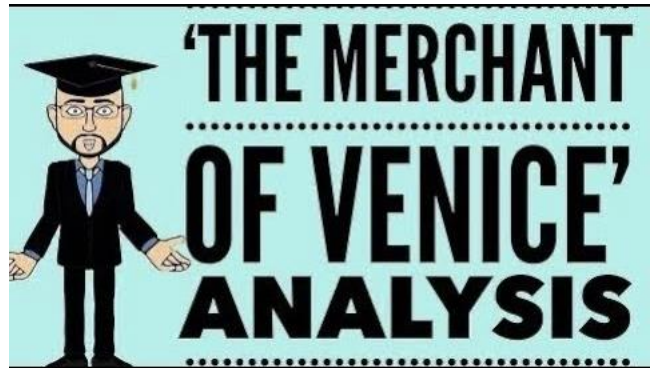


## 'The Merchant of Venice' Act 1, Scene 1

Based on the video: <https://youtu.be/QWBQw3djc8I>  
Alternatively, search YouTube for 'The Merchant of Venice Act 1, Scene 1 updated analysis – Mr Bruff'



### QUESTIONS:

1. In the beginning of the play, what is Antonio's mood and how is it reflected in the rhythm of his lines?
2. What is the significance of Antonio and Bassanio speaking in blank verse?
3. How does Shakespeare use Salarino and Salanio to foreshadow events related to Antonio's wealth?
4. What does Bassanio's description of Portia reveal about his motivations?
5. How does the 'golden fleece' simile portray Portia in Bassanio's eyes?
6. What is the significance of the shared line between Antonio and Bassanio in the scene?
7. How does the use of the rhyming couplet at the end of the scene signal to the audience that the scene is ending?
8. How did Shakespeare change the source material from Fiorentino's novella 'Il Pecorone' and what might be the reason for the change?
9. In the context of Antonio's sadness, how does the play's portrayal of melancholy relate to the cultural and social norms of the Elizabethan era?

### EXTENSION QUESTION:

- a) How does this scene establish the differences between romantic and platonic (non romantic) relationships?

### EXAM QUESTION: (based on the extract on the next page):

Starting with this conversation from Act 1, Scene 1, where Antonio expresses his sadness to his friends Salarino and Solanio, explore how Shakespeare presents friendship. Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents friendship in this extract
- how Shakespeare presents friendship in the play as a whole

**ANTONIO**

In sooth, I know not why I am so sad:  
It wearies me; you say it wearies you;  
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,  
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,  
I am to learn;  
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,  
That I have much ado to know myself.

**SALARINO**

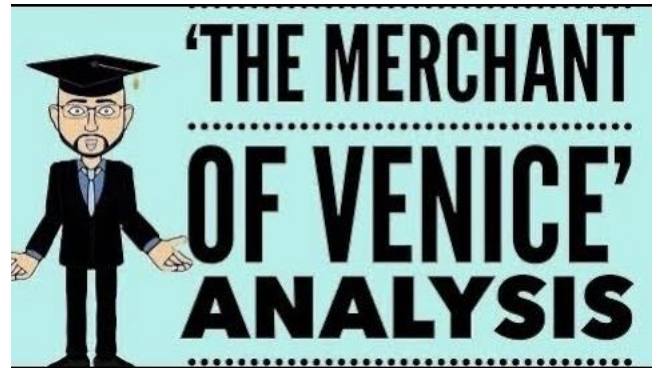
Your mind is tossing on the ocean;  
There, where your argosies with portly sail,  
Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,  
Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea,  
Do overpeer the petty traffickers,  
That curtsy to them, do them reverence,  
As they fly by them with their woven wings.

**SALANIO**

Believe me, sir, had I such venture forth,  
The better part of my affections would  
Be with my hopes abroad. I should be still  
Plucking the grass, to know where sits the wind,  
Peering in maps for ports and piers and roads;  
And every object that might make me fear  
Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt  
Would make me sad.

## 'The Merchant of Venice' Act 1, Scene 2

Based on the video: [https://youtu.be/PjEqRuc-C\\_U](https://youtu.be/PjEqRuc-C_U)  
Alternatively, search YouTube for 'The Merchant of Venice Act 1, Scene 2 updated analysis – Mr Bruff'



### QUESTIONS:

1. What is the significance of Portia speaking in prose instead of blank verse in Act 1, Scene 2?
2. How does Shakespeare use alternating structure to maintain audience engagement and heighten tension in the play?
3. What is the purpose of juxtaposing Antonio's and Portia's sadness in the opening lines of the first two scenes?
4. How does Shakespeare use Portia's wit and humour to foreshadow her role in the court scene later in the play?
5. How does Portia's father's will challenge the expectations of an Elizabethan audience in regard to arranged marriages?
6. What factors from historical context explain why Portia does not disregard her father's will?
7. How does the Elizabethan education system contribute to Portia's limited options in life?
8. How does Portia's conversation with Nerissa about Bassanio foreshadow the outcome of the play?
9. What are the implications of the word 'obtainyng' used in the First Quarto's description of the play in relation to Portia's role?

### EXTENSION QUESTION:

- A) Analyse the role of comedy in Act 1, Scene 2, and how it contributes to the development of Portia's character and the overall themes of 'The Merchant of Venice'.

### EXAM QUESTION (based on the extract on the next page):

Starting with this conversation from Act 1, Scene 2, where Portia and Nerissa discuss the suitors and the casket test, Explore how Shakespeare presents the relationship between Portia and Nerissa. Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents their relationship in this extract

- how Shakespeare presents their relationship in the play as a whole

**PORTIA**

By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world.

**NERISSA**

You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are: and yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing. It is no mean happiness therefore, to be seated in the mean: superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lives longer.

**PORTIA**

Good sentences and well pronounced.

**NERISSA**

They would be better, if well followed.

**PORTIA**

If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree: such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple. But this reasoning is not in the fashion to choose me a husband. O me, the word 'choose!' I may neither choose whom I would nor refuse whom I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one nor refuse none?

**NERISSA**

Your father was ever virtuous; and holy men at their death have good inspirations: therefore the lottery, that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver and lead, whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you, will, no doubt, never be chosen by any rightly but one who shall rightly love. But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

**PORTIA**

I pray thee, over-name them; and as thou namest them, I will describe them; and, according to my description, level at my affection.

\*Note: further worksheets will be added to this document as future YouTube analysis videos are uploaded.