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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. *The Merchant of Venice* was first registered in the year ____________.

2. Inspiration for *The Merchant of Venice* may in part be the executions of two men by the names of ___________________________________ and ___________________________________.

3. The former (the gentleman mentioned first in the above sentence) was Queen Elizabeth’s __________________________ and the latter was a Jesuit priest and _____________________________.

4. The writing of this play took place during a time of anti-semitism. During this time of anti-semitism, Shakespeare’s contemporary, ____________________________________, wrote a play called ____________________________, which packed the play house.

5. Shakespeare’s company of actors was called ______________________________________________.

6. The “shadow of Southwell” in this play are the many allusions to Southwell’s ____________________________, which Shakespeare must have known rather well.

7. Shakespeare borrowed plot for *The Merchant of Venice* from the following three texts:

   a. ______________________________________________________________________________________

   b. ______________________________________________________________________________________

   c. ______________________________________________________________________________________

8. The three main events of plot are the test of the ____________________, the test of the ________________ , and the test of the ____________________.

9. The moral concerns of this play focus on ____________________ and ____________________.

10. The author of the essay argues against focusing on ________________________________ because the play’s pivotal moments do not greatly hinge upon Shylock.
11. According to Pearce, Shakespeare saw his play as “a work overflowing with ______________________________ (p. xix).”

12. ____________________ is generally accepted as the heroine of the play rather than the drama’s eponymous character, Antonio.

13. Belmont literally means “_____________________________.”

14. Belmont offers a __________________ from which to view the world, whereas Venice is the “gutter” of vice.

15. Portia speaks about ____________________________ in contrast with unruly ____________________________, whereas Bassanio acts virtuously by selecting the ________________ casket of poverty rather than the gold and silver caskets of worldly riches.
ACT 1
PRE-GRAMMAR | Preparation

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

1. In one or two sentences, give a synopsis of “Little Red Riding Hood.”

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2. Though the story seems fantastic on some level, what truth about life does the tale communicate?

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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.*
### Definitions Bank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accusation</td>
<td>carelessly spending money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free</td>
<td>a charge for borrowed money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gladness or gaiety</td>
<td>inferior dog</td>
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<tr>
<td>inferior dog</td>
<td>journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>journey</td>
<td>language intended to encourage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>massive building</td>
<td>repay; offer in return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reject with disdain</td>
<td>risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trouble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>former European gold coins</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Act 1 - Grammar & Presentation

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)
COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Act 1, scene 1

1. How do Salerio and Solanio explain Antonio’s melancholy state?

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2. Why do Salerio and Solanio leave Antonio?

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3. Describe Bassanio’s financial condition and how it came to be.

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4. Why does Bassanio want to borrow again from Antonio?

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5. How does Antonio respond to Bassanio’s plan?

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Act 1, scene 2

6. Why is Portia upset about choosing a husband? Explain the test devised by her deceased father.

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7. Who are the suitors Nerissa names, and, in a sentence, what does Portia conclude about each man?

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8. What do readers learn about Bassanio when Nerissa speaks about him to Portia?

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Act 1, scene 3

9. What does Bassanio ask of Shylock?

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10. Explain why Shylock feels justified in disliking Antonio.

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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?

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12. When asked what the terms will be on Bassanio’s loan, what does Shylock say?

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13. Bassanio does not want Antonio to commit to the loan. Why does Antonio accept the terms despite Bassanio’s hesitation?

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LOGIC | Dialectic
The student reasons with the facts, elements, and features of the play.

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the point of Gratiano’s pond and fishing metaphors (1.1.79-104)?

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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?

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3. Does Bassanio love Portia? Use specific lines from the play to support your opinion thus far.

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4. Identify the two settings established by Act 1, and the conflict established for each setting.

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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?

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6. Should readers rely on Nerissa’s good opinion of Bassanio?
Central One Idea

1. In a sentence or two, summarize each scene in Act 1.

   Scene 1: 
   
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

   Scene 2: 
   
   ____________________________________________________________
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   ____________________________________________________________

   Scene 3: 
   
   ____________________________________________________________
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   ____________________________________________________________

2. 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 the following:

   Antonio is ____________________________.
   Proof #1: ______________________________________________________
   Proof #2: ______________________________________________________

   Portia is ____________________________.
   Proof #1: ______________________________________________________
   Proof #2: ______________________________________________________

   Shylock is ____________________________.
   Proof #1: ______________________________________________________
   Proof #2: ______________________________________________________
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.

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.