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❁ ACT 1 ❁

PRE-GRAMMAR | Preparation

Prepare the student for understanding the Central One Idea by drawing upon his or her prior knowledge or experience.

1. In one or two sentences, give a synopsis of "Little Red Riding Hood."
2. Though the story seems fantastic on some level, what truth about life does the tale communicate?

GRAMMAR | Presentation

The student is presented with and discovers essential facts, elements, and features of the play.

READING NOTES

1. **Antonio** – a merchant of Venice; friend of Bassanio
2. **Bassanio** – an Italian lord; suitor to Portia
3. **Salerio, Solanio, Lorenzo, Gratiano** – all are gentlemen of Venice; friends of Bassanio
4. **Portia** – a rich Italian lady
5. **Nerissa** – lady-in-waiting to Portia
6. **Shylock** – a wealthy Jewish man; a moneylender
7. **simile** – a figure of speech comparing two unlike things using "like" or "as"
8. **setting** – the time and place in which a story takes place
9. **conflict** – the established problem that gives rise to dramatic action in a drama or fiction
10. **plot** – the series of events in a literary work
11. **sub-plot** – a secondary story line in a literary work
12. **prose** – writing that corresponds closely to the patterns of everyday speech and that is distinctly not poetic verse
13. **character** – an artistically rendered person of a literary work

14. **pun** – a play on words
15. **metaphor** – a comparison of two terms that uses neither "like" nor "as"
Ex: My daughter is an angel.

WORDS TO BE DEFINED

Definitions Bank	
accusation	inferior dog
carelessly spending money	journey
a charge for borrowed money	language intended to encourage
a depression of spirits; gloominess	massive building
former European gold coins	to reject with disdain
free	to repay; to offer in return
gladness or gaiety	risk
	trouble

1. I have much **ado** to know myself (1.1.7)
2. And see the holy **edifice** of stone (1.1.30)
3. With **mirth** and laughter let old wrinkles come (1.1.80)
4. But fish not with this **melancholy** bait (1.1.101)
5. I'll end my **exhortation** after dinner (1.1.104)
6. you swore a secret **pilgrimage** (1.1.120)
7. Wherein my time something too **prodigal** (1.1.129)
8. Or bring your latter **hazard** back again (1.1.151)
9. if he love me to madness, I shall never **requite** him (1.2.65)
10. Three thousand **ducats** for three months (1.3.9)
11. Have you heard any **imputation** to the contrary? (1.3.13)
12. He lends out money **gratis** (1.3.44)
13. [Antonio] brings down the rate of **usance** ... in Venice (1.3.45)
14. And foot me as you **spurn** a stranger cur (1.3.118)
15. And foot me as you spurn a stranger **cur** (1.3.118)



Read Act 1, marking the text in key places according to the method taught in "How to Mark a Book."

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Act 1, scene 1

1. How do Salerio and Solanio explain Antonio's melancholy state?
2. Why do Salerio and Solanio leave Antonio?
3. Describe Bassanio's financial condition and how it came to be.
4. Why does Bassanio want to borrow again from Antonio?
5. How does Antonio respond to Bassanio's plan?

Act 1, scene 2

6. Why is Portia upset about choosing a husband? Explain the test devised by her deceased father.
7. Who are the suitors Nerissa names, and, in a sentence, what does Portia conclude about each man?
8. What do readers learn about Bassanio when Nerissa speaks about him to Portia?

Act 1, scene 3

9. What does Bassanio ask of Shylock?
10. Explain why Shylock feels justified in disliking Antonio.
11. Antonio reiterates that he does not pay interest when he borrows or charge interest when he lends, but he will break with his own policy on this occasion? Why?
12. When asked what the terms will be on Bassanio's loan, what does Shylock say?
13. Bassanio does not want Antonio to commit to the loan. Why does Antonio accept the terms despite Bassanio's hesitation?

LOGIC | Dialectic

The student reasons with the facts, elements, and features of the play; sorts, arranges, compares, and connects ideas – and begins to uncover and determine the Central One Idea.

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

May be verbally discussed or answered in written form in your Literature Notebook.

1. What is the point of Gratiano's pond and fishing **metaphors** (1.1.79-104)?
2. What is the **simile** Bassanio uses to comment upon Gratiano's dialogue in 1.1.116? The simile makes what point about this garrulous character?
3. Does Bassanio love Portia? Use specific lines from the play to support your opinion thus far.
4. Identify the two **settings** established by Act 1, and the conflict established for each setting.
5. The primary tool of Shakespeare's art is words! Using **puns**, he is able to take a single word and employ its multiple definitions. Puns create a surplus of meaning that can be directed toward deepening our understanding of a moment within a scene. Consider the pun with the word *kind/kindness* that begins on 1.3.142 (the term is used at least four subsequent times). How do the meanings of "kind" and "kindness" (generosity/natural inclination; type) shed light on the interaction between Shylock and Antonio?
6. Should readers rely on Nerissa's good opinion of Bassanio?

RHETORIC | Expression

The student expresses in his or her own words the Central One Idea with supporting details.

RHETORICAL EXPRESSION:

To be answered in your Literature Notebook in preparation for your essay.

1. In a few sentences or a short paragraph, **summarize** each scene in Act 1.
2. Write the **Central One Idea** of Act 1 in a precise, eloquent sentence.
3. List two or three points that **support** your determination of the Central One Idea for Act 1.
4. Act 1 introduces many characters. Thus far, what do you think of each **character**? List two or three features from Act 1 that helped you to draw your first impression of Antonio, Portia, and Shylock.
5. Write a **lead** (1-2 sentences) that grabs the reader's attention—such as a *quote, question, startling fact or statistic, scenario, piece of dialogue*, etc.
6. Write an **amplification/importance** (1-2 sentences) that explains why your thesis is important in a larger or more universal sense.

◆ **Central Quote:** Choose a quote from anywhere in Act 1 that you think best embodies the Central One Idea and copy it down.

① **Write the Central One Idea as expressed by the teacher.**

ESSAY OPTION

Choose a topic below and respond with a 3-paragraph essay that includes an Introduction with a clear thesis; a Body with organized, logical, and specific support of the thesis; and a Conclusion that discusses the significance of the thesis.

The essay should feature appropriate tone, voice, and point of view; correct grammar, usage, and mechanics; a variety of sentence structures enhanced by subordination and parallelism; a balance of general and specific detail; and enhanced rhetorical effect through transition words, appropriate diction, strong verbs, descriptive adjectives, and other rhetorical devices.

Note: Some of these prompts tend toward a shorter essay, and some toward a longer. Check with your teacher to see what length he or she suggests. Both short essays (1 page) and long essays (2-4 pages) are useful and helpful, depending on the intent and purpose.

1. One of the primary sources from which Shakespeare drew inspiration for this play was a fairy tale. Write a 3-paragraph essay where you explain how *The Merchant of Venice* is like a fairy tale in this first act.
2. During Shakespeare's time, few Jewish people lived in London, and the majority of theater-goers would not have known anyone from the Jewish faith. Write a 3-paragraph essay about how Shylock's character embodies the stereotype of a Jewish person.
3. Bassanio compares himself to the prodigal son. Write a 3-paragraph essay about the **character** of Bassanio that uses support from the first act to illustrate the accuracy of the comparison.
4. Which **plot** do you find most compelling, the main plot that takes place in Venice or the sub-plot in Belmont? Support your thesis with thoughtful reasons for your preference in a 3-paragraph response essay.
5. [Teacher] Essay prompt.