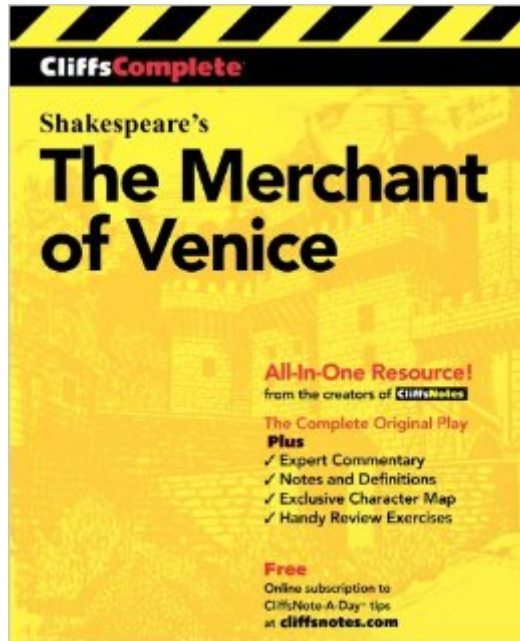


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CliffsComplete Merchant Of Venice



Synopsis

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Customer Reviews

"Merchant" is categorized among Shakespeare's comedies, primarily because of the romantic

subplot that ends --as most of the Bard's comedies do-- in serial weddings. But, of course, it is far more than a typical romantic comedy. Shakespeare ostensibly intended to write about the complicated theme of exterior versus interior. The value of gold and money against the value of friendship and loyalty. Shylock, the Jewish moneylender is portrayed as greedy and more concerned about his money than he is about his own daughter. But modern readers have a hard time sympathizing with Antonio the Merchant and his superficial and hateful friends, Bassanio, Gratiano, et al. They are racist, quick to judge, wasteful, and unconcerned about others. They are delighted to treat Shylock like a dog and to invent phony excuses for their own nasty behavior. Shylock is no innocent victim. Indeed, he brings about his own ruin. But in a play whose key passage is Portia's courtroom discourse on the quality of mercy, mercy and justice are hard to find in any character. Shakespeare's language is as powerful as ever in this play, but the unlikeable Shylock and the venom doled out to him by his sordid persecutors makes this play a stomach-churning challenge.

I'm not entirely sure how one should set about reviewing a Shakespeare play. I recently reread "The Merchant of Venice" in order to reacquaint myself with the story so that I could read a related book. Despite many critics' beliefs that the play is anti-semitic, "The Merchant of Venice" is a timeless look at the role that material desires can play in our lives. As one of Shakespeare's comedies, there is sure to be the sub-plots that include romantic intrigue and women in disguise. The play begins with the title merchant Antonio and his friend Bassanio making a deal with Shylock, a rich Jew. The deal is that Shylock will sponsor their merchant ships; if their ships should fail, Shylock can enact his revenge on Antonio by procuring one pound of his flesh. Meanwhile, Bassanio has fallen in love with Portia, a rich heiress, and tries to win her hand, while ultimately making sure that his friend Antonio doesn't lose his to Shylock. Granted there is mistreatment of Shylock that is rooted in his Jewishness; but the jibes that are directed toward him deal more so with his attitude toward money than to his heritage. For Shylock is more concerned with his money than he is with his daughter; and when she runs away to marry a Christian, his sole concern is the jewels and money she stole from him. Shylock is a hateful man, not because he is a Jew, but because of his actions (and many seem to miss that). When Bassanio and Antonio's venture fails, Antonio is doomed to die at the hand of Shylock. But in typical Shakespearean comedy fashion, a woman in disguise wins the day and defeats Shylock's supposedly ingenious scheme. I truly believe that some of the best scenes are not those that Shylock is in, yet whenever anyone speaks of "The Merchant of Venice" he is the main name mentioned. The scenes between Portia and her various suitors as they try to solve the

riddle to winning her hand tells the reader much about the ways of man's thinking; it is the men who chose gold and silver that cannot court Portia. Rather it is the man who recognizes the worth in all that doesn't glitter who wins the prize.

I clicked on the "Kindle Version" link from the paperback "The Merchant of Venice (Folger Shakespeare Library)" since I had purchased several of the Folger hard-copy editions and found the full facing page annotations a huge help in getting the most from the plays. I was worried that the alternating pages of annotations and text would be a bit cumbersome on the Kindle. I need not have worried, as the annotations, and all other extra features, are MISSING. The product description, however, of the Kindle edition does state that the extra features are present on this eBook. , please convert the Folger Shakespeare Library to the Kindle including all extra features with annotations. In the meantime, please clean up the descriptions for this product line.
edit 9/12/2014: There is an actual properly annotated version now, the RSC Shakespeare in Modern Library Classics editions, such as The Merchant of Venice (Modern Library Classics). The complete Shakespeare is not yet available but is scheduled for Feb 2015.

I really enjoyed having the side by side version...I found myself reading most often in the original text first, and glancing over at the modern text for clarification of meaning and humor. It made it very quick and enjoyable to read. High recommendation!

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