



PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

Activities to develop the text in performance

On the **Week by Week** section of the website and select **Week 1**. Here you will find the blog created by Bethan Cullinane the actor who is playing Jessica in the play. As you read her blog you will notice that she explains how they have decided on a lively opening for the production set in an expensive night club at 3 o'clock in the morning.

Why do you think that the director has decided to start the play in this way? What aspects of the play do you think the idea of a night club will emphasise for the audience? Now, think of other settings the director might have chosen to use which would emphasise the theme of money in the play such as a luxurious yacht moored in the harbour at Venice.

On the **Week by Week** section of the website and select **Week 2**. Here you will see some images of the actors being photographed to create publicity for the play. These photographs will appear in the programme, posters and press releases about the production. Find the photograph of Catherine who is playing Portia.

What do you think her pose in this photograph will tell the viewer about the way she will perform the part in the play? Which scene do you think the photograph is based on in the play?

Now think of a different scene involving Portia and decide how she could appear in a photograph based on that scene. Try out the poses for the photograph with another person acting as the director or photographer and telling you how to position yourself. If possible take the photographs and print out for display. Add a quote to link with that pose.

On the '**Week by Week**' section of the website, select **Week 3** where you will find a video interview with the Laura Rushton, Costume Supervisor for *The Merchant of Venice*. Watch the interview and notice how in this production, because it is in modern dress, many of the costumes will be bought from shops rather than made.

Choose one or two of the characters from the play and create your own costume brief for each character using photographs from magazines or catalogues. Glue the photographs you have collected on to a sheet of paper and add comments to explain why you have chosen that particular design and how that reflects your character's personalities. You could then move on to the brief you will find on the same page of the site and design your own costumes of the characters.



On the homepage of the site you will see a series of interviews with **Bill Buckhurst**, the director of the play. Select the interview on **'Language and Production'** and watch the section from time code 3:55 where Bill describes the decision to use modern clothing and settings for the production. He explains the reason for using this modern approach because it makes the play more relevant to younger audiences.

Discuss with others in your group whether you feel that modern dress and setting will be more appealing or whether you think it would be better to see the play in period costume. Think about the points Bill makes about the difficulties of modern productions of old plays, for example where characters sending letters might seem odd when now people would use texts or tweets to communicate.

On the **Week by Week** section of the website and select **Week 5**. Find an interview with Simon Kenny the designer who describes the process of developing the set for the play. In the interview Simon explains that he has used the production's mood board and the theme of wealth as his inspiration for the design of the stage set.

Next, on the **Week by Week** section of the website select **Week 2**. Click on **Creative Brief** where you will be able to download the mood boards for the production. Thinking about what Simon has said and looking at the mood boards, working with others in your group create your own design for the stage which emphasises the theme of wealth. Back on Week 5 of the site, click on Creative Brief and you will find materials to help with your design.

Now you have seen the production think about how you felt about what you saw. Did it match up to your expectations? How did you feel about the costumes being modern? What about the set and the way the play looked? Did it show the sense of wealth and power that the director wanted? What did the music and sound effects add to the experience of seeing the play? Did the 'props' (the objects used by the characters in the play like the caskets and the rings) seem a strong part of the production? Work in groups to discuss your reactions and add your thoughts to a chart like the one below.

Aspects of the production	What did you like?	Was there anything you would have changed?	Was there anything you hadn't expected?	Did it help to make the production a success? How?
The set				
The costumes				
The music and sound effects				
Props (such as the caskets and rings)				