



The Merchant of Venice Character Study:

Portia and Shylock

Many characters in *The Merchant of Venice* display duality, which means they show opposing sides of their character. Portia and Shylock are no exception. Throughout the play, these two characters demonstrate both positive and negative attributes and behaviors.

In row 1: Record your initial impressions of Portia and of Shylock after first encountering them in the play. As you continue reading, pay attention to the actions listed under each character's name.

In rows 3–5: For each action listed, find an opposing action that demonstrates the character's dual nature.

In row 6: Record your final impressions of the character.

Then, after you have finished reading the play, use your chart to write a paragraph or two explaining your final impression of each character. Be sure to explain whether your overall impression is positive or negative.

	Portia	Shylock
Initial Impressions		
Dual Actions	<p>Portia makes fun of all her suitors and complains that she might have to marry a dark-skinned man. (Act 1, scene 2)</p> <p>BUT</p> <p><i>Portia praises Bassanio even though she hardly knows him.</i></p>	<p>Shylock lends money to Bassanio without charging interest. (Act 1, scene 3)</p> <p>BUT</p> <p><i>Shylock demands a bond of a pound of flesh.</i></p>

Dual Actions	Portia offers to help Bassanio and Antonio by paying off the debt. (Act 3, scene 3) BUT	Shylock refuses to eat dinner with Antonio because it goes against his religious principles. (Act 2, scene 2) BUT
Dual Actions	Portia makes a compelling case in court that mercy be shown to Antonio. (Act 4, scene 1) BUT	Shylock demonstrates sadness at the loss of the ring from his wife, which Jessica stole. (Act 2, scene 8) BUT
Dual Actions	Portia, disguised as a male lawyer, demands that Bassanio give her the ring she gave him. (Act 4, scene 1) BUT	Shylock looks forward to extracting revenge on Antonio by taking his pound of flesh. (Act 3, scene 1) BUT
Final Impressions		

RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.