

# 15 - THE VENETIAN COURT

## Designing the Venetian Court

### WHAT YOU NEED

- A big piece of paper, or a notebook and something to write with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to visit [this page](#).
- A copy of Act 4 Scene 1 from *The Merchant of Venice*, to read either on the page or onscreen.

### ACTIVITY

- Read the opening of Act 4 Scene 1, up to the Duke's line, "Make room and let him stand before our face". Ask yourself: How do the rest of the characters address the Duke? The Duke is the ruler of Venice and he is also the judge in the Venetian Court. How might the other characters behave towards the Duke?
- Visit the Past Productions page on the Shakespeare Learning Zone [here](#) and click on The Venetian Court to investigate this setting. Look at the picture gallery and work through the things to consider.
- Using a big piece of paper, draw a floor plan for this scene. Mark on your floor plan where the entrances into the court are, where the audience will be, and where the characters will be placed. Think about the mechanics of cutting and weighing a pound of flesh from Antonio, what equipment might be needed, and mark what and where that should be. Ask yourself whether religion is important in this setting, and what you might include on stage to help the audience understand that.
- Read again the stage directions in the section of the scene you have read.
- Use counters, plastic figures or create your own models to represent all the characters in that section, and experiment with how the characters will move onto the stage.

### EXTENSION

- Create a soundscape for the opening section of the scene.
- Write a list of what you might be able to hear in the Venetian Court as it assembles. What sounds might you use to create the atmosphere? Include any sounds that might go with the feelings at this moment, such as the beating of a heart. What sound will you use for the moment when Shylock enters?
- Record all the sounds you will need to create the atmosphere.
- Edit together what you have recorded, to create a soundscape with a beginning, climax and end.
- Play your soundscape as you read aloud the opening section of the scene.

