



The Merchant of Venice Justice Versus Mercy

Two dueling concepts are presented in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*: justice and mercy. **Justice** is the act of following the law, while **mercy** is a show of compassionate kindness toward a person who has done you wrong or toward one who holds less power than you.

As you read *The Merchant of Venice*, record scenes, quotations, and/or other elements from the text that emphasize the importance of justice and the importance of mercy.

After finishing the play and completing the chart, discuss the questions that follow with a partner.

Justice	Mercy
	<p>PORTIA:</p> <p>The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven Upon the place beneath. . . . It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings, It is an attribute to God himself, And earthly power doth then show likest God's When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew, Though justice be thy plea, consider this-- That in the course of justice none of us Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy, And that same prayer doth teach us all to render The deeds of mercy. (No Fear: 4.1.173–191)</p>

Questions for Peer Discussion:

Do you think justice or mercy is a more important quality within the framework of the play? Why?

Do you think justice or mercy is a more important quality to emphasize in daily life? Why?

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.

SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.