

Bitesize KS3 English Literature – Shakespeare Merchant of Venice – Performance analysis – Rehearsing the court scene (The Big Scene) transcript

TITLE

THE
BIG
SCENE

PRESENTER

Hello and welcome to The Big Scene.

We're at rehearsals for The Merchant of Venice, [CAPTION-ACT 4 SCENE1]

Act 4, Scene 1, and the actress playing Portia faces arguably her biggest challenge yet.

[CAPTION-THE MERCHANT OF VENICE]

She's disguised as a man, [CAPTION –PORTIA (DISGUISED AS MAN)

(PRETENDING TO BE LAWYER) (TRYING TO WIN OVER COURT)]

pretending to be a lawyer, trying to win over the court and save [CAPTION-ANTONIO

Antonio's life and outwit the opposition, [CAPTION-SHYLOCK] team Shylock.

[CAPTION-THE MERCHANT OF VENICE]

It's a veritable minefield out there – not literally, of course, because that would be bonkers – but just how [CAPTION-DIRECTOR] the director gets her to tackle this key scene will determine how the audience interprets the entire production. Good luck with that, mate.

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ACTRESS

Be merciful. Take thrice thy money. Bid me tear the bond.

PRESENTER (OFF SCREEN)

Well, well, that is embarrassing. Portia might be disguised as a man but she's tougher than most of them, and no-one wants to see acting like that from a player of her calibre, least of all the boss.

DIRECTOR

No, no, no. You've got to stay strong. Strong. Get up.

PRESENTER

Exactly. It's time to sort the men from the boys, or the girls disguised as men, from the weeping boys who are not disguised – no, no. I've lost it. I've lost it.

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ACTRESS

One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
Are by the laws of Venice, confiscate
Unto the state of Venice.

PRESENTER

Oh, and what on earth is she playing at? This play may be a comedy but you can't take a scene of this magnitude lightly, and I don't think the director's seen the funny side, either.

DIRECTOR

Why don't you try it a bit straighter?

ACTRESS

OK.

PRESENTER

And there's clearly been a tactical rethink here. Let's see how this girl performs now.

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ACTRESS

You shall have nothing but the penalty.

PRESENTER

And this is a clinical performance, showing complete contempt for the opposition there – and, arguably, it works. But the director really wants to see Portia enjoying herself out there.

DIRECTOR

(WHISPERING) I need you to give a little bit more, OK? Now, go for it.

ACTRESS

Mm. OK.

ACTRESS

Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh.
Shed thou no blood.

PRESENTER

And what a class act, cool and in control. She knows exactly what she's doing, making a fool of the opposition and really loving it.

ACTRESS

...thou hast incurred the danger formerly by me rehearsed.

Bitesize

Down, therefore, and beg mercy at the duke.

PRESENTER

Ah.

ACTRESS

Yes. Woo! Woo! Ah!

ACTRESS

Woo-hoo!

PRESENTER

Oh dear.

ACTRESS

Fly the flag!

PRESENTER

Now she's gone just too far. That is disappointing.

ACTRESS

Yes! Come on! Yes!

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