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Merchant of Venice Summary Example

Ever since William Shakespeare composed The Merchant of Venice in 1596, many versions of this play have been performed frequently on stage. This captivating play, because of its humorous scenes and satisfying ending, is broadly welcomed by varieties of audiences. Although the play typically regarded as an entertainment, it is one of Shakespeare's most debatable plays for several reasons. Written in England during the sixteenth century, where anti-Semitism was extremely intense, the play poses many confusions whether or not it is about racial and religious discrimination. The answer perhaps is primarily concentrated in act four scene one, where the majority of Shakespeare's thematic ideas are present. Dania's acting group who performed act four scene one apparently supports anti-Semitism, and with proper stage directions, they had presented the play up live with accurate interpretation.

The predominant criticism regarding anti-Semitism within The Merchant of Venice is the portrayal of the main villain Jewish Shylock. A simple reading of this play perhaps suggests that Shylock's act of vengeance and his underlying character flaw of hubris that had led to his ultimate end. However, a thorough understanding of the play would be interpreted as social and religious segregation. To address this severe theme, Dania's group

presented the characters with proximate personalities in the use of body language, facial expression, and tone of voice. Especially the person who displays Shylock that mostly contributed to the understanding of anti-Semitism. During the dialogues of the other characters, the abhorrent stares that she continuously gives indeed expresses the hatred that Shylock possesses. As she slowly wanders around, the atmosphere turns ominous which alludes to the proverb it is always calm before the storm. The passionate tone and rapid tempo in Dania's voice during the first dialogue depict Shylock's urgency of taking Antonio's flesh and his irritation when Gratiano and Nerissa talking about Christian spouses that reminds him of Jessica. The use of this voice tone reminisces the audience about Shylock's eloquent and justified speech that he delivered to force sympathy and proving himself theoretically equal. The sympathy rises as he says, "I am a Jew.

Hath a Jew not eyes?" (Act 3, Scene 1) This quote causes him to become an ambiguous character and offering him an excuse for why he is so villainous. On the contrary, his monologue hides a darker sentiment, emphasizing a deep-rooted desire for vengeance, as seen when he states "if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?" (Act 3, Scene 1) Despite the sympathy the audience is forced to feel about his rhetoric monologue, Shylock's lack of mercy and the perpetuation of his malevolence is antipathetic, turning the audience against Shylock. Dania not only expresses the evilness inside Shylock but also establishes connections to other scenes, adding to the understanding of this multi-dimensional character.

Accompanying the presentation of Shylock is the performance of Portia, Antonio, Bassanio, and Gratiano. The people who display these characters with appropriate facial emotion and emphasis insert a secondary foundation to the inference of anti-Semitism. The fact that Shylock is rarely referred to by his actual name and simply as 'Jew' by these characters implies that his malevolence is an embodiment of his Judaism. For instance, the person who portrays Gratiano emphasized the word "currish Jew" in his dialogue to criticize Shylock who is a stereotypical Jew that only possess the demonic trait. With his aggressive voice tone and the word "currish", it is an insult not only to Shylock but directly to the majority of the Jews. This derogatory referral acquires significance as it is constantly repeated, becoming a term with a negative connotation that changes the audience's view on Shylock. Furthermore, the appearance and wisdom of Portia are the foremost factors leading to the downfall of Shylock.

During the beginning of the play, it is possible to infer that Portia will become the hero of the play due to the charisma and intelligence that she has. The person who performed Portia certainly has a rigorous explication while acting this character. She displays an omniscient, courageous Portia who wisely resolves the strife between Antonio and Shylock.

The strategy behind this is by her speaking eloquently and logically shifting the tone of voice. The tone within the beginning dialogues seems like Portia agrees with Shylock for fulfilling the law; however, the drastic change in tone when Portia reveals the law to Shylock has placed a sign on destroying Shylock. Although her action appears to be justified, Shylock's coerced conversion into a Christian is a result of anti-semitism as Portia intentionally places a trap for Shylock to step into. Among all the aspects and marvelous collaboration between these characters, this scene definitely conveys the thematic idea of anti-Semitism.

Converting Shakespeare's writing into an authentic play appears to be impossible as many aspects can only be implied. Dania's acting group with the meticulous study of each character had put together a performance with precise interpretation. The Merchant of Venice is a play not centralized around the tolerance of anti-Semitism, but about highlighting segregation as a whole. The answer to the question of whether or not The Merchant of Venice is an anti-Semitic play remains unknown as there is no explicit evidence in the play. Preferably, The Merchant of Venice is an accurate social commentary on human nature, yet still relevant today.