



CHARACTER ACTIVITIES

Activities to develop understanding of character and motivation

Open the **Characters** section on the website. You will see some of the characters illustrated by photographs. Notice how the characters are dressed in modern clothes. Think about the type of people who might wear these clothes today and draw up a list. You might think of film stars or other famous people. How do you think dressing the characters in this way can help a modern day audience of young people to understand the play? .

Open the **Characters** section on the website and click on **Antonio**'s page. Look at the photograph of Antonio and discuss his appearance. Notice how his appearance links with the quote next to the photograph. Find other quotes from the play which could be added to the page on the web-site that would help to show Antonio's character and feelings. Next try the same process with Bassanio's page. What quotes could be added to the current one on his page?

Find **Portia**'s page on the **character** part of the website. Open the media and interviews section and listen to the interview with Catherine Bailey, the actor playing Portia. From the time code of 2:30 in the interview you will hear her talking about Portia's feeling of isolation at her palace in Belmont. From time code 4:00 she talks about her relationship with Nerissa and how much she depends on her servant.

Thinking about the relationship between the two characters, do you agree that Portia depends on Nerissa? Why do you think this might be so? Think about her isolation in Belmont, the fact that her parents are dead and her great wealth and how these factors might affect her.

On the homepage find the interviews with the director of the play **Bill Buckhurst**. Select the **'Character and Audience'** interview and watch the section from time code 1:38 to time code 3:13 where he describes the choice that Jessica makes to leave her father and her background and go with Lorenzo. Bill describes the way Jessica is almost silent at the end of the play and he wonders how she might be feeling about what has happened to her father Shylock.

Discuss with a friend what you think Jessica is feeling at the end of the play. Write a letter to an Agony Aunt where Jessica explains what she is feeling and asks what she should do about her relationship with her father Shylock in the future.



On the homepage find the interviews with the director of the play **Bill Buckhurst** and select the **'Character and Audience'** interview. Watch the section from time code 4:15 to time code 6:31 where Bill describes the impact Jessica's leaving has on Shylock and the importance of the theft of his money and the precious ring.

With others in the group, discuss what you feel about Shylock's response. Decide whether you agree with Bill when he says that the loss of the ring belonging to Leah (probably his late wife) is the point which *'...pushes him over the edge'* making him decide to take his bloody revenge on Antonio. What items of your own would it be very upsetting for you to lose? Share your ideas with others.

Now you've seen the production think about your views of each character. Did seeing the play in the theatre change how you feel about characters such as Shylock, Portia or Jessica? Did you feel more or less sympathetic a character like Shylock when you saw the play? Did anything about a character surprise or disappoint you?

Draw up a table like the one below and put in brief notes about what you thought before you saw the play and what you now think. Work in groups for this activity and you will be able to discuss your feelings.

Character	Your view on the character before seeing the play.	How has your view changed or has it remained the same?	Were there any surprises?	Were there any disappointments?
Shylock				
Portia				
Jessica				
Other Characters				