

Act 3 scene 2

Staging the casket scene

This is a long and detailed scene. As we read it, it is important to get a clear picture of:

- what is going on
- how it would have been staged in Shakespeare's theatre.

Work on your own

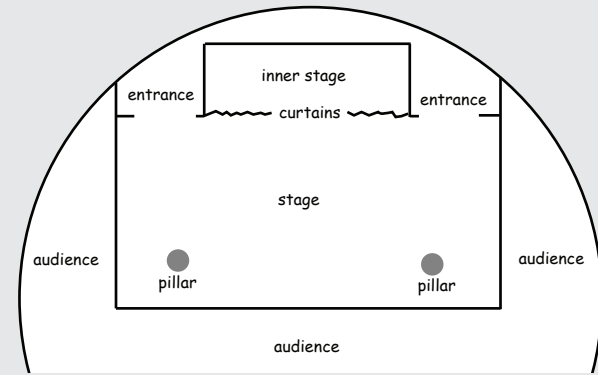
1 Copy and complete this table. It has been started for you:

Lines	Characters who speak	Other characters on stage	The main things that happen
1-42	Portia, Bassanio		
43-62			
63-72			While Bassanio looks at the caskets, the others sing the song.
73-148			
149-185			

Work with a partner

- Discuss your answers in the table.
- Now look at the pictures of Shakespeare's theatre on pages xiii-xvi and think about how Act 3 scene 2 could have been staged. For example, where are the caskets placed and how do they get there? Who is on stage and how do they get there?
- Copy the stage diagram at the top of the next page. Choose the first of the five sections in your table. Mark on the diagram where everyone is standing.

- Now do the same for the other sections.
- Present your ideas to the rest of the class.



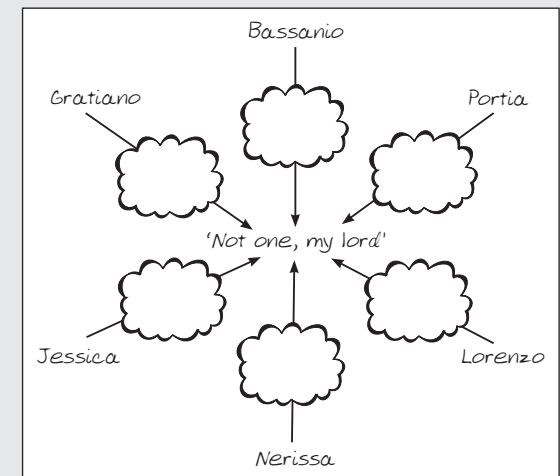
Thought-plotting

There is a dramatic moment in this same scene, when Salerio brings news that all Antonio's ships have been wrecked. Bassanio asks him if not even one of them has survived. Salerio replies, 'Not one, my lord'. At this point different characters will react in different ways according to:

- how much they know about Antonio
- how they are affected personally by this news.

Work on your own

- Copy out this diagram onto a large sheet of paper.



- 2 Think about what each of the characters in the scene would have thought and felt when they heard these words.
- 3 Write one or two sentences in each of the thought bubbles describing that character's thoughts and feelings.

Character work; Portia and Bassanio

In this scene both Portia and Bassanio reveal quite a lot about themselves.

Work with a partner

- 1 In the table below, key sections of text have been picked out. Each illustrates features of Portia's character. Copy and complete the table.

Lines	What they mean	What they tell us about her
1-5	<i>She wants him to wait a day or two before making his decision. She doesn't want to lose him, but not because she loves him.</i>	<i>She doesn't want to face up to how she would feel if he made the wrong choice, or admit even to herself that she loves him.</i>
10-14	<i>She could tell him the right answer but that would mean breaking her solemn promise. So he may choose wrongly, which would make her wish she had told him - and that would have been a sin.</i>	
60-2		
111-14		
157-65		
170-1		

- 2 Now do the same for Bassanio. Comment on these lines:
24-5, 73-4, 101-2, 183-5, 257-63, and 292-6

Follow-up

Now make a mood temperature graph for Bassanio for this scene.

- 1 Follow the pattern described on p. 102.
- 2 Decide which words should go at the top and bottom of the Y axis.
- 3 Plot the key moments for Bassanio in the scene.

Plot summary quiz

The 12 short quotations below sum up the story of this scene.

- 1 Work out the correct order for them.
- 2 Work out who said each one.

A

The world is still deceived
with ornament.

B

And I must freely have the half of anything
That this same paper brings you.

C

My maid Nerissa and myself meantime
Will live as maids and widows.

D

I pray you tarry, pause
a day or two
Before you hazard...

E

What sum owes he the Jew?

F

You saw the mistress,
I beheld the maid.

G

And not one vessel 'scape
the dreadful touch
Of merchant-marring rocks?

H

Not sick my lord, unless
it be in mind
Nor well, unless in mind.

I

Let fortune go to hell for it, not I.

J

First go with me to church,
and call me wife...