3 - THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

Why did Shakespeare choose to set the play in Venice and Belmont?

ACTIVITY

- Visit the photo gallery of Settings on the Shakespeare Learning Zone **here.** What do these images tell you about the world of the play? What is it like? How might life be different for Christians and Jewish people? Write down any words or images that come to mind.
- Take a look at the 'Did you know' about Belmont. What is it like? Write down any words or images that come to mind. How might the different communities in Venice and Belmont relate to each other? Look at the words you have written down so far.
- Create a mood board for the world of *The Merchant of Venice*, either digitally using an app or as a collage using your own drawings or old newspapers and magazines. A mood board can help a designer to think about the overall impression they want the audience to have of a place and can be a collection of colours, textures, fabrics, styles of clothing, buildings, art work and anything else that you see which inspires you. Include all the places in the play. In your mood board, try to label the things you add to help you remember your thought process.
- Ask yourself: What did the world of Venice and Belmont mean to Shakespeare's audience? Where could the modern versions of this world be today?

EXTENSION

- Create your own Model Box for a production of *The Merchant of Venice*. Use drawings or mood boards to start your design so you are happy with it. Where will your audience sit? How will your actors enter and exit? What scenery will you have - if any?
- When your model box is finished, practise explaining how it works to an imaginary director and cast of actors. Where will some of the scenes take place in your model? The Venetian Court? The choosing of the caskets?