancelot suggests that Shylock should get a noose as a present to hang himself with showing his hatred towards Shylock.
Gr. A2S2	<i>Use all the observance of civility/Like one well studied in a sad ostent</i>	Friendship Control	Theme: Appearance vs Reality	Gratiano will appear to be civil and obedient on the outside, to help Bassanio woo Portia.
Je. A2S3	<i>Our house is hell, and thou a merry devil</i>	Inference	Hyperbole Allusion (Biblical)	Jessica refers to her own home as like hell and uses alliteration to

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			Irony Alliteration	demonstrate how much she despises her own father.
La. A2S3	<i>Most beautiful pagan, most sweet Jew</i>	Inference Friendship	Oxymoron	Lancelot puts two opposite words together 'pagan' and 'beautiful', as in Elizabethan times they believed that non-Christians couldn't hold any desirable virtues.
Lo. A2S4	<i>What page's suit she hath in readiness</i>	Agency	Theme: Appearance vs Reality	Lorenzo infers that only through cross-dressing can Jessica gain agency and control over her own life away from Shylock.
Sh. A2S5	<i>The prodigal Christian. Jessica my girl.</i>	Control	Possessive pronoun Zeugma (multiple meanings)	Shylock refers to Jessica as one of his possessions showing how he counts Jessica as part of his material wealth. Then he uses 'prodigal' to refer to wasteful and to the story of the Prodigal son – inferring that Christians are lost.
Sh. A2S5	<i>Do as I bid you; shut doors after you:/Fast bind,fast find;</i>	Control	Rhyming Anaphora	Foreshadows how Jessica will disobey him through his cruel punishment. Also, shows his unsentimental nature he can quickly replace his losses with his wealth.
Je. A2S6	<i>Cupid himself would blush/ To see me thus transformed to a boy.</i>	Agency	Allusion (Greek myths)	Jessica refers to how perfect her disguise is at fooling even gods, demonstrating how increased her agency is after dressing as a man.
Mor. A2S7	<i>All the world desires her./From the four corners of the earth they come.</i>	Control	Hyperbole	The prince overestimates how much the world desires Portia, which the prince of Aragon pointed out included beggars and peasants.
Mor. A2S7	<i>Then farewell heat, and welcome frost.</i>	Agency	Juxtaposition	The reality of his situation has set in, and he contrast his pleasant 'warm' life with his cold, dark new life.
So. A2S8	<i>As the dog Jew did utter in the streets./ "My daughter, O my ducats, O my daughter!/"Fled with a Christian!...Justice! Find the girl!</i>	Control Justice	Repetition Possessive pronoun	Shylock feels ownership and control over his goods (his money and his daughter). He laments their loss and asks for justice in a Christian society.
Po. A2S9	<i>Hazard for my worthless self</i>	Agency Control	Hyperbole	Portia exclaims she is worthless, which is not the case as half the world is trying to win her hand! She worries as without agency she cannot control who she's with. So, it may as well be a game of chance.
Act 3				
So. A3S1	<i>Let me say "amen" betimes, lest the devil/cross my prayer, for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew.</i>	Intolerance	Allusion (Biblical)	Solanio thinks that he needs to pray before encountering Shylock as he is the conjuring of the devil. He also thinks that it is serious enough to change his habits around him.
Sh. A3S1	<i>a beggar that was used to come so smug/upon the mart! Let him look to his bond.</i>	Intolerance	Repetition	Shylock is 'cackling' with his thoughts of revenge with his ability to take advantage of Antonio's bond and be able to swipe the smile off his face.
Sh. A3S1	<i>if it will feed nothing else,/it will feed my revenge.</i>	Revenge	Personification	Shylock starts to dream of the revenge and how he will feed the Christian flesh to fishes. This demonstrates his lust for revenge.
Sh. A3S1	<i>I am a Jew. Hath not/a Jew eyes?</i>	Intolerance	Rhetorical question	Shylock goes into his famous speech trying to make the audience feel sympathy for him, by pitting the individual (Shylock) versus the collective (Christians).
Sh. A3S1	<i>The villainy you teach me I/will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the/instruction.</i>	Revenge	Repetition High modality	Shylock wants to follow the Christian example of villainy to get revenge on his persecutors and

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				this is shown through the high modality of 'shall'.
Sh. A3S1	<i>I would my daughter were dead at my foot.</i>	Revenge	Hyperbole	Shylock demonstrates his pure hatred for his daughter and how he hates her conversion to the hated religion: Christianity. It demonstrates the pain he feels at the loss of his possessions (his wealth and his daughter).
Po. A3S2	<i>I am locked in one of them./If you do love me, you will find me out.</i>	Agency	Metaphor	Portia is symbolised to be locked in the casket, demonstrates how she is chained to her dead father's will. Yet, the last line hints at a change of perspective, with her realising that her father planned it so the most worthy man would marry her.
Ba. A3S2	<i>The seeming truth which cunning times put on/To entrap the wisest.</i>	Agency	Theme: Appearance vs Reality	Bassanio realises that people can appear to be happy and trustworthy, but just like the caskets you have to understand their deeper meaning. He hints with Shylock having a deeper longing for 'cunning' revenge.
Po. A3S2	<i>Commits itself to yours to be directed/As from her lord, her governor, her king.</i>	Agency	Poetic triplet	Portia gives all her agency, power and wealth to Bassanio, her new husband. This is the transfer of 'ownership' of Portia from her dead father to Bassanio.
Ba. A3S2	<i>then parts life from hence./O, then be bold to say Bassanio's dead!</i>	Friendship	Dramatic irony	The audience knows the fallibility of men, as setup through Shylock's madness and the unvirtuous suitors. We know this is hyperbole for Bassanio to rather die than give up the ring.
Po. A3S2	<i>What, no more?/Pay him six thousand and deface the bond./Double six thousand and then treble that,</i>	Friendship	Anaphora	Portia shows little regard for money, instead she cares more about stabilising and maintaining her husband's friendships, especially with a close friend like Antonio.
An. A3S2	<i>my estate is very low, my bond to/the Jew is forfeit, and since in paying it, it is impossible/I should live, all debts are cleared between you and I</i>	Friendship	Theme: Friendship vs Wealth	Antonio realises that his life has gone after he cannot pay the bond, this letter is filled with a tone of anguish and sorrow, as Antonio realises that he is no dead. Yet, he never blames Bassanio instead implores him as a friend to be by his side.
Sh. A3S3	<i>But since I am a dog, beware my fangs.</i>	Revenge	Metaphor Irony	Shylock twists the dog imagery of Jews, to demonstrate how he will take his revenge through very damaging means (taking a pound of flesh) with his fangs (his knife).
An. A3S3	<i>The Duke cannot deny the course of law,/ Will much impeach the justice of the state,</i>	Control	Legal imagery	Antonio realises and is resigned to his fate, he will lose a pound of flesh at the hands of the Venetian legal system otherwise the system will seem to be weak.
Po. A3S4	<i>Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint lies</i>	Agency	Simile	This is Portia's view of men, as laughing and bragging beings. She feels she can easily fit into this culture; she infers that all men tell lies, and her lie will be of her gender.
Je. A3S5	<i>I shall be saved by my husband. He hath made me a Christian.</i>	Control	Possessive Biblical imagery	Jessica now feels saved after her husband converted her to Christianity, there is an idea of a woman being represented as an object, and how she has been shaped into a Christian.

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Act 4				
Du. A4S1	Uncapable of pity, void and empty/From any dram of mercy.	Intolerance	Metaphor	The Duke feels like Shylock is like a bucket empty of an remorse, mercy or pity for his action to take a pound of Antonio's flesh. The listing of all of Shylock's 'empty' properties, demonstrates how everyone feels he is being unreasonable and stubborn.
			Cumulative listing (of emptiness)	
Sh. A4S1	More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing	Intolerance	Exclamation (comparative)	Shylock demonstrates his severe hatred towards Christians, and how he has very strong emotions towards them with transcends a certain reason.
Du. A4S1	How shalt thou hope for mercy, rend'ring none?	Mercy/Justice	Rhetorical question	The Duke asks Shylock how he can ask for mercy in your decision when you give no mercy towards Antonio.
Sh. A4S1	I stand for judgment. Answer: shall I have it?	Mercy/Justice	Rhetorical question	Shylock asks for judgement and asks the court if he will have his twisted justice, the justice of killing another man.
Gr. A4S1	Infused itself in thee, for thy desires/Are wolfish, bloody, starved, and ravenous.	Intolerance	Metaphor	Gratiano uses an extended wolf metaphor to refer to Shylock, demonstrating that instead of showing mercy or patience he is more like an animal in his 'terrible' desires.
			Dog imagery	
StDi. A4S1	Enter Portia [disguised as Doctor Balthazar, followed by officials]	Agency	Stage direction	Portia has to disguise herself as a lawyer to be able to have authority and power in this patriarchal and male-centric environment, allowing her to argue and demonstrate her intellect.
Po. A4S1	But mercy is above this sceptered sway. ... It is an attribute to God Himself;	Mercy/Justice	Biblical/king allusion	Portia describes mercy as being a trait above any earthly or temporary power, instead it an attribute of God. Therefore, it is a <i>clearly</i> Christian attribute, which Shylock couldn't ever be expected to do.
		Intolerance		
Sh. A4S1	I crave the law,/The penalty and forfeit of my bond.	Mercy/Justice	Irony	Shylock longs for the Christian law to provide him 'justice' for his act against Antonio, he wants to enact the penalty of the bond and be able to enact revenge on Antonio. It could be argued that this is hyperbole, as Shylock has decried the Christian Venetian state before.
An. A4S1	And when the tale is told, bid her be judge	Mercy/Justice	Dramatic irony	We the audience know that Portia is currently the one judging Antonio know, he wants Portia to judge him as he sees her as honourable and fair (even when Portia is delivering a harsh punishment on Antonio currently).
Ba. A4S1	I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all/Here to this devil, to deliver you.	Friendship	Dramatic irony	Bassaino would lose all for Antonio, even his wealth and his wife (who is currently present). Shows the value of friendship and connection over any money.
			Hyperbole	
Po. A4S1	One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods/Are by the laws of Venice confiscate/Unto the state of Venice.	Mercy/Justice	Imagery	Portia values Christian 'justice' for Shylock, this is the climax of the play when Shylock is placed in an impossible decision either do nothing or lose all his wealth for a pound of flesh.
		Intolerance		
Po. A4S1	Thou shalt have justice more than thou desir'st.	Mercy/Justice	Paradox	Portia gave Shylock more justice than he desires, for someone who's being crying out for justice he gets justice – just not the type he wants. This is a paradox as the
		Intolerance		

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				justice he receives his not one of revenge but one of punishment.
Po. A4S1	Tarry, Jew./The law hath yet another hold on you.	Mercy/Justice	Legal allusion	Portia refers to how the law will now continue to have grip on Shylock's life. It will deprive him of all his wealth, his religion and it will strip him of his very identity. This is an example of Christian hypocrisy as they give a very non-Christian version of mercy by taking away Shylock's life just because of racism.
Po. A4S1	Art thou contented, Jew? What dost thou say?	Mercy/Justice	Irony	Portia asks if Shylock is content with the terrible terms of indictment, she uses a cruel and sarcastic tone to bring about his downfall. Showing none of the Christian mercy.
Ba. A4S1	she made me vow/That I should neither sell nor give nor lose it.	Friendship (Love)	Imagery Cumulative listing	Bassanio describes how his wife made him swear to never part with his ring, otherwise she would think he was being disloyal. Portia is trying to test his faith and loyalty to her, for comic effect.
Act 5				
Lo. A5S1	And his affections dark as Erebus./Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.	Friendship	Musical imagery	Lorenzo ends off his whole speech about the power of music saying that those with no inner music (no inner peace, connection to God and the like) cannot be trusted. Another reference to Shylock.
Po. A5S1	How far that little candle throws his beams!/So shines a good deed in a naughty world.	Agency	Metaphor	Portia describes her own act of justice as a good deed in a bad world. The candle imagery demonstrates the profound effect that a small mercy can have on everyone else, how 'mercy' can be in a bad world.
Ne. A5S1	Ay, if a woman live to be a man.	Agency	Paradox	The feat that Nerissa describes makes no logical sense, like how it is highly doubtful that the husband could not see their own wives. Yet, it shows a woman who feels agency in the position of a man and how she uses it over her husband.
Po. A5S1	There you shall find that Portia was the doctor,/Nerissa there, her clerk.	Agency	Listing	Portia does the grand reveal of her and Nerissa's grand plot to test their husband and save Antonio. This shows agency in the fact that they were able to accomplish a lot without their husband's consent or even knowledge.
Po. A5S1	There you shall find three of your argosies/Are richly come to harbor suddenly.	Friendship	Listing Wealth imagery	Portia gives Antonio a lifeline, his wealth and his happiness are now back. Tied into the start of the play. It also hints at a supernatural element with miraculous and 'sudden' appearing of the fully laden ships.
An. A5S1	I am dumb.	Inference	Truncated sentence	Antonio is just in a state of shock, his lifeblood is back. He has gained back all his lost words, and he feels like he is in a grand plot or play, that it has just gone a bit too well.
An. A5S1	Sweet lady, you have given me life and living;	Inference	Symbol: wealth Metaphor Hyperbole	Antonio expresses how grateful he is to this news. He has literally gained back his life both from Shylock and at the hands of his debts. He now feels accomplished and satisfied. He exaggerates how he has gained his life back from the dead.