between the lines

A lesson written for every student in the room

FREE LESSON SAMPLER

The Merchant of Venice: A lady richly left

How does Shakespeare present the friendship between Antonio and Bassanio in Act 1 Scene 1?

Lesson 3 of 33 from the scheme of learning

Teacher notes, slides and student pages at all three levels

Written for the AQA specification



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What is in this sampler

This is one complete lesson from our The Merchant of Venice scheme for Literature Paper 1, Section A. It comes exactly as it appears in the full scheme, so you can teach it next week and see how our lessons work.

Teacher notes	Timings with slide numbers, Do Now answers, the exploded quotation, the hinge question and what each answer tells you, the task at three levels, a model and notes on misconceptions and adapting the lesson (next pages).
Slides	The editable PowerPoint deck for Lesson 3, with teacher notes on every slide (separate file).
Student pages	The lesson's pages from the student booklet: one question, with the Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support side by side (at the end of this document).

How every lesson works

Know	Do Now from memory, vocabulary, then the reading. The five Do Now questions build on what students learned in Lessons 1 and 2 of the full scheme.
Apply	Explode one quotation together; a hinge question checks understanding.
Master	One shared task, with Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support; then a model and an exit ticket. Most Master tasks are What–How–Why paragraphs, and some are creative or other forms: in this lesson, a diary entry.

Three levels of support

Every student answers the same question in every lesson. What changes is the support on the page, so the whole class does the same lesson:

Securing	The most support: a word bank, a choice of quotations, a worked example and sentence starters. For students working towards a grade 4.
Strengthening	Prompts for What, How and Why, a paragraph planner and a checklist. For students working at grades 5 and 6.
Soaring	A debatable statement, prompts to think further and an argument planner. For students aiming at grades 7 to 9.

The names describe the support, never the student. The hinge question shows who might start where, and students move between levels from lesson to lesson.

In the full scheme

- 33 lessons like this one, with editable slides and a teacher handbook (lesson notes, unit map, assessment guide and knowledge bank)
- A student booklet with every lesson and all three levels of support, plus the same lessons as one pack per level
- Six weeks of independent practice homework at three levels

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- Four Feedback Loop progress checks with whole-class feedback sheets and improvement tasks
- An exam-style end-of-unit essay with a teacher guide, level guidance and annotated model answers
- A Soaring stretch booklet for students aiming at the top levels
- A catch-up sheet for every lesson, for students who missed it
- An inclusion guide: pre-teaching, SEND, EAL and pupil premium notes for every lesson
- The revision workbook and the model answer pack, to print for every student
- Every licence for the scheme also includes its 30 Raising Achievement drills for intervention sessions

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Lesson 3: A lady richly left

SEQUENCE 1: CONTEXT AND ACT 1 · 60 MINUTES

How does Shakespeare present the friendship between Antonio and Bassanio in Act 1 Scene 1?

By the end of the lesson, students can

- Explain how Bassanio speaks of Portia in images of wealth, and how Antonio answers him in plain words
- Analyse how Antonio's "Try what my credit can in Venice do" shows what he will risk for a friend
- Write Antonio's diary entry for the night Bassanio asks for help, using at least three exact phrases from Act 1 Scene 1

Lesson at a glance

Time	Phase	What happens	Slides
0–8	Know	Do Now: five quick questions on Lesson 1 and the terms students need. Students self-mark from the answer slide.	2–3
8–20	Know	Pre-teach "credit", "fleece", "hazard" and "commodity". Read the extract aloud, with one student as Bassanio and one as Antonio, then ask: what does Bassanio want, and what does Antonio say?	4–7
20–30	Apply	Explode the quotation together. Think aloud about what it means to put your credit at a friend's service, then students annotate their copy. Before you reveal any notes, students try the four empty boxes on the first explode slide, on their own or after you model one box.	8–9
30–35	Apply	Hinge question on mini-whiteboards. Use the answers to decide who starts on which level of support.	10–11
35–53	Master	Students write Antonio's diary entry for the night Bassanio asks for help, using their level of support in the student booklet. Share the model entry in the last five minutes and ask three students to read a sentence aloud.	12–13
53–60	Master	Exit ticket. Collect and sort into three piles to plan the start of Lesson 4.	14

Do Now answers

1	In which year did Edward I expel Jewish people from England?	**1290**
2	When were Jewish people allowed to return to England?	**1656**
3	What was the Ghetto in Venice?	**The district where Venice made its Jewish people live from 1516, with gates locked at night**
4	What is usury?	**Lending money at interest, which the Church taught was a sin for Christians**
5	In Lesson 1, what is antisemitism?	**Prejudice against Jewish people**

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Vocabulary

credit	the trust that lets a person borrow money because others believe they will repay it
fleece	the wool of a sheep; in a Greek myth, Jason sailed to win a golden one
hazard	a risk, or something you risk losing
commodity	goods that can be bought and sold

Reading

Act 1 Scene 1: Bassanio asks for help

Bassanio owes Antonio more than he can repay. He has already said that he is in debt, and Antonio has promised that his "purse", his "person" and his "extremest means" are at Bassanio's service. Now Bassanio tells him about a lady in Belmont.

BASSANIO.
In Belmont is a lady richly left;
And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,
Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes
I did receive fair speechless messages:
Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia:
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece;
Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strand,
And many Jasons come in quest of her.
O my Antonio, had I but the means
To hold a rival place with one of them,
I have a mind presages me such thrift,
That I should questionless be fortunate!

ANTONIO.
Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;
Neither have I money nor commodity
To raise a present sum: therefore go forth;
Try what my credit can in Venice do:
That shall be rack'd, even to the uttermost,
To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.
Go, presently inquire, and so will I,
Where money is, and I no question make
To have it of my trust or for my sake.

William Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice (1596–97), Act 1 Scene 1

Word help **richly left**: left a large fortune by her father · **Colchos' strand**: the shore of Colchis, where Jason sailed to win the golden fleece · **presages**: tells in advance · **rack'd**: stretched

Explode the quotation

Method
An imperative verb: Antonio gives an instruction, in plain words, with no image in it. Bassanio's own speech is full of images of wealth.

Zoom in
"Try" is an imperative verb that invites Bassanio to act. "credit" is an abstract noun for the trust that lets Antonio borrow in Venice.

"Try what my credit can in Venice do"

Effect
The audience sees a friend who has no money to hand but gives his good name instead. He has already promised all he has before Bassanio says what he wants.

Purpose
Shakespeare makes the friendship a matter of credit as well as love. In Scene 3 that credit becomes a signed bond, with a price.

Hinge question

Antonio says "Try what my credit can in Venice do". What is he giving Bassanio?

A. His good name, so that Bassanio can borrow money in Antonio's name. (the right answer)

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B. A gift of money from his own purse.

C. A place on one of his ships to travel to Belmont.

What the answers tell you

B means the student has missed “Neither have I money” two lines earlier: Antonio has no ready money. C means the student has taken “fortunes are at sea” as a gift of a ship: re-read the lines together and ask what credit is. These may be your students who start on Securing.

Why the answer is right

Antonio says that all his fortunes are at sea and that he has no money, so he gives Bassanio his credit, which means his good name in Venice, to borrow against.

Master task: diary entry

Write Antonio’s diary entry for the night Bassanio asks for his help. Say why he is sad, what Bassanio asked and how he spoke of Portia, why Antonio said yes before he had heard the plan, and what he will do in the morning. Use at least three exact phrases from Act 1 Scene 1.

Securing aiming for a 4

A frame for each part of the diary entry, exact phrases to use and a word bank.

“In Belmont is a lady richly left”

“all my fortunes are at sea”

“Try what my credit can in Venice do”

Strengthening aiming for grades 5 to 6

Prompts for each part of the diary entry and a success checklist.

Begin with the night and why you are sad

Say what Bassanio told you about his debts and what he asked of you

Describe how he spoke of Portia and what you noticed in his words

Explain why you promised help before you heard the plan

End with what you will do in the morning and what it may cost you

Soaring aiming for grades 7 to 9

Write the entry so that Antonio notices how Bassanio speaks of Portia’s wealth before her virtues, and chooses to help without saying that he minds. Let the reader work out what Antonio feels.

Model diary entry

The night Bassanio asked for my help.

I was sad again this evening, and I still “know not why I am so sad”. Then Bassanio came, and I was glad of anything else to think about. He owes me most, and he said so himself, “in money and in love”. Then he asked me to help him once more.

He spoke of a lady in Belmont, “richly left”, whose hair hangs “like a golden fleece”, and of the many Jasons who sail after her. I could hear that he loves her, and I could hear that he loves her fortune too. I did not mind. A man in debt dreams in gold, and I would rather he dreamed of Portia than of nothing.

I told him to ask for anything before he had said what it was. I have no money to hand, because “all my fortunes are at sea”. What I have is my name. In the morning I will go out and “Try what my credit can in Venice do”, and I will find the money for him. A friend like that is worth the risk.

What makes it work

- Keeps Antonio’s voice: sad, plain and generous, with no mention of a moneylender, because in this scene Antonio does not yet know who will lend
- Uses five exact phrases from the scene, each in double quotation marks and spelt as in the text

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