

8 - LANCELOT GOBBO

In which ways might Lancelot Gobbo make the audience laugh?

WHAT YOU NEED

- Some pieces of paper, or a notebook and something to write with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to visit [this page](#).
- A copy of Act 2 Scene 2 from *The Merchant of Venice*, to read either on the page or onscreen.

ACTIVITY

- Visit the Relationships page on the Shakespeare Learning Zone [here](#). Click to view the information and scroll down to read information and key quotes about Lancelot Gobbo, to help you interpret this character and his role in the play.
- Read Lancelot Gobbo's first speech in Act 2 Scene 2.
- Write a list of all the reasons why Lancelot Gobbo should stay working for Shylock, and all the reasons why he should leave.
- Lancelot is described in the stage directions as 'the clown', which could indicate that he was played originally by Shakespeare's company clown, Will Kemp.
- One of the challenges of this speech is to make it as funny as possible. Find two objects: one to represent the 'fiend' – or devil – and one to represent the 'conscience' – or truth – that Lancelot mentions. These could be soft toys or any other household object you have to hand.
- Hold your fiend in one hand and your conscience in the other. Read the speech aloud, using exaggerated voices for the fiend and the conscience as if they are speaking to Lancelot, one in each ear. Use exaggerated movements for your fiend and conscience as they speak, as if they are reacting emotionally and giving Lancelot conflicting advice.
- Film yourself speaking the speech, using your fiend and conscience.
- Watch the film and ask yourself: which are the funniest moments in this speech and why?

EXTENSION

- Read Act 2 Scene 3, in which Lancelot says goodbye to Jessica.
- Ask yourself: Before the characters start speaking in the scene, what might Lancelot be doing to make Jessica laugh? How might Lancelot react to the letter that Jessica gives him?
- Ask yourself: How does having a clown in the play add to our understanding of the world the characters live in?
- Visit the Shakespeare Learning Zone [here](#) to investigate how Lancelot Gobbo has been portrayed on stage at the RSC.