

### **Study and Discussion Questions**

1. What connections can be seen between the circumstances of Shakespeare's own life (*In Search of Shakespeare*) and *The Merchant of Venice*?
2. Was Shakespeare anti-Semitic? Or was he using Shylock to arouse opposition to anti-Semitism?
3. *The Merchant of Venice* is classified as a comedy. Do you think it is a comedy or a tragedy? Both? Neither? Explain with references to the play.
4. Who is the most despicable character in the play? Who are the admirable characters? Explain.
5. Who are the villains in *The Merchant of Venice*? Who are the heroes? Explain.
6. Is Shylock a victim? Why/why not? Explain.
7. Why is the play entitled *The Merchant of Venice*? Who is the merchant? Does the play center on the merchant? Explain.
8. Check out "Portia: Mean, Detestable Hypocrite." Agree/disagree? Explain with references to play. [<http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/xMerchantof.html#Portia>]
9. What does Antonio mean when he says, "The devil can cite scripture for his purpose"? (*Act I, Scene III, Line 99*)
10. In Act II, Scene VII, the Prince of Morocco chooses the gold casket and discovers a message therein that opens with this famous line: *All that glitters is not gold*. What does this line mean?
11. Where do your sympathies lie? Why?
12. What is usury? How was it viewed in Elizabethan society?
13. What do you think is the purpose of the rings to the play?