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## PRE-GRAMMAR | Presentation

1. Little Red Riding Hood disregards her mother's advice to hurry straightaway to Grandmother's. Instead she visits with a wolf, who discovers her destination, runs ahead of Red, and disguises himself as Grandma. Dressed in Grandma's bed clothes and lying in her bed, the wolf gobbles up Little Red Riding Hood upon her arrival.
2. Do not talk with strangers OR Always listen to your parents: they know best!

# 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

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

### WORDS TO BE DEFINED

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

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. The gentlemen assume Antonio worries about the welfare of his ships at sea (1.1.15-40). When Antonio rejects their assumptions, Solanio wonders if Antonio is in love (1.1.46).
2. Salerio and Solanio leave when Antonio's closest friend, Bassanio, arrives (1.1.57-59).
3. Bassanio admits to economic distress. He has lived lavishly without the means to support his lifestyle. He refers to his lifestyle as "prodigal," a Biblical allusion to the prodigal son. He speaks all this to Antonio because they are good friends and because Bassanio has already borrowed a sum of money from Antonio. (1.1.122-134)
4. Now Bassanio is in love and believes he may have a chance to win Portia's heart. Courtship, however, requires money. Bassanio needs a loan so that he may follow his heart. (1.1.161-176)
5. Antonio tells his friend that his money is tied up at sea, but Bassanio may go into Venice and use his name as a guarantee on a loan. Antonio will also seek a loan for his friend.
6. Because of the "casket test" devised by her deceased father, Portia is upset about the possibility of ending up with a husband she would not choose. She cannot pick who she wants, nor can she decline someone she would not love. Her father's test requires the suitor to choose amongst three caskets: one of gold, one of silver, and one of lead.
7.
  - a. The Neapolitan prince is obsessed with horsemanship.
  - b. Count Palatine displays an "unmannerly sadness."
  - c. Monsieur Le Bon imitates everyone and seems to lack his own personality.
  - d. Falconbridge has no class. He has no command of language and poor taste in dress.
  - e. The Scottish lord lacks common sense.
  - f. The Duke of Saxony is a drunk.(1.2.40-91)
8. Nerissa calls Bassanio "a scholar and soldier" and declares he is the only man her eyes have looked upon that is deserving of Portia. (1.2.112-114 and 1.2.117-119)
9. Bassanio asks to borrow 3,000 ducats and wants three months to repay the loan.
10. At first Shylocks says he hates Antonio because he is a Christian. Then he says that what he dislikes more than Antonio's Christianity is Antonio's policy not to charge interest on loans. Antonio not charging for loans drives down the interest Shylock can charge when he lends money. Shylock then elaborates on his first grudge against the merchant: Antonio hates Jewish people and he speaks unkindly about Shylock to the other merchants. Shylock says forgiving Antonio would be a betrayal of the Jewish nation. (1.3.42-51)
11. Because he so values their friendship, Antonio is willing to pay interest in order to help Bassanio. (1.3.61-64)
12. Shylock claims he would like to be friends and forget the past, "supply your present wants, and take no doit" (1.3.140), but if the loan is not paid, the balance must be paid by an equal amount of flesh (1.3.149-150).



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?

In lines 1.1.161-176, Bassanio speaks highly of Portia. She is "richly left" and she is beautiful, but "*fairer than that word, /Of wondrous virtues*" (1.1.162-163). He acknowledges her beauty but more importantly that her beauty is her inner virtue.

\*Students may have differing opinions, but they need to use what the play has presented thus far in order to support their conclusions.

4. The main plot is set in Venice. Bassanio is in debt but would like the means to court a virtuous lady, so he asks his friend, Antonio, for another loan. This second loan puts Antonio's life in danger. Belmont, a fictional place out in the country, is the setting for the sub-plot. Eligible bachelors flock to Portia. Any man wanting to wed her must adhere to the wishes of her deceased father by selecting one of three caskets.
5. The two definitions of "kind," considered interchangeably at the end of scene 3, suggest each man wonders of what the other is capable. Is kindness an option, or does a "natural inclination" (whatever pre-conceived notion that may be) determine character?
6. Though the two ladies enjoy some humorous "girl talk," Nerissa presents herself in scene 2 as a motherly or wise figure in Portia's life. When Portia complains she is tired of the world, Nerissa reminds her that she would have a right to complain if the many blessings in her life were hardships instead (1.2.3-5). She defends Portia's father's character and claims his casket test will result in a man who will love her rightly and deserve her love in return (1.2.27-33).

Because of the wisdom and friendship expressed by Nerissa throughout scene 2, Nerissa's claim that Bassanio is "*the best deserving a fair lady*" (1.2.118-119) is worth noting.

13. Antonio is certain of his investments. He expects to earn three times the loan within two months, a full month before the 3,000 ducats must be repaid. (1.3.156-159)

### SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Gratiano encourages Antonio to cheer up and interact with the people around him. Just as standing water allows for the buildup of scum and algae, so, too, a man with limited human interaction becomes stagnant. In his chatty way, Gratiano prattles on to say some men are purposely reticent because they want to be thought of as intelligent. These folks are wise to stay quiet because when they do speak up, their thoughts tend to be foolish. Gratiano concludes Antonio should stop "fishing" for attention. He calls himself a fish that is easily caught, which means he sees himself as too willing to pay attention to Antonio's melancholy.
2. Finding logic or wisdom in Gratiano's conversation is like hunting for grains of wheat amongst chaff: it takes all day to find the two grains and they end up not being worth the search.
3. Bassanio says his chief concern is paying off his debt (1.1.127-128) but because he would like to court a woman (Portia), he now needs a second loan. It seems that if Bassanio did not love Portia, he would not be asking for more money.

## RHETORICAL EXPRESSION

1. **Scene 1:** The titular merchant of Venice, Antonio, conveys his melancholy state to his friends Salerio and Solanio. They assume that he is worried about the welfare of his ships at sea. But since Antonio denies this, they think he might be in love. Antonio's best friend, Bassanio, arrives and the others leave. In their conversation, Bassanio reveals his great economic stress and debt. Though he has already borrowed money from Antonio, he wants to borrow more from him. Bassanio is in love with the wealthy Portia, and he wants to be a suitor for her, which will take great sums of money. Antonio explains that his money is tied up at sea, but he suggests Bassanio go into Venice and use his good name as a guarantee on a loan.

**Scene 2:** Portia and her confidante, Nerissa, discuss Portia's concern over her suitors for marriage. Portia is upset because she feels that the casket test will force her to choose a husband whom she does not want to marry, or should not marry. But she knows she must because she gave her word of promise to her late father's wishes. To encourage her, Nerissa names the suitors who have come to Belmont so that Portia can review who might be a good match. This does not work though, as Portia dismisses each one for a particular fault or vice. Then Nerissa reminds her of a gentleman who came to Belmont named Bassanio, "a Venetian, a scholar, and a soldier." Portia remembers him and praises him: "He, of all the men that ever my foolish eyes looked upon, was the best deserving of a fair lady."

**Scene 3:** Bassanio looks for the Jewish moneylender, Shylock, and asks him for a loan of 3,000 ducats, on the good credit of Antonio. Shylock is reluctant to lend the money because he dislikes Antonio—primarily because Antonio is a Christian who loans money without charging interest, and because Antonio publicly condemns Shylock for charging so much interest in his lending. Finally Shylock agrees to lend the money. But will this be a loan without interest "among friends," like Antonio's usual loan, or will it be one with interest, like Shylock's usual loan? This becomes the content of their discussion. Unexpectedly, Shylock announces that he wants Antonio's friendship, and so specifies a "friendship" kind of loan without interest. He does, however, add a penalty clause: if Bassanio does not repay the money within three months, Shylock will retain the right to cut a pound of flesh from any part of Antonio's body. Though Shylock maintains that the penalty is merely a jest, Bassanio has misgivings about it. Antonio believes that it will be no problem to pay Shylock back because one of his ships will surely return.

2. Answers will vary.

3. Supports for Central One Idea (as expressed by the teacher):

- Although Bassanio already owes Antonio money, Antonio does not hold it against him. Antonio offers him even more money out of his faithful love and support for him.
- Antonio offers his reputation and even his life (a pound of flesh) for his friend Bassanio and his happiness.

## 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.

📌 **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.



4. (Answers will vary. Here are some examples.)

**Antonio** is a loyal, loving friend.

- He offers to loan Bassanio more money, even though Bassanio already owes him money.
- He is willing to give his name and reputation for Bassanio so that Bassanio can acquire the funds to pursue Portia. Moreover, for the first time, he is willing to take out a loan with interest for him, and he even offers a pound of his own flesh for his friend!

**Portia** is intelligent, thoughtful, and virtuous.

- Nerissa says that Portia's father was virtuous and holy (1.2.27-28), and Portia surely bears his influence in her life. Though personally opposed, she is committed to honoring her father's dying wish that she choose the suitor who picks the right casket.
- Portia wants to marry the right person for love—not for a suitor's wealth, power, or status, or for the mere chance involved in the casket game.

**Shylock** is an intelligent, cunning businessman.

- He has built up great wealth through his moneylending practices.
- He seems "up to something" and cunning when he forfeits requiring interest on his loan to Bassanio, but then adds a special "penalty clause" of a pound of flesh to the loan.

5. Answers will vary.

6. Answers will vary.

◆ **Central Quote:** Answers will vary. Here is an example:

Antonio. "I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it; / And if it stand, as you yourself still do, / Within the eye of honor, be assured / My purse, my person, my extremest means / Lie all unlocked to your occasions."  
(1.1.135-139)

- 1 There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for a friend.