

WELLAND GOULDSMITH SCHOOL

English Language

Class 8

STUDY MATERIAL

Synopsis of Act 1, Scene 1 of Merchant of Venice

Shakespeare has been regarded as a master of opening scenes. The opening scene of the 'Merchant of Venice' fully illustrates that view. In this scene, the foundations of both the major stories of this play has been laid, and laid clearly and firmly. The main plot of this play pertains to Antonio and Shylock and the bond which Antonio signs and subsequently forfeits. This story is known as the "bond story". The other major story pertains to the will left by Portia's father laying down the condition which a suitor of Portia must fulfil before he can claim Portia's hand in marriage. This is known as the "casket story". Now, the germ of each of these two stories is to be found in the opening scene. Bassanio asks for a loan of three thousand ducats from Antonio in order to be able to go to Belmont to try to win Portia as his wife. Antonio, who has no cash in hand, asks Bassanio to borrow money in Antonio's name from some moneylender in Venice. Thus both the stories have been set afoot at the same time and have been closely interlinked too.

WORKSHEET

Q1) How is Antonio introduced in Act 1, Scene 1 of the play 'The Merchant of Venice'?

Q2) What do we come to know about Bassanio from Act 1, Scene 1 of the play?