Vikram’s English Academy (ICSE)

Act I Scene 1:- Opens the play. We are introduced to the characters and also understand the nature of the friendship of Antonio, Salerio, Solanio, Bassanio, Lorenzo and Gratiano. Portia is introduced too in the scene though she does not make an entry yet. But too woo Portia Bassanio needs money and that sets up the plot of the play. The unexplained melancholy of Antonio creates an intuition of something sad that is about to happen. The highlight of the scene remains the friendship of Antonio and Bassanio and shows us the generosity of Antonio and the pragmatism of Bassanio.

Act I Scene 2:- Portia and Nerissa are introduced in the scene. We see her as witty and smart but devoted to her father. The condition of caskets to get married to Portia is revealed in the scene. Portia is a little unhappy that she does not have the right to choose her own husband but decides to still follow the diktat of her father. The different descriptions of the wooers and Portia’s reaction to them invoke humour. We are also introduced to the aspect of racism visible in Portia when she reacts to the information of the arrival of the Prince of Morocco.

Act I Scene 3:- This scene introduces us to Shylock the villain of the play. The condition of the bond for securing the loan is proposed in this scene. Antonio is gullible and falls prey to the pretension of Shylock. We also see the shrewd nature of Shylock when he sees Antonio getting angry. He traps Antonio and convinces him to sign the bond which he says is in merry sport. We see Bassanio in better light when he says that he would rather dwell in his necessity but does not want Antonio to sign that kind of bond for him.

Act II Scene 1:\_- The main purpose of the scene is to create an illusion of passage of time. As the bond is for three months it is elements like these that will help to show the time passing by and then Shylock’s demand for the pound of flesh. We are also introduced to the boastful Prince of Morocco and his claim to bravery. Portia is being diplomatic when she says that had she not been hedged by the condition put by her father he too stood a fair chance.

Scene 2:- The jester of the play Launcelot is introduced and so is his habit of malapropism. There is a lot of humour created when Launcelot tries to fool his father Old Gobbo. Bassanio is making preparations to leave for Belmont . The scene also prepares the ground for the presence of Gratiano and Launcelot at Belmont to participate in the ring story towards the end of the play.

Scene 3: - The scene introduces us to the sub plot which is the love story between Jessica Lorenzo. The elopement story too begins here when Jessica gives a letter to be delivered to Lorenzo. Perception of passage of time is also created by the scene.

Scene 4:- Scene four sees the development of the Jessica story. We realise that Lorenzo and Jessica will elope after the masquerade. We are also told about the gold and jewels that they are planning to take with them for the elopement.

Scene 5:- The scene is important for the dramatic irony that it introduces. Shylock is unaware of the plan of his daughter whereas the audience is already aware about it. We are shown the insecurity that creeps in when Shylock realises about the masque. He gives her a list of things that she should not do if there is a masque around. Jessica is keen to leave the house of Shylock .

Scene 6:- This scene hold importance as it the one in which the elopement actually happens. We also see Jessica a little embarrassed at her disguise of a pageboy. She is shocked to know that she is supposed to be a torchbearer. At the end of the scene we are told that they are not participating in the masque and that Bassanio would sail for Belmont on the same night.

Scene 7:- A very important scene where the first choice of casket is made by Morocco. We see his reasoning to choose the gold casket. The details related to all the caskets are revealed and the justification provided by Morocco make the scene interesting. Also a strong message that is given by the scroll is that all that glitters is not gold.

Scene 8:- This scene informs us about the events which cannot be shown on stage. The departure of Bassanio, the flight of Lorenzo and Jessica would be difficult to depict. The first hint about the drowning of Antonio’s merchant vessel is dropped here but a confirmation of the same is not given to create an element of suspense.

Scene 9:- Prince off Arragon makes his choice chooses the casket. The three pats off the oath which was to be taken before the choice of casket are clarified here. We see the reasoning provided by him to make the choice of the silver casket. Also as his choice of the casket also proves to be wrong, the audience realises that lead is the correct casket to choose.

ACT III:- Scene 1:- The news about the drowning of Antonio’s ship is confirmed here. Salerio and Solanio mock Shylock and he retaliates. Here there is sympathy that is evoked by Shylock when he talks about Jews being equal. After Tubal enters the interaction between him and Shylock oscillates between good and bad news for Shylock. We are shown the human side of Shylock when he reacts to the news of his turquoise ring being sold cheaply by Jessica. Jessica evokes some dislike on the same account. This scene sharpens the resolve of Shylock to take revenge.

Scene 2:- This scene is one of the most important scenes and is the dramatic centre of the play. The casket story ends here and so does the suspense off weather Bassanio would choose the right casket. When Portia surrenders herself to Bassanio the play reaches its climax. There is a continuation of the Bond story in this scene and the next humour pot, the ring story commences in this scene. Also we get an insight into the character of Portia in the scene and realise her generosity and sacrificing nature.

Scene 3:-This scene marks a shift inn the tone of Antonio against Shylock. He tries to convince Shylock but isn’t successful. The balance of mind of Antonio is visible and it seems he is now resigned to his fate. It also brings us one step closer to the trial scene.

Scene 4:\_ The scene prepares the background for Portia’s presence during the trial scene. We also realise that she gets her legal acumen from her cousin Dr Bellario. The maturity of Portia’s character is visible in the scene .She very wisely plans to reach Venice in a disguise to defend Antonio during the trail scene.

Scene 5:- The scene offers comic relief before the intensity of the trail scene. The scene also acts a filler between the departure of Bassanio and Portia and their arrival at Venice during the trail scene. Launcelot’s humour assumes significance and the friendly banter between Lorenzo and Launcelot creates humour.

ACT 4:- Scene 1 :- In this scene the play reaches its climax. Justice is delivered here and the bond story also comes to a close. The heightened suspense is relieved by the wit of Portia in saving Antonio Earlier inn the scene she impresses with her quality of mercy speech. One does feel for Shylock who is forced to embrace Christianity. The asking off the ring from Bassanio and his reluctant giving induces humour at the end of the scene. Overall the scene takes the play to a new height with a gamut of emotions.

Scene2:- Not an important scene. A short scene which helps Nerissa to get the ring from Gratiano. As a judge Portia also has to take Shylock’s signature on the deed of gift made. The stage is set for the final scene.

Act 5 Scene 1:- The last scene of the play. Brings the comedy Merchant of Venice to its humorous peak. After the intense Act 4 , this scene is to be enjoyed by the audience which is no suspense, gloom or pain. The scene starts with music and love but becomes more comic later. The confrontation of Bassanio and Gratiano over the rings encourages laughter. Also the play is brought to its happy ending with good news all around. Antonio is happy about the return of the ships. There are three happy couples and their life looks as if it would be happy ever after.