

# STUDY GUIDE



Saddleback's *Illustrated Classics*<sup>™</sup>  
**THE MERCHANT OF VENICE**  
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**NOTES TO THE TEACHER**

**SADDLEBACK'S ILLUSTRATED CLASSICS<sup>™</sup> SERIES**

What better way could there be to motivate struggling readers? Here are 45 of the world's all-time greatest stories—in the form of full-color graphic novels, no less! (Check the copyright page in this guide for a complete list of titles.)

**THE REPRODUCIBLE EXERCISES**

The eleven reproducible exercises that support each Illustrated Classics title are ideal for use in the academically diverse classroom. All written at a sub-5.0 reading level, they are designed to be “moderately challenging” for all learners—be they on-level recreational readers, older, struggling readers in need of skills reinforcement, or native speakers of other languages who are working to improve their command of language structure.

As a whole, the exercises focus on developing the traditional skillsets that underpin reading competence. The overall goal is to reinforce and extend basic reading comprehension while using the text as a springboard for acquisition of important language arts competencies. Specific skills and concepts targeted in the exercises include: following directions, vocabulary development, recall, cause and effect, recognizing details, generalization, inference, interpreting figurative language, understanding idioms and multiple-meaning words, etc.

All students—regardless of their range of exceptionalities and markedly different experiential backgrounds—can benefit from, and even enjoy, the experience of successfully “showing what they know” via the reproducible exercises.

## **DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION: OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Responsive teachers have always used a variety of methods and strategies to tailor instruction to the needs of specific students. To this end, the reproducible exercises lend themselves to a variety of presentation modes. Following are some suggestions for varying your approach:

- ▶ **Pre-reading:** Before students begin to read the story, hand out copies of the *Previewing the Story* and *About the Author* exercises. You, or student volunteers, might read them aloud before eliciting answers from the class. The *Interpreting Visual Clues* exercise also lends itself to introducing the story through class discussion.
- ▶ **Assign reading buddies or small reading groups.** Students not yet able to work independently can be paired off as reading buddies who consult with and reinforce each other as they answer questions or solve the puzzles. Small groups can also be formed to cooperatively complete the exercises. If appropriate, groups can compete as teams. (“Winners” might finish first or have the most correct answers.)
- ▶ **When possible, give your students a choice of response modes.** As an alternative to working independently, allowing students to respond orally to the exercise questions may give some students a better chance to demonstrate their grasp of the material. Many students can greatly benefit by “listening to how other people think” as they explain their answers. Choice also increases the struggling student’s sense of autonomy and engagement—which in turn enhances his or her sense of competence and self-esteem.
- ▶ **Native speakers of other languages** will especially benefit from the combination of the pictorial representations in the book and the follow-up printed matter in the exercises. While maintaining different performance expectations for students at different levels, use the vocabulary exercises to help these students add to their stock of English words and phrases. Students at the intermediate to advanced levels are ideal candidates for the *Word Study* and *Language Study* exercises that deal with idioms, figures of speech, and multiple-meaning words.
- ▶ **Suggestions for lesson extensions:**
  - Write a paragraph about your favorite character.
  - Do Internet research on the author or the story’s setting.
  - Write a three-paragraph book report.
  - Use the vocabulary words as the basis for a spelling test.
  - Have students rewrite lines of dialogue in their own words.
  - Ask students to write a new title for the book.



THE MERCHANT OF VENICE  
**PREVIEWING THE STORY**

What's the story about? Read the summary before answering the questions.  
 Hint: There are no right or wrong answers. Use your imagination!



Would you borrow money to help a friend who is short on cash? In this story, a young man does just that. Then unexpected business losses prevent him from repaying the loan on time. Even worse, the moneylender is vengeful and bloodthirsty; in place of the money, he demands a pound of the young man's flesh! Like the borrower himself, his friends feel horrified and helpless. What can they do to save his life? Little do they know that help is on the way—from a completely unexpected source!

1. Some people think nothing of borrowing money and paying interest on the loan. Other people think it's smarter to save money until you have enough to pay for what you want. Which kind of person are *you*—a saver or a borrower? Explain your reasoning.

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2. In this story, a young woman's choice of a marriage partner is controlled by the will of her dead father. In some cultures, even today, parents still select their children's husbands and wives. Give one reason this might be a good idea and one reason why it wouldn't.

**GOOD IDEA:** \_\_\_\_\_

**BAD IDEA:** \_\_\_\_\_

3. A wealthy young heiress in the story complains that she is "bored with everything in the world." Her maid responds, "I suppose people with too much money can be as sick of it as those who have nothing." Tell why you agree or disagree with the maid's remark.

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4. Suppose someone has broken the law. Under what circumstances do you think justice should be put aside in favor of mercy? In what situation might justice without mercy be the wiser option? Give an example of each.

**IN FAVOR OF MERCY:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**IN FAVOR OF JUSTICE:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



THE MERCHANT OF VENICE  
**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**2**

**A.** Read about the author's life on the page before the story starts. After reviewing what you have read, study the statements below. Then write **T** for *true*, **F** for *false*, or **NM** for *not mentioned* next to each statement.

1. \_\_\_\_ Shakespeare studied several languages as a schoolboy.
2. \_\_\_\_ Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway when he was 28 years old.
3. \_\_\_\_ Shakespeare's acting company was called the Stratford Players.
4. \_\_\_\_ Audiences in Shakespeare's time thought he was more gifted as an actor than as a playwright.
5. \_\_\_\_ Shakespeare was born in the 15th century and died in the 16th century.
6. \_\_\_\_ Susanna, Hamnet, and Judith were the grandchildren of Mary Arden and John Shakespeare.
7. \_\_\_\_ Shakespeare is believed to have been 53 years old when he died.
8. \_\_\_\_ Shakespeare's plays were performed at the Globe Theater in London.
9. \_\_\_\_ Shakespeare's comedies are more highly regarded than his tragedies.
10. \_\_\_\_ Shakespeare was born in Stratford-on-Avon, England, on April 26, 1564.

**B.** Circle a letter to show the meaning of the **boldface** word from the reading.  
Hint: Check a dictionary if you need help.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Shakespeare's father was a <b>merchant</b> .    | 3. Shakespeare wrote a number of <b>sonnets</b> . |
| a. one who buys and sells goods for profit         | a. 14-line poems rhymed in a certain pattern      |
| b. soldier hired to fight for a foreign country    | b. very short biographies                         |
| c. one who lends money for profit                  | c. plays with many sound effects                  |
| 2. Someone who lives as a <b>country gentleman</b> | 4. Today, a <b>grammar school</b> is called       |
| a. never visits the city.                          | a. a junior college.                              |
| b. raises chickens and pigs.                       | b. a prep school.                                 |
| c. has retired from the working world.             | c. an elementary school.                          |

**INTERPRETING VISUAL CLUES**

Stories in graphic novels are told with pictures as well as with words. Pictures, for example, can tell when and where a story takes place. In fact, they can show what the characters are thinking or feeling much easier than words can.

In your book, turn to the referenced page and look closely at the picture. Then circle a letter to answer the question or complete the sentence.

1. **Page 10—top of page.**  
The details in the picture give you some clues about the time and place. You can make a good guess that the story is set in
  - a. 19th century Los Angeles.
  - b. 16th century Venice.
  - c. 20th century London.
2. **Page 17—top righthand side.**  
The inset picture of a man and a horse has a cloudlike border. This detail suggests that Portia is
  - a. picturing him in her mind.
  - b. resentful of his presence.
  - c. pleasantly surprised to see him.
3. **Page 23—bottom of page.**  
Study the expression on Bassanio's face. What is his reaction to Shylock's demand for a pound of Antonio's flesh if his debt is not repaid? It seems clear that Bassanio
  - a. is impressed with his friend's generosity.
  - b. feels sorry for Shylock.
  - c. thinks the very idea is disgusting.
4. **Page 48—top of page.**  
By studying the positions of the three main characters in the drawing, you can tell that the green-robed duke is
  - a. the defendant.
  - b. the judge.
  - c. the lawyer.
5. **Page 50—bottom of page.**  
Without reading the words, the details in the illustration show that
  - a. Shylock won't accept Bassanio's money.
  - b. Bassanio wants to repay Antonio.
  - c. Antonio wants a pound of Shylock's flesh.
6. **Page 56—middle of page.**  
Look closely at the expression on Bassanio's face. How do you think he feels about taking off the ring Portia gave him?
  - a. ready and eager
  - b. hesitant and sad
  - c. very angry and resentful