

Money in Shakespeare's 'The Merchant of Venice'

Lead-in: Read the advertisement. What's a payday loan?

GET YOUR PAYDAY LOAN HERE!

Feeling the pinch? No worries! Take out one of our loans to keep the wolf from the door and stay afloat till pay day.

If you can't pay this loan back, we will use any means necessary to reclaim our money.

www.Tonypaydayloansnow.com

Answer the questions:

1. What do you think the underlined expressions in the advert mean?
2. Why do you think some people might take out payday loans?
3. What are the problems of payday loans?
4. Many people think that payday loans should be made illegal. Do you agree? Why/Why not?

Task 1: Read the emails written by characters from Shakespeare's play 'The Merchant of Venice'. Then answer the questions.

1. Who wants to borrow money, and why?
2. Who's going to lend the money?
3. What are the terms of the loan?

Hey Antonio,

Sorry I haven't been in touch. How are things with you? All well here. I've fallen in love with the most beautiful woman, Portia. She's clever and pretty. Who could ask for more? I was just wondering...you wouldn't be a mate and lend me some money, would you? The thing is, I'm seriously **in the red**. If I could only get Portia to marry me, all my worries would be over. Not only is she gorgeous, but she's **minted** too!

Cheers,

Bassanio

Yo Bassanio,

Sorry, I'm a bit **skint** myself. Why don't you borrow money from Shylock? I know he's a bit dodgy, but needs must, and I think you'll easily pay him back once you get your hands on Portia's **dosh**. And if I can help you to get the loan, just let me know.

Later,

Antonio

P.S. Old Shylock isn't just rich! He also has a really beautiful daughter called Jessica. I think our good friend, Lorenzo, is in love with her! Watch this space ...

Hi Nerissa,

You know how my dad's dying wish was that I get married? Well, I just don't fancy any of the lads who've turned up so far. Not only that, dear old Dad fixed it that anyone who does turn up to marry me needs to choose from three caskets. The one who picks the gold one wins me as his wife! I can only hope the winner isn't a total loser - a lot of the guys who're coming round are nothing but **gold-diggers**.

Come over and help me out, will you?

Portia

Dear Mr Shylock,

I would like to apply to borrow some money from you (3000 ducats) as I have debts to pay. Please let me know how I can go about applying for a loan with your company. I would promise to pay you back in full after three months. I have a **good credit rating** and a friend, Antonio, who will be my **guarantor**.

Yours sincerely,

Bassanio

Dear Bassanio,

I must admit I am surprised to hear from you. Isn't it you and your friends who spit at me in the street and call me dog just because of my religion? Do you have something against Jewish people?

That said, business is business. I will lend you the money – **interest-free** – on one condition. If you are late with your repayments, I will take a pound of flesh from your friend Antonio as my payment.

Please find attached a contract for you to sign and return to me.

Kind regards,

Shylock

My darling Lorenzo.

Tonight is the night! I cannot wait to escape with you and begin a new life away from my **miserly** father. I'll make sure I bring some of the family jewels to help us on our way!

With all my love,

Jessica XXX

Task 2: Match the characters' names with the information about them.

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|-------------|--|
| 1. Nerissa | a. He is a money lender who is often insulted because of his religion. |
| 2. Portia | b. He wants to marry Portia because she is beautiful and rich. |
| 3. Antonio | c. She is a friend of Portia's. |
| 4. Bassanio | d. She is Shylock's daughter, is Jewish and is in love with someone who is not Jewish. |
| 5. Jessica | e. He doesn't have enough money to lend his friend Bassanio, but tries to help him anyway. |
| 6. Shylock | f. She is a rich woman. Lots of men want to marry her. |

Task 3: Write definitions for the words in bold in the emails.

Words / phrases	Definitions
be in the red	

Task 4: What do these proverbs mean?

- 'All that glitters is not gold.' (From 'The Merchant of Venice', Act 2, Scene 7)
- 'The best things in life are free.'
- 'There's no such thing as a free lunch.'
- 'Money is the root of all evil.'