

Introduction

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

The world's greatest playwright, William Shakespeare, was born of a middle class family in England. Since his family had money, his childhood was very comfortable. However, William could not attend a university, because his family lost their wealth when he was thirteen years old.



At the age of eighteen he married Anne Hathaway, who was eight years older than him. He had three children with her. It is believed that Shakespeare began to write as a playwright around 1590. In the beginning, he was just copying the stories of other authors and sharpening his writing skills. But he kept getting more and more popular. Finally, he achieved some success as an actor and a playwright and in 1594 became a leading member of the King's official playwright

company, where he continued to write until his death.

He wrote thirty-seven plays, and his work is generally divided up into four periods: historic plays, "joyous" comedies, tragedies, and tragic romantic comedies. His four well-known great tragedies include *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. They were written during the tragedies period. The sonnets in Shakespeare's plays clearly support his reputation as the best poet and greatest dramatist that has ever lived.

Shakespeare died on his fifty-second birthday on April 23, 1616 in his birthplace, Stratford-Upon-Avon. The people there still annually celebrate his death.

The Merchant of Venice is a comedy divided up into five acts and was published in 1597. Antonio, a Venetian merchant, has a close friend, Bassanio. One day, Bassanio asks Antonio for a loan because he desperately needs money to court Portia, who lives in Belmont. Antonio agrees, but he is unable to make the loan himself, so he borrows some money at an exorbitant interest rate from the moneylender Shylock. The moneylender will also be entitled to a pound of Antonio's own flesh if he can't pay back the loan.

In order to marry Portia, Bassanio must first choose the case that contains her portrait from among the three different cases made of gold, silver, and lead. He passes the test and gets a chance to marry her.



In the meantime, Antonio has lost all of his ships and can no longer pay back the loan from Shylock. Wise Portia hears of this and disguises herself as a man and becomes Antonio's lawyer. Finally, she saves him with her wisdom. She reminds Shylock that he can take a pound of Antonio's flesh only if he can do it without causing any bleeding because the contract does not entitle him to spill any blood.

The Merchant of Venice is one of Shakespeare's romantic comedies and is the most popular and successful work among his comic plays.



How to Use This Book

本書使用說明

1 Bassanio took the money that Antonio had borrowed although he had a bad feeling about the loan contract. He bought many gifts and clothes that he needed to propose to Portia. He then handed the gifts into a cartilage. He and his servant, Gratiano, went to Portia's house with the carriage. When Bassanio arrived, Portia was delighted. She had hoped that he would return for her. She was in love with him.

2 have a bad feeling about sth 對某事感到不安
loan [ləʊn] n. 1 借貸 2 借貸的利息
contract [kən'trækt] n. 1 契約 2 合約 3 條約
delighted [dɪ'leɪtɪd] a. 1 高兴的 2 高兴的
return [rɪ'tɜ:n] v. 1 返回 2 归还

3 "Portia, I'm so happy to see you again," said Bassanio. "But I have something awful to tell you. I'm broke! I have no money." "Bassanio! Don't worry about that! I have all of the money we need. Money means nothing to me! The only thing you have to worry about is choosing the right box. Then, we can live happily ever after!" Portia told Bassanio about her father's contract.

4 awful [ə'wʊl] a. 1 可怕的 2 糟糕的
broke [brəʊk] a. 1 破产的 2 破产的
worry [wə'ri:] v. 1 担心 2 烦恼
choose [tʃu:z] v. 1 选择 2 挑选
happily [hə'pɪli] a. 1 高兴的 2 愉快的
ever after [ɪvə'ɑ:tə] n. 1 永远 2 永远以后

1 Original English texts

It is easy to understand the meaning of the text, because the text is divided phrase by phrase and sentence by sentence.

2 Explanation of the vocabulary

The words and expressions that include vocabulary above the elementary level are clearly defined.

3 Response notes

Spaces are included in the book so you can take notes about what you don't understand or what you want to remember.

4 One point lesson

In-depth analyses of major grammar points and expressions help you to understand sentences with difficult grammar.

How to Improve Reading Ability

如何增進英文閱讀能力

1 Catch key words

Read the key words in the sentences and practice catching the gist of the meaning of the sentence. You might question how working with a few important words could enhance your reading ability. However, it's quite effective. If you continue to use this method, you will find out that the key words and your knowledge of people and situations enables you to understand the sentence.

2 Divide long sentences

Read in chunks of meaning, dividing sentences into meaningful chunks of information. In the book, chunks are arranged in sentences according to meaning. If you consider the sentences backwards or grammatically, your reading speed will be slow and you will find it difficult to listen to English.

You are ready to move to a more sophisticated level of comprehension when you find that narrowly focusing on chunks is irritating. Instead of considering the chunks, you will make it a habit to read the sentence from the beginning to the end to figure out the meaning of the whole.

3 Make inferences and assumptions

Making inferences and assumptions are part of your ability. If you don't know, try to guess the meaning of the words. Although you don't know all the words in context, don't go straight to the dictionary. Developing an ability to make inferences in the context is important.








The first way to figure out the meaning of a word is from its context. If you cannot make head or tail out of the meaning of a word, look at what comes before or after it. Ask yourself what can happen in such a situation. Make your best guess as to the word's meaning. Then check the explanations of the word in the book or look up the word in a dictionary.

4 Read a lot and reread the same book many times

There is no shortcut to mastering English. Only if you do a lot of reading will you make your way to the summit. Read fun and easy books with an average of less than one new word per page. Try to immerse yourself in English as often as you can.

Spend time "swimming" in English. Language learning research has shown that immersing yourself in English will help you improve your English, even though you may not be aware of what you're learning.

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Before You Read



Shylock

I am a moneylender¹ living in Venice, Italy. I make² a lot of money by lending money to others and charging³ them high interest⁴. People in Venice hate me because I am Jewish⁵ and greedy⁶. But I don't care. I hate them, too, particularly⁷, Antonio.

1. moneylender [ˈmʌni.lendər] (n.) 放貸的人
2. make money 賺錢
3. charge [tʃɑːrdʒ] (v.) 索價；索費
4. interest [ˈɪntərəst] (n.) 利息
5. Jewish [ˈdʒuːɪʃ] (a.) 猶太人的
6. greedy [ˈɡriːdi] (a.) 貪婪的
7. particularly [pərˈtɪkjələrlɪ] (adv.) 特別地



Antonio

Like Shylock, I am a moneylender. I am, however, quite different from¹ him. I like helping people when they are in trouble². I often lend money to others and don't charge any interest. Shylock hates me for doing this. I hate him, too, because he is heartless³ and greedy.

1. be different from... 與……不相同
2. be in trouble 在困難中；有難
3. heartless [ˈhɑːrtləs] (a.) 無情的；冷酷的



Bassanio

I am Antonio's best friend. Whenever I need money, Antonio helps me. Recently, I fell in love with¹ a wonderful woman named Portia. I need some money to buy Portia some gifts before I propose to² her. As always, I will ask Antonio to help me.

1. to fall in love with sb 愛上某人
2. to propose to sb 向某人求婚



Portia

My father recently passed away¹, and I inherited² a lot of money. Before he died, he set up³ some conditions⁴ for suitors⁵ who want to marry me. They must go through⁶ a test.

1. to pass away 過世
2. inherit [ɪnˈherɪt] (v.) 繼承
3. to set up 設立
4. condition [kənˈdɪʃən] (n.) 條件
5. suitor [ˈsuːtər] (n.) 求婚者
6. to go through 通過



Gratiano & Nerissa

We are Bassanio and Portia's servants¹. Even though² we are inferior to³ them, they treat us like⁴ their own family. We will always be loyal to⁵ them.

1. servant [ˈsɜːrvənt] (n.) 僕役
2. even though 即使
3. be inferior to sb 較不如某人
4. to treat sb like... 待某人如……
5. be loyal to sb 對某人忠誠



The Moneylenders

RESPONSE NOTES

I have a story to tell. It is a story of love and hatred. A story of giving and taking. A story of laughter and tears. This story was told a long time ago. But it still has as much meaning today as it did then. It happened in a city called Venice¹ in Italy. This beautiful city rests² like a crown³ jewel⁴ on the Adriatic Sea⁵.

1. Venice [ˈvenɪs] (n.)
義大利城市威尼斯

2. rest [rest] (v.) 靠；擺放；
放置在……上

3. crown [kraʊn] (n.) 皇冠

4. jewel [ˈdʒuːəl] (n.)
寶石；珠寶

5. Adriatic Sea 亞得里亞海
(義大利和巴爾幹半島間的
內海)

6. merchant [ˈmɜːtʃənt] (n.) 商人

7. repay [rɪˈpeɪ] (v.) 償還；回報
(repay-repaid-repaid)

8. in terrible ways 以淒慘的方式

9. simply [ˈsɪmpli] (adv.)
單純地；只



There lived a moneylender named Shylock in Venice. He earned a lot by lending money to merchants⁶. Many people hated Shylock. Some people hated him because he forced merchants to repay⁷ him in terrible ways⁸. Others hated him simply⁹ because he was Jewish.

One Point

Some people ... **Others** hated him simply because he was Jewish. 有些人……其他人憎恨他，只因為他是猶太人。

Some...Others... : 有些……，其他的…… (對照用法)

e.g.: **Some** say that he is innocent. **Others** say that he is guilty. 有些人說他是無辜的，其他人說他有罪。