MONTANA SHAKESPEARE IN THE SCHOOLS,
AN EDUCATION PROGRAM OF SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARKS
PRESENTS

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

“ALL THAT GLISTERS IS NOT GOLD.”
ACT II, SCENE VII

STUDY GUIDE 2014

SPOONRED BY

Sidney E. Frank
FOUNDATION

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Arts & Architecture

HOMER A. & MILDRED S. SCOTT FOUNDATION

BNSF RAILWAY
How now, teachers and students!

We are so thrilled to be integrating the world of William Shakespeare into your classrooms! There is truly no better way to introduce Shakespeare’s words to a young audience than through the experience of hearing and seeing a play. Our goal is to engage you and your students on a variety of levels through workshops, activities presented in this guide, and most importantly, through live performance.

Having acted with Shakespeare in the Schools several times, I feel a special attachment to the experience of working with this program and sharing the relevant themes, characters, and relationships with you and your students. *The Merchant of Venice* highlights themes of Identity, Rebellion, Regret, Justice and Persecution. We believe that these are topics that resonate with all generations and cultures, and are especially relevant to the lives of our younger audiences. Through the incorporation of a comprehensive curriculum, intriguing design elements, and most importantly an incredibly talented group of professional artists, we strive to provide an exciting and lively experience that will allow for greater accessibility into the language and world of Shakespeare! Enjoy the journey as we all investigate the relevant issues that Shakespeare explores in this magnificent story.

Thank you to all teachers! You are an integral part of our success. When you participate as an audience member and as a workshop participant, you help us make the very most of our visit! Last year, during the workshops, actor-teachers found that some teachers jumped in to every activity while others participated in the warm-up games and then chose to float around the room and offer suggestions. Either way, teacher participation made a difference. According to one actor-teacher, once teachers “committed fully ... the students really were enthusiastic about [them] being a part of the workshop!” In this guide, we have also included classroom activities connected to the workshops and the production. You can do them before and after our visit to complement and expand student’s understanding.

Thanks also for providing feedback during and after our visit and letting us know what you think!

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**TEACHERS PLAY WITH US**

**AND WE’LL NOT FAIL YOU!**

KEVIN ASSELIN
Director and Executive Artistic Director
CHARACTERS

VENICE

DUKE OF VENICE
The judge of Venetian law in the courtrooms.

ANTONIO
a merchant of Venice, close friend to Bassanio

BASSANIO
Close friend to Antonio

GRATIANO
Friend to Bassanio and Antonio

SALERIO
Friend to Bassanio and Antonio

LORENZO
Friend to Bassanio and Antonio

SHYLOCK
A rich Jew and moneylender in Venice

JESSICA
Daughter of Shylock

LAUNCELOT GOBBO
Servant to Shylock

TUBA
A Jewish friend of Shylock

BELMONT

PORTIA
A rich heiress

NERISSA
Lady in waiting to Portia

BALTHAZAR
Servant to Portia

DUKE OF MOROCCO
Suitor to Portia

PRINCE OF ARRAGON
Suitor to Portia

Costume Designer Claudia Boddy's designs for Shylock (left), and the Duke of Morocco (right).
BASSANIO, in debt and in love, wishes to woo PORTIA, a wealthy Belmont heiress. Needing funds to present his suit, he asks his merchant friend ANTONIO for a loan. Antonio’s monies are tied up in his shipping ventures, but he offers instead to seek a loan with Antonio acting as guarantee. SHYLOCK, a Jewish moneylender whom Antonio has often publicly reviled, agrees to advance the money, free of interest—but with what he calls a “merry bond.” Should Antonio not be able to pay the loan within three months, he must forfeit a pound of his flesh. Confident that his ships will soon return laden with wealth, Antonio agrees.

Shylock’s daughter, JESSICA, is love with LORENZO, a friend of Antonio’s and a Christian. She makes the rash decision to steal away under cover of night and elope with Lorenzo, taking with her money and jewels from Shylock’s household. Upon discovery of her flight, Shylock comes undone. He rails against the loss and swears revenge upon Antonio should he fail to pay his debt.

Upon his death, Portia’s father stipulated that Portia could not choose a husband for herself. Instead, her suitors must decide between three locked caskets: one gold, one silver and one lead. If the chosen casket contains Portia’s portrait, the suitor wins her hand, but if he chooses wrongly he must depart at once and never seek marriage with anyone again. After two suitors, the DUKE OF MOROCCO and the PRINCE OF ARRAGON, choose wrongly, Bassanio arrives to try his chances. He brings GRATIANO along with Lorenzo and Jessica. Portia is overjoyed when Bassanio makes the correct choice. She gives him a ring and makes him swear never to part with it. Meanwhile, Gratiano and NERISSA have discovered their love for each other and Nerissa gives him a ring, asking Gratiano for a similar oath.

Soon after, word arrives that Antonio’s ships have been lost at sea, and that Shylock is asking for payment of the bond: a pound of flesh taken from Antonio. Portia sends Bassanio back to Venice with money to pay the debt many times over. Meanwhile, she and Nerissa secretly make their own way to Venice, where a court has been convened to rule on Shylock’s claim.

In the courtroom, Shylock refuses any amount of money and demands justice as proscribed by the laws of Venice. Portia, disguised as BALTHAZAR, a lawyer and Nerissa as his clerk, present themselves to the court in place of Bellario, an esteemed lawyer the judge had asked to argue this case. Portia argues first for mercy, imploring Shylock to relent. He refuses and Portia agrees that according to the law, Shylock must have his pound of flesh. But, as Shylock proceeds to extract his bond, Portia tells him that nowhere in the bond is a mention of blood. Therefore, if Shylock sheds any blood in the taking of the flesh or takes more or less than an exact pound, he will die and his goods will fall to the court. Shylock is defeated and asks for his payment and to leave. However, Portia goes further and cites the law of Venice which states that if any foreigner be proven to threaten the life of a citizen, he must give up his wealth and possibly his life. The Duke pardons his life but gives half of Shylock’s wealth to Antonio and half to the state. Antonio asks Shylock to leave his wealth to Lorenzo and Jessica and demands that Shylock agree to become a Christian.

Bassanio urges Portia, still disguised as Balthazar, to take some payment for her service. Portia asks for his ring and with great reluctance, he gives it to her. Nerissa then plays the same trick on Gratiano.

Once all are returned to Belmont, Portia and Nerissa scold their husbands for so easily parting with their rings. After Portia and Nerissa have chastised their husbands, they reveal to all who the lawyer and his clerk really were. The couples’ happiness is completed by the news that several of Antonio’s ships have reached port after all.
KEY THEMES TO EXPLORE: IDENTITY, PERSECUTION, REGRET, JUSTICE AND MONEY

There are many themes to explore in this rich and problematic play. The play cannot be taught without taking a serious look at the issues of racism and anti-Semitism presented in the play. Our awareness today of persistent issues of racism and persecution cannot be ignored. What is important to recognize is that the anti-Semitic remarks in the play are not confined to one or two ‘villainous’ characters: indeed Portia, Antonio and their friends, who are otherwise good people, all contribute racist remarks to the play (and not solely directed at Shylock and the Jews). Shakespeare exposes and explores the suffering and the behavior that comes from racial prejudice.

The play provides a unique opportunity for both teachers and students to explore the overarching issues of racism by breaking them down into the following themes highlighted through the actions of all the characters in the play. We encourage you to discuss these themes prior to the performance and as discussion points after the company has departed.

IDENTITY
What do the characters believe is the one element that most defines their identity?
What happens when that key element is stripped away or given away?
• Antonio demands that Shylock renounce his religion
• Jessica gives up her religion in a moment of rebellion
• Portia disguises her womanhood in order to plead the case in court

PERSECUTION
In what ways do the characters deliberately use one’s sense of identity as a vehicle to persecute (synonyms: torment/intimidate/bully) another? What happens when people are cast as outsiders or others by a dominant society?
• Antonio’s treatment Shylock refers to in the marketplace
• The implied treatment of Shylock towards his daughter Jessica and his servant, Launcelot
• Portia’s treatment of the suitors, the Duke of Morocco and the Prince of Arragon

REGRET
How do those heightened, impulsive moments result in unintended consequences and regret? How are these moments reflected in the play through physical action (slapping, spitting, shoving); rebelling and running away; verbally abusing someone; and/or breaking promises, often followed by regret?
• Actions against Shylock; Shylock’s unreasonable demands
• Shylock’s promise to care for a daughter
• Jessica’s promise to her father and elopement with Lorenzo
• Bassanio and Gratiano giving away of their rings

JUSTICE
How are calls for justice interpreted by the individual? What is the relationship between justice and law? How is justice expressed throughout the play?
• Shylock’s Judaism is associated with the Mosaic code (from Leviticus and Deuteronomy in the Old Testament), with its strict emphasis on justice and following the letter of the law
• Antonio and Portia’s Christianity, on the other hand, is associated with the New Testament’s emphasis on God’s mercy and the chance for salvation
• In the courtroom, Shylock is made to follow the “letter of the law” by giving up his goods and converting to Christianity. Is this justice carried too far?

MONEY
How does the economic system of the play depend on mercantilism, material goods and debts/credit?
• Bassanio’s debts and Antonio’s pound of flesh
• Antonio’s demands on Shylock to convert to Christianity

Patrick Budde as Puck in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, 2014
S

hylock’s bizarre decision to enter into a “merry bond” with Antonio, in which the price for forfeiture is a pound of the merchant’s flesh, is the most famous aspect of *The Merchant of Venice*. The notion of the bond becomes more and more serious as the play progresses, for Shylock sees this as the avenue for his revenge against Antonio and the other Christians who have stolen Shylock’s daughter. No matter what else he is offered, Shylock repeatedly exclaims: “I’ll have my bond!” He is quite literally going to exact his pound of flesh. Such flesh-bond stories go back to ancient literature (including the Talmud), so despite how strange the price seems to us, the notion was not original with Shakespeare. However, by combining this story with several others and developing a network of character relationships, Shakespeare found a way to explore in depth what it means for humans to be bound to one another.

In its legal sense, a bond is a contractual obligation whereby one person must pay something owed to another. Yet during the early modern period, as in our own, the word “bond” had many other meanings, including: anything that restrains liberty, an obligation or duty, a cementing force for any kind of union, a covenant between two or more people, and a pledge of oneself.

At the center of this play is the legal obligation; Antonio is bound to Shylock, and thus becomes physically bound during the trial scene, when Shylock prepares to cut off his flesh. Yet Antonio enters into this agreement in the first place because of another kind of bond: friendship. Bassanio begs Antonio for money on the basis of this friendship, yet it is clear that Bassanio has nothing to offer in return but his love. The fact that Antonio is ultimately willing to die for Bassanio shows that such bonds are not casual, but instead a matter of the deepest human connection.

The bonds of family are also central to multiple plots in this play. Portia is bound by the will of a dead father, and Jessica by a living one. Portia is unable to accept or refuse her suitor because of the casket choice instituted in her father’s will. Portia is unable to offer or refuse her suitor because of the casket choice instituted in her father’s will, so she laments her own lack of freedom. Even more glaringly, Jessica is locked in a house which she calls “a hell,” told not to even look out the window. Her decision to break with her father is monumental, for it represents not just a young woman eloping, but the concomitant loss of religion, community, and family. Though Jessica is firm in her resolve to break these bonds (“I have a father, you a daughter, lost,” 2.5.56), this storyline emphasizes the great cost of breaking away from one’s family. We are never certain, in fact, how Jessica feels about the decision she has made. Hints in the play, such as her “playful” accusations to Lorenzo in Act 5, suggest that there could be lingering sadness, even in the midst of her future as Lorenzo’s wife.

Consider the words of the traditional marriage ceremony: “What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10.9). If marriage is the ultimate holy bond, the ring is its symbol. The playful final act, which seems to be an afterthought following the resolution of the Shylock plot, focuses on the importance of marriage bonds. Portia and Nerissa manipulate their husbands into breaking a minor vow—keeping a ring—in order to highlight the importance of keeping the paramount vow—fidelity. The women poignantly demonstrate that human bonds are vital, but also fragile, and breaking them can quickly result in catastrophe.

All the characters agree that the citizens of Venice are bound by the law; the Duke himself “cannot deny the course of law” (3.3.26). Without a legal system that protects all inhabitants (including marginalized Jews), the society would fall apart. In the case of Venice, what binds people to obey such rules is that they are all dependent upon commerce: ships are at sea, money is lent out, and servants work for masters. In all cases, the Venetians need one another because they are part of an economic system that requires people to rely upon one another (even Shylock must borrow the money from Tubal that he loans to Antonio, who in turn gives it to Bassanio).

The references to law in this play cannot be fully disentangled from the references to religion. In sixteenth-century England, the Christian assumption was that the Jews were too bound to law (the Old Testament), remaining stubbornly unwilling to accept the message of Jesus (the New Testament). Likewise, so far as the Christians in the play are concerned, Shylock’s error is that he is obsessed with a harsh and barbaric reliance upon the law. Portia tries to get Shylock to understand the distinction in her famous speech, making the contrast between justice (“I’ll have my bond!”) and grace (“The quality of mercy is not strained…” (4.1.181)). Yet Shakespeare stops far short of offering a conventional sermon about Jewish error at the end of this play. The Christians emerge as equally harsh and unbending, especially when Antonio chooses to punish Shylock by forcing him to convert to Christianity. While there is some pain involved in Jessica’s break with her father, there is unbearable trauma that results from forcing someone like Shylock to break from his Judaism. Speaking about money, Shylock remarks that “you take my life / When you do take the means whereby I live” (4.1.372-3). What, then, results from the brutal breaking of the bond whereby someone measures his soul?

Like Shakespeare’s characters, we are bound by family, friendship, money, and religion. And we are also bound by history. In the post-Holocaust world, it is notoriously difficult to talk about *The Merchant of Venice* because of the sensitive issues it raises about anti-Semitism. Yet no play gives us a better avenue whereby we can explore how we are bound to our own prejudices, stereotypes, and all too often unexamined reactions to those whom we perceive as “the other.”
**SEEING THE PLAY**

**CLUES FOR BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER**

“I’LL MAKE MY LEISURE TO ATTEND ON YOURS.”

In addition to the classroom activities, consider these quick activities before, during and after the performance.

### BEFORE SIS ARRIVES

**READ** through the play and/or synopsis and character map.

**MAKE PREDICTIONS** on what you think the different characters and settings will look like.

**DISCUSS** how the themes of the play might relate to contemporary times?

**WHAT KINDS OF MUSIC** do you think you will hear?

**REVIEW THEатRE ETIQUETTE:** why is this important to viewing a live performance? (see below)

### DURING THE PERFORMANCE

**LOOK** for clues to the time period of the production (1945).

**LOOK** for examples of the themes discussed before.

**WHICH** character and/or story do you find the most interesting?

**WHAT** surprises you or confuses you?

### AFTER SIS LEAVES

**DISCUSS** the themes again, relating this to the performance.

**HOW** did the humans behave in this play? Did any of that behavior seem familiar from modern movies or books, or your own experiences?

**WHY** do you think the director set the play in 1945?

**DID THE DESIGN** (sets & costumes) of the production make sense to you? Why or why not?

### THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Going to see a play is very different from going to the movies. During live theatre, the audience is as important a part of the experience as the actors. The following are things that most experienced audience members know:

1. **LIVE RESPONSE IS GOOD!**

   If you’re telling a story to a friend, and they really respond or listen, it makes you want to tell the story better—to keep telling the story. So, the better an audience listens, laughs and responds, the more the actors want to tell the story. In this way, the audience (as well as the actors) can make a performance great.

2. **THE ACTORS CAN HEAR YOU TALKING.**

   If an audience member is not paying attention, the actors know it. Have you ever had a conversation with someone and felt that they’d rather be someplace else? This is the EXACT feeling actors get when people in the audience are talking.

3. **THE ACTORS CAN SEE YOU.**

   Even though actors are pretending to be other characters, it is their job to “check in” with the audience in order to tell the story better. Theatre actors can do a take over and over to try to get it right. Theatre actors have one chance with an audience and want to make sure they are communicating clearly. Think about it...

4. **CELL PHONES, CANDY WRAPPERS, LOUD GUM SMACKING.**

   Please turn off all cell phones, school bells (if possible) and open any candy before a show.
**SHAKESPEARE’S TIMELINE AND LANGUAGE**

**BORN**

Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564 in Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire, about 100 miles northwest of London. April 23, 2014 marked the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare’s birth! His parents were John and Mary Shakespeare. His father John was a whittawer, someone who made and worked with leather goods such as purses, belts, and gloves. William Shakespeare had seven brothers and sisters. He was the third son.

**MARRIAGE AND FAMILY**

Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway on November 28, 1582. They had three children. Daughter Susanna was born in 1583, and twins Judith and Hamnet born two years later.

**CAREER**

Shakespeare produced most of his work between 1589 and 1613. He wrote 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and some other short verses. By the early 1590’s, records indicate that Shakespeare was a managing partner with The Lord Chamberlain’s Men, an acting company in London. After the crowning of King James in 1603, the company changed its name to The King’s Men. By 1599, Shakespeare and his business partners built their own theatre on the bank of the South Thames in London. They called it The Globe. The Globe was destroyed by fire on June 29, 1613.

The Merchant of Venice is believed to have been written between 1595 and 1598. The play was first published in quarto form in 1600. The first recorded performance of the play was at the court of King James I in the spring of 1605, although the published version of the play in 1600 stated that it had already been performed “divers times.” The King liked it so much that he ordered a second performance several days later. Like many of his plays, Shakespeare got his ideas from many sources. Christopher Marlowe’s play The Jew of Malta (written around 1589) was the source of some of the details of The Merchant of Venice.

The idea for Shylock’s bond came from Giovanni Fiorentino’s prose collection Il Pecorone (The Simpleton, 1558). The idea for the casket riddle came from Il Novellino (1476), a collection of short stories by Italian poet Masuccio Salernitano, and from Gesta Romanorum, a Latin story collection compiled at the end of the 13th or beginning of the 14th century and published in a popular English translation in 1577. The play also calls on classic folk-tales, such as the miser—a man who loves money more than anything else—and the riddle in which a suitor’s correct choice is rewarded with the hand of a maiden.

**DEATH**

Shakespeare is believed to have died on April 23, 1616, and was survived by his wife. 2016 marks the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death, and there are many events and celebrations planned throughout the world. In the U.S., the Folger is sponsoring a tour of Shakespeare’s first folio. The document will visit each state in the union. In Montana, the First Folio will be at the University of Montana May 9 – 31, 2016.
When reading Shakespeare it is important to place the language within the context of the scene. Here are some words that might be a bit unfamiliar. See if you can come up with our own word for the following:

**ARGOSIES/PORTLY:** large merchant ships/swelled by the wind, majestic

“When your mind is tossing on the ocean, There, where your argosies with portly sail” (Salerio, 1.1.8–9)

**Meaning:** Your mind is focused on the ocean, where your merchant ships are sailing with full sails.

**STRANGE:** reserved, becoming strangers

“You grow exceeding strange. Must it be so?” (Bassanio, 1.1.70)

**Meaning:** You are not treating me as a friend. Why are you like this?

**WARRANTY:** privilege

“To you, Antonio, I owe the most in money and in love, And from your love I have a warranty To unburden all my plots and purposes” (Bassanio, 1.1.134–37)

**Meaning:** I owe both money and love to you, Antonio. Because of your love I have your help and privilege which aids my plans.

**DUCAT:** Venetian gold, money worth about $7

“Three thousand ducats for three months, and Antonio bound” (Shylock, 1.3.10)

**Meaning:** Bassanio is asking for a loan of almost $20,000.

**FEARFUL:** untrustworthy

“See to my house, left in the fearful guard Of an unthrifty knave, and presently I’ll be with you” (Shylock, 1.3.177–79)

**Meaning:** Go to my house now, which is left in the hands of an untrustworthy person, and I will be with you soon.

**VARNISH’D FACES:** masks or painted faces

“Clamber not you up to the casements then, Nor thrust your head into the public street To gaze on Christian fools with varnish’d faces” (Shylock, 2.5.31–33)

**Meaning:** Do not look out into the street to look at Christians who are celebrating carnival, wearing masks, and acting like fools.

**A CARRION OF DEATH:** death’s head, a skull

“Oh hell! What have we here? A carrion Death within whose empty eye There is a written scroll!” (Prince of Morocco, 2.7.63–65)

**Meaning:** What do we have here? A skull, which has a scroll in its empty eye.

**ELECTION:** choice “The Prince of Arragon hath ta’en his oath, And comes to his election presently” (Nerissa, 2.9.3–4)

**Meaning:** The Prince of Arragon has taken his pledge and now he is coming to make his choice.

**COZEN:** cheat

“For who shall go about To cozen fortune and be honourable Without the stamp of merit?” (Prince of Arragon, 2.9.38–40)

**Meaning:** Who will go about and try to cheat fortune and be admirable without the appearance of honor?

**COMPLEXION:** natural disposition

“And Shylock, for his own part, knew the bird was fledged; and then it is the complexion of them all to leave the dam” (Solanio, 3.1.25–26)

**Meaning:** Shylock knew that his daughter was grown up and that it is in children’s natural disposition to leave home.

**COUNTERFEIT:** portrait, picture

“Fair Portia’s counterfeit! What demi-god Hath come so near creation?” (Bassanio, 3.2.118–19)

**Meaning:** The beauty of Portia’s picture is comparable to her own beauty.

**CEREMONY:** anything held sacred

“What man is there so much unreasonable, If you had pleas’d to have defended it With any terms of zeal, wanted the modesty To urge the thing held as a ceremony?” (Portia, 5.1.219–22)

**Meaning:** What type of man would not defend something that is sacred to him?

**DOUBLE:** two-fold and deceitful

“Mark you but that! In both my eyes he doubly sees himself, In each eye, one: swear by your double self, And there’s an oath of credit” (Portia, 5.1.261–64)

**Meaning:** See that I am the lawyer too.

**CHARGE US THERE UPON INTER’GATORIES:** question under oath

“Let us go in; And charge us there upon inter’gatories, And we shall answer all things faithfully” (Portia, 5.1.319–22)

**Meaning:** Let us go in where you can question us and we will answer truthfully.

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SHAKESPEARE’S INFLUENCE ON LANGUAGE CONTINUED

SOME FAMOUS LINES FROM THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

“In sooth, I know not why I am so sad.”
Antonio, 1.1.1

“I hold the world but as the world... A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.”
Antonio, 1.1.1

“Let me play the fool.”
Gratiano, 1.1.83

“If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do,
chapels had been churches, and poor men’s cottages princes’ palaces.”
Portia, 1.2.9

“God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man.”
Portia, 1.2.59

“How like a fawning publican he looks! I hate him for he is a Christian.”
Shylock, 1.3.42

“If I can get him once upon the hip, I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.”
Shylock, 1.3.47

“The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.”
Antonio, 1.3.99

“It is a wise father who knows his own child.”
Lancelot Gobbo, 2.1.83

“But love is blind, and lovers cannot see The pretty follies that themselves commit.”
Jessica, 2.6.36

“The portrait of a blinking idiot.”
Aragon, 2.9.54

“Let him look to his bond.”
Shylock, 3.1.51

“I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses,
affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to
the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter
and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not
laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge?”
Shylock, 3.1.60–70

“The quality of mercy is not strained.”
Portia, 4.1.189

“How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world.”
Portia, 5.1.117–118

Thanks to Utah Shakespeare for these!

Claudia Boddy’s designs
for Jessica (top), and
Portia (bottom).
How Shakespeare in the Schools Meets Montana’s Common Core

Reading Standards for Literature 6-12
Integration of Knowledge and Themes

Grades 6-8
Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceived when they listen or watch.

Grade 6
Describe how a particular’s story or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

Grade 7
Determine the meaning or words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetition of sounds (e.g. alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or a section of a story or drama.

Grade 8
Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g. created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Grade 8
Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating choices made by the directors or actors.

Grades 9-10
Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of the text.

Grades 11-12
Determine the meaning of words or phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author refines the meaning of a term or key terms over the course of a text.

Reading Standards for Informational Text 6-12

Grade 6
Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g. visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

Grade 8
Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g. print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

Grades 9-10
Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g. how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare or how American Indian stories and oral histories appear in contemporary works such as James Welch’s Fools Crow, the author retells the Pikuni Traditional story, “Star Boy.”

Grades 11-12
Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g. recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry, or traditional American Indian oral histories) evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)
Through the performance, the workshops, and this guide, we aim to create supporting curriculum for the teaching component of our program, allowing for further investigation before and after our visit. All are connected to Montana’s Common Core Standards, adopted on November 4, 2011.

The following classroom activities are suggestions for teachers to use before or after our visit to extend student understanding of the play, and of the SIS performance, and of the workshops.

Please refer to the theatrical vocabulary/conventions on page 16 to inform your work on the theatrical production activities.
SHAKESPEARE’S LANGUAGE

OVERVIEW: The emphasis for this activity is on exploring the language devices Shakespeare uses to express emotions and ideas through movement and voice.

GRADE: 6 – 12

GOAL: To investigate the various language devices and speak Shakespeare’s text in order to understand how speaking Shakespeare out loud increases our understanding of his text.

OUTCOMES: Students will work in groups on selected passages from The Merchant of Venice to identify various language devices, speaking the speeches out loud and finding action in the words.

ACTIVITY

1. Working in groups of 4 – 5, students will read through selected scenes first for sense and identify language devices of prose, blank verse, rhymed verse, etc.

2. Students will assign parts of scenes to individuals and practice saying the text out loud. As they speak, encourage students to find action in the words.

3. Have students share their scenes working together as a group.

REFLECTION

• What difficulty did your group have finding the language devices used, if any?

• Were certain parts of the monologue harder than others to speak out loud and find action for?

• In ways did the different group interpretations bring to life the meaning of the words?

SUGGESTED SCENES*

Scene numbers are based on the abridged version of the play from the MSIS production sent as a separate document.

The beginning of Act II, Scene 2: Launcelot, Shylock’s servant, speaks of his desire to leave. (Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew.) His speech is called a soliloquy. He is not speaking to anyone, but is thinking out loud. Shakespeare uses prose not verse for this soliloquy.

The beginning of Act I, Scene 3: Bassanio and Shylock discuss the loan. (Three thousand ducats, well.) Again, Shakespeare uses prose not verse. Note how the repetition and rhythm adds tension to the scene.

In the courtroom, Act IV, Scene 1: Shakespeare uses blank verse to express Portia’s plea for mercy (The quality of mercy is not strain’d.) Blank verse is unrhymed and each line has ten syllables, with the even-numbered syllables emphasized more strongly in pronunciation. Note places where the rhythm is disrupted.

Shakespeare also uses rhymed verse; most notably for the scrolls inside the caskets. Notice that he also changes the rhythm to set these apart from the rest of the play.

GOLD CASKET
(All that glisters in not gold) Act 2, Scene 7

SILVER CASKET
(The fire seven times tried this) Act 2, Scene 9

LEAD CASKET
(You that choose not by the view) Act 3, Scene 2

*These can be read separately from reading the whole play as the emphasis is on the language as presented in scenes. If students have read or seen the play in performance, students can add that understanding to the work.
OVERVIEW: The emphasis for this activity is to explore how powerful words and actions can be in shaping and changing our sense of identity and the intended or unintended consequences those actions and words have on the characters’ identity in the scene.

GRADE: 6-12

GOAL: To introduce students to key scenes from the play that reveal individual’s identity as constructed by self or others.

OUTCOMES: Students will work in groups to stage these scenes and reflect on the consequences of the scenes on the individuals or group in the play.

ACTIVITY

1. Introduce theatrical vocabulary and conventions to the class.

2. Make a list of the various groups students might belong to—in school and out of school. Discuss the ways being a part of those groups informs their identity and/or sense of self.

3. Students will rehearse their scenes and then perform the scenes for each other.

4. Ask students to comment on the identity of the individual characters and/or group and how that was revealed in the scene.

5. Students will perform their plays for each other. Compare their thoughts with contemporary groups (see #2).

REFLECTION

- How did your group use the theatrical vocabulary and conventions to stage the play?
- How did the different groups stage the scenes? What was similar and what was different?
- What difficulties and/or surprises did your group encounter as you rehearsed the play?
- How was identity revealed in the scene?

SELECTED SCENES*

Scene numbers are based on the abridged version of the play from the MSIS production sent as a separate document.

ACT I SCENE 1
Antonio, Shylock and Bassanio agree to the terms of a loan. Note how each one uses their religion and their occupations to mark their identities.

ACT II SCENE 3
Jessica and Launcelot bid farewell to each other and to their previous identities.

ACT III SCENE 1
Shylock gives a speech defining his reasons for justice and revenge.

ACT III SCENE 2
Portia gives a speech to Bassanio defining herself to him.

ACT IV SCENE 1
Antonio’s demand that Shylock renounce his religion and become a Christian.

*These can be read separately from reading the whole play as the emphasis is on the language as presented in scenes. If students have read or seen the play in performance, students can add that understanding to the work.
THEATRICAL PRODUCTION 2
M - O - N - E - Y

OVERVIEW: The emphasis for this activity is to explore what Shakespeare’s play reveals about human relationships to money and materialism.

GRADE: 6 – 12

GOAL: To introduce students to key scenes from the play that illustrate the character’s relationships to money and goods.

OUTCOMES: Students will work in groups to stage these scenes and reflect on the consequences of the scenes on the individuals or group in the play.

ACTIVITY

1. Introduce theatrical vocabulary and conventions to the class.

2. Working in groups of 3-4, each group will receive a selected scene. Ask students to make a list of characters, divide the play into separate scenes, assign parts, and decide on the basic blocking for each scene.

3. Students will rehearse their scenes and then perform the scenes for each other.

4. Ask students to comment on how the characters’ relationships to money and goods influenced their actions and words in the scene.

REFLECTION

• How did your group use the theatrical vocabulary and conventions to stage the play?

• How did the different groups stage the scenes? What was similar and what was different?

• What difficulties and/or surprises did your group encounter as you rehearsed the play?

• Where do we see similar character relationships to money and goods in contemporary film and/or television?

SELECTED SCENES

Scene numbers are based on the abridged version of the play from the MSIS production sent as a separate document.

ACT II, SCENE 4
Lorenzo and friends set out to steal Jessica along with her many possessions from her father’s house.

ACT II, SCENE 8
Salarino tells of Shylock’s despair at losing both his daughter and his money.

ACT 2, SCENE 7; ACT 2, SCENE 9; ACT 3, SCENE 2
Review any or all of the casket scenes where suitors must choose in order to win Portia’s hand in marriage.

ACT III SCENE 1
Tubal tells Shylock about hearing of his daughter’s spending in Genoa.

ACT 4 SCENE
In the courtroom, consider arguments about the value of money over life.
THEATER VOCABULARY / CONVENTIONS

**ACTIONS** are indicated through language that requires others to act or react.

**ASIDES** happen when a character temporarily turns away from another character and speaks directly to the audience.

**ENTRANCE** and **EXITS** indicate when characters exit and enter a scene. Pay particular attention to what is being said as each character enters or leaves the scene and decide where each one will occur (see diagram).

**LINES** refer to the text spoken by the individual characters.

A **CUE** is the last line before the next character(s) enters, exits or speaks.

**PART** is a word used to indicate the individual character’s role.

**PROPS** are the objects a character needs to complete an action on the stage. Props may also add to the overall setting of the play.

**RECURRING IMAGERY** is found in repeated words, phrases and images.

**SCRIPTS** refers to the text or play the directors, designers and actors use during rehearsal.

**SET** refers to the overall design of the stage to indicate where the play takes place. One play may have several sets or locations.

**SCENES** and **ACTS** are dividers of the action within a play. Acts are a number of scenes grouped together.

**SOLILOQUY** is when a character is alone on stage and speaks out his or her thoughts aloud.

**SOUND EFFECTS** can happen on stage or off stage. They usually occur to highlight the action in the moment.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS** are usually presented in brackets in the script that tell the actor how to say the lines (such as crying out and wringing hands) or when/when to enter (enter upstage right). However as best we know, Shakespeare did not write stage directions. His stage directions are in the lines. Directors and actors must mine each line to figure out how to present the particular moment. Some editions do include exits and entrances.

Use this basic outline to create your blocking (movements for the actors) for the play.

The wedding dance from 2011’s *As You Like It*
WEB RESOURCES

There are many sources for Teaching Shakespeare and A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Here are some of our favorites:

FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY Teaching Modules
www.folger.edu/teaching-modules

FIRST FOLIO CURRICULUM GUIDES The Shakespeare Theatre in Washington DC
www.shakespearetheatre.org/_pdf/first_folio/Folio-Midsummer.pdf

WEB ENGLISH TEACHER lesson plans
www.webenglishteacher.com/midsummer.html

SHAKESPEARE ON LINE notes, plays, lesson plans
www.shakespeare-online.com

OTHER STUDY GUIDES FOR THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

STRATFORD THEATRE
www.stratfordfestival.ca/uploadedFiles/Stratford/Watch_and_Listen/Publications/Study_Guides/THE%20MERCHANT%20OF%20VENICE%20STUDY%20GUIDE.pdf

UTAH SHAKESPEARE THEATRE
www.bard.org/the-merchant-of-venice-study-guide/

THE CLASSIC THEATRE SAN ANTONIO
www.classictheatre.org/index.php/education/teacher-study-guides