

## Bitesize KS3 English Literature – Shakespeare Merchant of Venice – Performance analysis – Staging Portia’s reveal (Directors’ Den) transcript

### Presenter

Here are the directors: 12 divorces, nine law suits and three stints in rehab between them, these guys know what they want and they normally get it. Today, they’re looking for effective ways to disguise the character Portia as a man.

### Presenter

In Act 5, Scene I, Portia reveals that she was the lawyer, Balthazar, to her lover, Bassanio. The directors want the audience to believe his shock at this revelation. Does theatre designer, Graham, have the right idea?

### Director

OK, Graham, and what’s your name, sir?

### Susan

Susan.

### Director

Graham, Susan, with a disguise that good the audience would really believe the shock Bassanio feels. I love it.

### Director

Obviously, there’s some quick scene changes in this play. How long does it take to get all this makeup on and off?

### Graham

Well, it’s not the fastest process but one would argue that the effect...

### Director

Answer the question.

### Graham

About three hours to get on, two hours to get off.

### Director

Those sort of timings might work for a film, but never on stage. That’s ridiculous. I’m out.

### Director

I don’t think I’ve ever met a man called Susan before.

### Presenter

Next into the Directors’ Den are two designers with a colour-coded costume idea.

# Bitesize

## **Designer**

Here is a letter. Read it at your leisure. There you shall find that Portia was the doctor, Nerissa there her clerk.

## **Director**

I like it. It's quite simply simple and simply effective.

## **Director**

The audience will know that Portia is disguised as Balthazar so you could argue that we don't need to try to hide it from them. Well done.

## **Director**

Look, I like the idea and I like you two, but blue is simply not your colour, girlfriend. It clashes with your eyes. For that reason, I'm out.

## **Presenter**

Next into the Directors' Den is theatre designer, Tracey, from Cheam. She wants to try something very traditional with the character of Portia.

## **Tracey**

And, of course, this technique removes the need for a disguise when Portia is pretending to be a man.

## **Director**

Tracey, in Shakespeare's times he had to cast men as women because it wasn't allowed for women to be actors.

## **Director**

You've merely created the same problem in the opposite direction. I'm out.

## **Male Actor**

I told you we should have waxed my bikini line.