

MERCHANT OF VENICE

ACT II Scene 3

EXTRACT 1.

Q: Give reasons for Launcelot's leaving Jessica's house.

(i) Launcelot left Jessica's house since her father Shylock was a miserly Jew and his stay as his servant has half-famished him. He felt that any further stay with him would make him like the Jew. Besides, Bassanio has accepted him in his service and Launcelot feels that Bassanio is a better master.

Q: Give the meaning of:

Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil,

Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.

(ii) In the above lines, Jessica says that her house is hell because of her father's avarice. Launcelot with his jolly nature and with his antics and nonsensical capering has relieved it of much boredom and dullness.

Q: How does Jessica show in words and action that she liked Launcelot's presence in her house?

iii) Jessica shows in words and actions that she liked Launcelot's presence in the house. He calls him a merry devil and thanks him for reducing the boredom and dullness in her house. She offers him a ducat too.

Q: What errand does Jessica give to Launcelot? What precautions does she ask him to take while doing the errand?

(iv) Jessica gives to Launcelot the errand of delivering a letter to Lorenzo at supper in Bassanio's house that night. She advises him to deliver the letter to Lorenzo secretly.

Q: How does Jessica show herself as a scheming but prudent young lady? In what way is her character different from that of Portia?

(v) Jessica shows herself as a scheming lady when she plans to elope with a Christian boy, Lorenzo without the knowledge of her father. She proves herself to be prudent when she instructs Launcelot to deliver her letter to Lorenzo at Bassanio's party secretly. Her character is entirely different from that of Portia. While Portia obeys her deceased father's will to marry the one who wins the lottery of caskets, Jessica betrays her father and religion to marry Lorenzo.

EXTRACT 2.

Q: How does Launcelot bid farewell to Jessica? In this context, what are your feelings for Launcelot, Jessica and Shylock?

(i) Launcelot bids farewell to Jessica calling her 'most beautiful pagan' and later 'most sweet Jew'. He says that tears prevent his tongue from uttering his feelings. We feel happy for Launcelot and Jessica. Launcelot is leaving his miserly master and is undertaking Bassanio's service where he will be happier. Jessica too will soon escape from the 'hell' and marry Lorenzo. We feel sorry for Shylock as he is still obstinate, miserly and with evil intentions. Further, he shall lose his daughter as well as money.

Q: Why does Jessica regret being the daughter of Shylock? What is the 'heinous sin' referred to in the extract? Is it really a 'sin'? Give reasons to justify your answer.

(ii) Jessica regrets being the daughter of Shylock due to his behaviour, his being a bad father to her and for making her home "hell". Jessica describes her feeling of being ashamed for being her father's daughter as a "heinous sin". It is not really a sin because even if she is Shylock's daughter by birth, she does not actually detest her father but detests his miserliness and tyrannical nature.

Q: Give the meaning of:

But though I am a daughter to his blood,

I am not to his manners.

(iii) The given lines mean that although I am his daughter by birth, I don't have his habits.

Q: Which promise has Lorenzo to keep? Describe the strife that Jessica is going to end.

(iv) Jessica is a lively young girl who rebels against the oppression of her father and the joylessness of her life at home. She calls her home 'hell'. She detests her father's miserliness and tyrannical nature. She affirms that though she is Shylock's daughter by birth, she does not share his disposition. She is ready to leave her father and elope with Lorenzo, a Christian.

Q: Explain Jessica's relationship with her father which is shown in the scene.

(v) Lorenzo has to keep the promise of eloping with Jessica that night. Jessica will end the struggle between her desire to marry Lorenzo and her duty to her father, Shylock.