



Director's Paper: Shylock Through the Eyes of. . .

The scene is set: You are directing a production of *The Merchant of Venice*. As the director, there are many interpretations, factors, and questions for you to consider. You may consider setting, costumes, language, and acting styles.

The first – and most critical – decision is who your audience is and *how you want your audience to perceive Shylock, based on a correct understanding of that society's ideas about "the other", especially Jews*. This decision will be the driving force (thesis, in a sense) behind all the other decisions you make about your production. Next, consider the **options** below (listed as 1-3), choose the one most intriguing to you, and decide how you would represent this aspect of the play. Be sure to include important examples from the play to support your decision – one quotation is required; more are optional. Be sure to defend your position with logic and reasoning. As you make your selections, remember to think about your audience. How can you accomplish your goals by making specific choices in your production?

Essay Requirements:

- Describe your audience. Are you presenting the play to a modern or historical audience? How much anti-Semitism is present in your audience (this is where your research will be vital)? Will your audience mainly be comprised of people of a certain age? Where are they seated? Is your production a movie or a play, or something else altogether?
- Describe the setting (time, place), the general characteristics (dress, mannerisms, appearance, speech, costume) of at least one character. You *may wish* to describe lighting, backdrops, music, etc. All this can be done in one paragraph, or you may address these items throughout the essay. Remember, for this assignment you have license to be creative with the setting and costumes, as well as scene selections. Still, you must be true to the text, and keep your details focused on your "thesis".
- You must describe your intentions in regards to Shylock. Do you want your audience to perceive him as a helpless victim of prejudice or as an avaricious, vengeful miser? Do you want them to feel sympathy for him or hatred toward him? Whatever you decide, **all other decisions must further this point.**

Options: Choose One

Address ONE of the following questions in your essay.

1. How would you portray Shylock? Would he be especially obvious or understated? How would you portray his connections to Tubal and other Jews? Explain how this choice influences the way your audience perceives Shylock.
2. How would you portray Antonio? How would you physically depict him and why? Explain how this choice influences the way your audience perceives Shylock.



3. To what extent is Jessica involved? What are her intentions with the ring/monkey incident? Is there any tenderness in her relationship with her father? How do these aspects affect the way your audience perceives Shylock?