

4 - ANTONIO AND BASSANIO

What is at stake between Antonio and Bassanio?

WHAT YOU NEED

- Some pieces of paper, or a notebook and something to write with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to visit these pages on [Relationships](#) and [Language Analysis](#).
- A copy of Act 1 Scene 1 from *The Merchant of Venice*, to read either on the page or onscreen.

ACTIVITY

- Visit the Relationships page on the Shakespeare Learning Zone [here](#). Try filtering the relationships for 'friendship' and 'love'. There are many questions about the nature of the relationships in the play.
- Deciding why Antonio helps Bassanio is key to understanding and interpreting the play. Click on 'View the Information' and read the information about Antonio and Bassanio. Note the clues about these characters and their relationship in Act 1 Scene 1.
- Find the place in Act 1 Scene 1 where Solanio says, "Why then, you are in love." Read from there, until he says, "Because you are not sad."
- Try saying Solanio's lines aloud as if he genuinely does not know why Antonio is sad.
- Now, try saying Solanio's lines aloud as if he thinks that Antonio must be secretly in love.
- Ask yourself: which felt the most appropriate to you and why?
- Visit the Language Analysis page on the Shakespeare Learning Zone [here](#) and click on 'Analysing Imagery' then 'wealth and possessions'. Click on 'Read Act 1 Scene 1 extract' and read what happens between Antonio and Bassanio once they are left alone by their friends.
- Using the clues from Act 1 Scene 1, decide what might have happened between Antonio and Bassanio before the play starts. Ask yourself: How did they meet? For what reasons might Antonio have lent money previously? How might Bassanio have lost that money? Why does Antonio keep lending Bassanio money? You may have several ideas. Write them down.
- Imagine you are Antonio at the end of Act 1 Scene 1. Write a blog as if you are him, titled: "All the world's a stage where every man must play his part", in which you explain why you are prepared to help Bassanio and put your credit on the line for him.

EXTENSION

- Write a series of other blog entries as Antonio. Start with the day you met Bassanio: where was it, what happened, how and when did you meet? You could take selfies as Antonio, to illustrate

your blog, showing your attitude and feelings. You could even find costume that might be appropriate for your Antonio selfies.

- Visit the Past Productions page on the Shakespeare Learning Zone [here](#), to investigate the relationship between Bassanio and Antonio in RSC past productions.