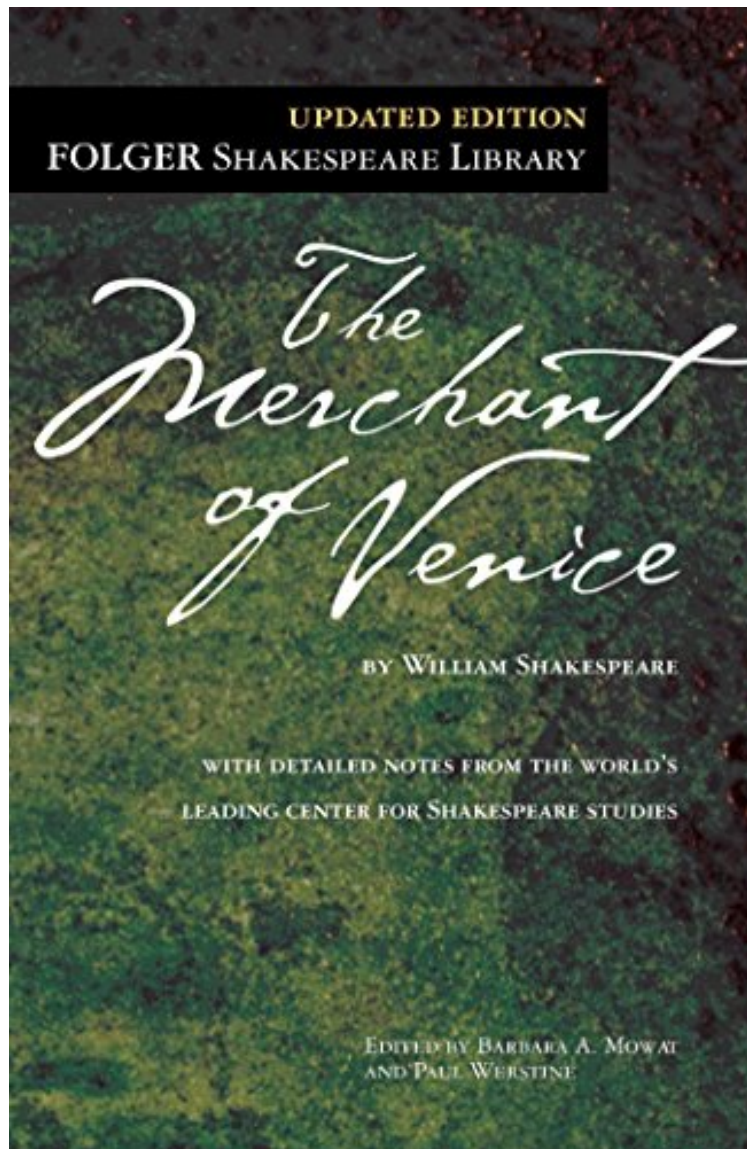


(Ebook pdf) The Merchant of Venice (Folger Shakespeare Library)

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William Shakespeare : The Merchant of Venice (Folger Shakespeare Library) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Merchant of Venice (Folger Shakespeare Library):

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Shakespeare taking chancesBy Ricardo MioCymbeline is among Shakespeare's last five plays, four of which are romances: "Pericles," "The Winter's Tale," "The Tempest," and "Cymbeline." "Cymbeline" is the least performed of the four; the plot is complicated, and the characters are mostly one dimensional (except for the heroine Imogen and the Machiavellian Iachimo). The play is ambitious, too, and entails all of Shakespeare's favorite subjects: love, loss, treachery, the unequal conflict between the good and the

evil, and the fragile balance between men and women. However, Imogen is one of the Bard's inspired creations, on the level of Rosalind, but put through a far more harrowing experience. Helen Faucet, the 19th century actress, suggested the play should be retitled "Imogen, Princess of Britain." She has a point. The reason to read the play (so say the critics) is for Shakespeare's particularly exquisite verse. Cymbeline is perhaps an acquired taste, but worth seeing for unsinkable Imogen, who has been played by a number of great actors down through the years, including Vanessa Redgrave and Dame Judi Dench. No less than Charles Van Doren has counted it among his five favorite plays by William Shakespeare. More about that later. The story is reminiscent of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs--with added pitfalls. Imogen's stepmother, the evil queen, wants her to marry her son, clueless and irredeemable Cloten. Against the Queen's wishes, and that of her father, King Cymbeline, she marries Posthumus. Posthumus is then banished from Britain. Before departing for Rome, he gives a bracelet to Imogen. In Rome, Posthumus meets the cunning interloper Iachimo, who tells him that his wife can be made unfaithful. Later, in Britain, in one of the play's truly bizarre scenes, Iachimo hides in a trunk in Imogen's bedroom. While she's asleep, he emerges and steals her bracelet. Learning that Iachimo has the bracelet, Posthumus believes the worst and orders his servant Pisanio to kill her. Meanwhile, Rome demands tribute from Britain but Cymbeline refuses. Pisanio, faithful to the bewildered Imogen, tells her to disguise as a boy and seek refuge with the invading Roman army. She becomes lost in Wales and meets a long-ago banished lord, Belarius, and two youths who are the sons of Cymbeline, and therefore princes, and Imogen's brothers. Belarius kidnapped them when he was banished and has raised them as his own sons, although Cymbeline doesn't know this; he thinks they're dead. Imogen, meanwhile, becomes ill and takes a drug that puts her into such a deep sleep that she appears to be dead. Cloten arrives on the scene dressed in Posthumus's clothes, up to no good, and is killed by one of the princes. Imogen awakes and thinks Cloten's headless body is that of her husband's. Deeply grieved, she joins the Roman general, whose forces are ready to attack Cymbeline's forces. The courage of Belarius and the two princes win the day for Britain. All come before Cymbeline where, one revelation growing from another, the plot's many twists are unraveled. Cymbeline is reunited with his sons and happiness returns to the kingdom, except for the evil Queen, who has died mysteriously. Even Iachimo the interloper and liar is pardoned. Imogen and Posthumus are reunited and presumably live happily ever after. Sound far-fetched? It is. The play's saving grace is Imogen, ever faithful, ever pure of heart, ever plucky and resourceful, and allotted the play's sublimest lines; and Iachimo, rat though he is, Shakespeare renders a three-dimensional character. The rest are one-dimensional cardboard characters--stiff, myopic, inclined to believe the worst. About Imogen, in his book "William Shakespeare," George Branes writes: "We see her in the most various situations, and she is equal to them all. We see her exposed to trial after trial, each harder than the last, and she emerges from them all, not only unscathed, but with her rare and enchanting qualities thrown into ever stronger belief." Finally, Charles Van Doren has this to say: "When you have written 30 plays, and know everything about writing plays, and in particular know that your skill will not allow you to make any really bad mistakes, you may be willing to take some very big chances and try some things that have never been tried before. This is what Shakespeare does in 'Cymbeline'; and it is the reason above all why I love the play." 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The Darkly Humorous--Richard II--is Reviewed By Brian Wayne Wells This is a copy of the famous Shakespeare play--Richard III--published by Signet Publishing Company. This particular publisher has been my favorite publisher Shakespeare plays since my undergraduate days. Signet's entire collection of Shakespeare's plays contains much more than the simple transcript of the play itself. Each volume contains an extensive number of essays and articles on the particular play which is contained in the volume. I have gone back to these volumes time and time again in order to read these articles. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Is this Shakespeare or is it Shakespeare? By James Bonavito My eight year old son and I took turns reading the pages of Romeo and Juliet. He and I both were excited and interested in the story not that we were reading and learning great Shakespeare. (a very nice way to sneak in great works of art) This series of Shakespeare for children books is an excellent way to introduce your younger children (especially boys) to a little more sophisticated literature without any fuss.

In The Merchant of Venice, the path to marriage is hazardous. To win Portia, Bassanio must pass a test prescribed by her father's will, choosing correctly among three caskets or chests. If he fails, he may never marry at all. Bassanio and Portia also face a magnificent villain, the moneylender Shylock. In creating Shylock, Shakespeare seems to have shared in a widespread prejudice against Jews. Shylock would have been regarded as a villain because he was a Jew. Yet he gives such powerful expression to his alienation due to the hatred around him that, in many productions, he emerges as the hero. Portia is most remembered for her disguise as a lawyer, Balthazar, especially the speech in which she urges Shylock to show mercy that "droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven." The authoritative edition of The Merchant of Venice from The Folger Shakespeare Library, the trusted and widely used Shakespeare series for students and general readers, includes: -The exact text of the printed book for easy cross-reference - Hundreds of hypertext links for instant navigation -Freshly edited text based on the best early printed version of the play -Newly revised explanatory notes conveniently linked to the text of the play -Scene-by-scene plot summaries -A

key to the play's famous lines and phrases -An introduction to reading Shakespeare's language -An essay by a leading Shakespeare scholar providing a modern perspective on the play -Fresh images from the Folger Shakespeare Library's vast holdings of rare books -An annotated guide to further reading Essay by Alexander Leggatt The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, is home to the world's largest collection of Shakespeare's printed works, and a magnet for Shakespeare scholars from around the globe. In addition to exhibitions open to the public throughout the year, the Folger offers a full calendar of performances and programs. For more information, visit Folger.edu.

About the Author William Shakespeare William Shakespeare was born in April 1564 in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon, on England's Avon River. When he was eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway. The couple had three children—an older daughter Susanna and twins, Judith and Hamnet. Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, died in childhood. The bulk of Shakespeare's working life was spent in the theater world of London, where he established himself professionally by the early 1590s. He enjoyed success not only as a playwright and poet, but also as an actor and shareholder in an acting company. Although some think that sometime between 1610 and 1613 Shakespeare retired from the theater and returned home to Stratford, where he died in 1616, others believe that he may have continued to work in London until close to his death. Barbara A. Mowat Barbara A. Mowat is Director of Research emerita at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Consulting Editor of *Shakespeare Quarterly*, and author of *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances* and of essays on Shakespeare's plays and their editing.