



Hath a dog money?

William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-97), Act I, Scene 3

Antonio meets Shylock to borrow the money he needs for his friend Bassanio. They discuss and negotiate the terms of the loan.

» Before you read

- CRITICAL THINKING** What is money-lending usually associated with? Write down a few notes about the topic, then exchange them with your classmates.

Venice. A public place.

SHYLOCK Three thousand ducats; 'tis a good round¹ sum.

Three months from twelve; then, let me see; the rate² –

ANTONIO Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding³ to you?

SHYLOCK Signior Antonio, many a time and oft

5 In the Rialto you have rated⁴ me
About my moneys and my usances⁵:

Still have I borne it with a patient shrug⁶, _____ | > What does "it" refer to?

For sufferance⁷ is the badge⁸ of all our tribe.

You call me **misbeliever**, cut-throat dog,

10 And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine⁹,

And all for use of that which is mine own.

Well then, it now appears you need my help:

[...]

What should I say to you? Should I not say

'Hath a dog money? is it possible

15 A cur¹⁰ can lend three thousand ducats?' Or

Shall I bend low and in a bondman's key¹¹,

With bated breath¹² and whispering humbleness, Say this;

'Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last;

[...]

You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies

20 I'll lend you thus much moneys'?

ANTONIO I am as like to¹³ call thee so again, _____ | > What is meant by "so"?

To spit on thee again, to spurn¹⁴ thee too.

If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not

As to thy friends; for¹⁵ when did friendship take

25 A breed for barren metal of his friend¹⁶? _____ | > What does "barren metal" stand for?

1. round: grande, sostanziosa

2. rate: tasso

3. beholding: in debito

4. rated: criticato

5. usances: interessi su prestiti

6. shrug: scrollata di spalle

7. sufferance: sopportazione

8. badge: marchio distintivo

9. gaberdine: mantello

10. cur: cane bastardo

11. in a bondman's key: con i modi di un servo

12. With bated breath: timorosamente, ansiosamente (letteralmente, con respiro trattenuto)

13. I am as like to: probabilmente mi ritroverò a

14. spurn: calciarti via a calci

15. for: poiché

16. take / A breed ... friend: richiede al proprio amico qualcosa in cambio di denaro (**breed:** ciò che è generato; **barren:** sterile)

But lend it rather to thine enemy,
Who, if he break, thou mayst with better face
Exact¹⁷ the penalty.

SHYLOCK Why, look you, how you storm¹⁸!

30 I would be friends with you and have your love,
Forget the shames¹⁹ that you have stain'd²⁰ me with,
Supply your present wants²¹ and take no doit
Of usance²² for my moneys, and you'll not hear me:
This is kind²³ I offer.

35 **BASSANIO** This were kindness.

SHYLOCK This kindness will I show.

Go with me to a notary, seal²⁴ me there
Your single bond²⁵; and, in a merry sport²⁶,
If you repay me not on such a day,
40 In such a place, such sum or sums as are
Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit²⁷
Be nominated for an equal²⁸ pound
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
In what part of your body pleaseth me.

45 **ANTONIO** Content, i' faith: I'll seal to such a bond
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

BASSANIO You shall not seal to such a bond for me:
I'll rather dwell²⁹ in my necessity.

ANTONIO Why, fear not, man; I will not forfeit³⁰ it:
50 Within these two months, that's a month before
This bond expires, I do expect return
Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

[...]

ANTONIO Yes Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.



▲ Jonathan Pryce as Shylock, Dominic Maffham as Antonio and Daniel Lapaine as Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* directed by Jonathan Munby at the Globe Theatre, 2015.

17. **Exact:** esigere

18. **storm:** vi infuriate

19. **shames:** insulti

20. **stain'd:** coperto (letteralmente, macchiato)

21. **wants:** necessità

22. **doit / Of usance:** piccola somma

richiesta come interesse sul prestito

23. **kind:** gentilezza, umanità

24. **seal:** sottoscrivete

25. **bond:** contratto

26. **in a merry sport:** giusto per scherzo (letteralmente, piacevole divertimento)

27. **forfeit:** penale

28. **equal:** preciso

29. **dwell:** rimanere

30. **forfeit:** sarò privato (del pezzo di carne)

» Understanding the text

1. Tick the correct alternative.

a. The bond between Shylock and Antonio expires in

1. 12 months. 3. 60 days.

2. 3 months.

b. Remembering all the insults received from Antonio, Shylock

1. thinks that he must respond with humility to Antonio's insults.

2. wonders if he should refuse or accept Antonio's request.

3. tells him that he cannot lend him money, because Antonio sees him as a dog.

c. Antonio

1. promises he will never abuse Shylock again.

2. asks Shylock to lend him money as to a friend.

3. tells Shylock to lend him money as to an enemy.

- d. Shylock says that
- a storm will destroy Antonio's ships.
 - Antonio will have to pay interest for using his money.
 - if Antonio can't pay back his debt, what he wants in exchange for his money is something worthless.
- e. The bond proposed by Shylock
- worries Bassanio, who is afraid for his friend's life.
 - is nothing serious according to Antonio.
 - requires an interest twice times as high as the sum of money borrowed.

2. How does Shylock express the two alternatives he has (to refuse or accept to lend Antonio the money)? Complete the paraphrase of Shylock's arguments.

a. Refusing

Since you I am a how can I you money? do not money.

b. Accepting

Even though you me dog, should I humbly, like a, welcome your and give you a considerable amount of

» Closer reading

3. Answer the questions.

- a. In discussing the terms of the bond Shylock refers to the **insults** and **offences** he has received from Antonio. Highlight them in the text. The first ones have been done for you.
- b. In lines 29-44 Shylock offers a generous deal.
- Why is the deal apparently advantageous for Antonio?
 - What does the deal actually imply?
- c. **IELTS** Define the attitude of the three characters involved in the dialogue, using the adjectives below. Justify your choices referring to the text. Once you have collected the information, write a presentation of the three characters underlining their similarities and differences.
- controlled • worried • self-assured • defying • ironic • revengeful • angry • afraid • provocative

Shylock	Antonio	Bassanio

» Rounding it up

4. **FIRST** Fill in the text with the words provided.

- merciless • friendship • wrongs • provoke • understand • control • generous • revenge • advantage • temper

Shylock takes [1] of Antonio's 'weak' position to [2] him and emphasize the embarrassing situation in which the Christian merchant finds himself. He then humiliates him by offering to lend him money with no interest as a sign of [3] In other words, thanks to the apparently [4] conditions of the loan agreement, Shylock is taking his [5], which will be accomplished by Antonio's death. Antonio reacts initially by showing self-assurance and defiance, then by losing his [6] The Jew, on the contrary, is in [7] of himself throughout the entire conversation. In spite of the [8] bond that Shylock forces on Antonio and his thirst for revenge, the Jew's memory of all the [9] done to him makes the readers [10], if not justify, the moneylender's reasons.

» Over to you

5. **CRITICAL THINKING** Imagine yourself back in time, in Shylock's Venice. You have overheard Shylock and Antonio's dialogue. Take a few notes about it then report their conversation orally adding your comments on the situation and the characters.