

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

ACT 1 SCENE 2: EXCERPT ANALYSIS



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Complete the following tasks:

- 1. Study the following scene and the accompanying annotations. Then complete the table provided.**

SCENE STUDY: ACT 1 SCENE 2

NERISSA

First, there is the Neapolitan prince. [Prince from Naples, Italy.](#)

PORTIA

Ay, that's a colt [young male horse \(stubborn and difficult to handle\)](#) indeed, for he doth [does](#) nothing but talk of his horse; [he goes on and on about his horse](#) and he makes it a great appropriation [approval of/reference to](#) his own good parts, [The prince praises](#) himself for that he can shoe him himself. [That he can put on the horse's shoes](#) I am much afeard [afraid](#) my lady his mother [the prince's mother](#) played false [had an affair](#) with a smith. [blacksmith](#)

NERISSA

Then there is the County Palatine.

PORTIA

He doth [does](#) nothing but frown, [looks unpleasant/unhappy](#) as who should say 'If you will not have me, choose:' he hears merry tales and smiles not: [he does not smile even when he hears something funny](#) I fear he will prove the weeping [crying](#) philosopher [discusses theories about life](#) when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly [not pleasant to look at](#) sadness in his youth. [depression](#) I had rather be married to a death's-head with a bone in his mouth rather be married to a skeleton than to either of these. God defend me from these two!

NERISSA

How to say you by the French lord, Monsieur Le Bon?

PORTIA

God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man. [She only considers him human/a man because he was made by God, other than that she does not consider him human.](#) In truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker: [She is aware that it is wrong to make fun of others](#) but, he! [Exclaims in horror at Le Bon](#) why, he hath [have/has](#) a horse better than the Neapolitan's [Le Bon immediately insists that his horse is better than the Neapolitan prince, once the topic comes up, a better bad habit of frowning claims that he can frown better than Count Palatine](#) than the Count Palatine; he is every man in no man [he tries to be everyone else so much he doesn't have his own personality](#) ; if a

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throistle **bird** sing, he falls straight a capering **dance**: he will fence with his own shadow **pathetic because if he sees his own shadow, he starts fighting with it**: if I should marry him, I should marry twenty husbands **she will marry 20 different personalities**. If he would despise me I would forgive him, for if he love me to madness, I shall never requite him. **Never be able to return his love him at all costs**

NERISSA

What say you, then, to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

PORTIA

You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him: **they find it hard to understand each other** he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian, **unable to speak more than one language** and you will come into the court and swear that I have a poor pennyworth in the English. He is a proper man's picture, **he is handsome** but, alas, who can converse with a dumb-show? **Who can talk to someone who doesn't understand other languages** How oddly he is suited! suit/clothes which are odd/strange I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany **making fun of his fashion sense** and his behavior every where. **He seems to behave like he came from many different places**

NERISSA

What think you of the Scottish lord, his neighbour?

PORTIA

That he hath a neighbourly charity in him, **giving and sharing** for he borrowed a box of the ear of the Englishman **he was punched on the ear by Falconbridge** and swore he would pay him again when he was able: **swore to take revenge by punching the English guy back** I think the Frenchman became his surety **guarantee** and sealed under for another. **Portia's opinion of him is that he fights too much**

NERISSA

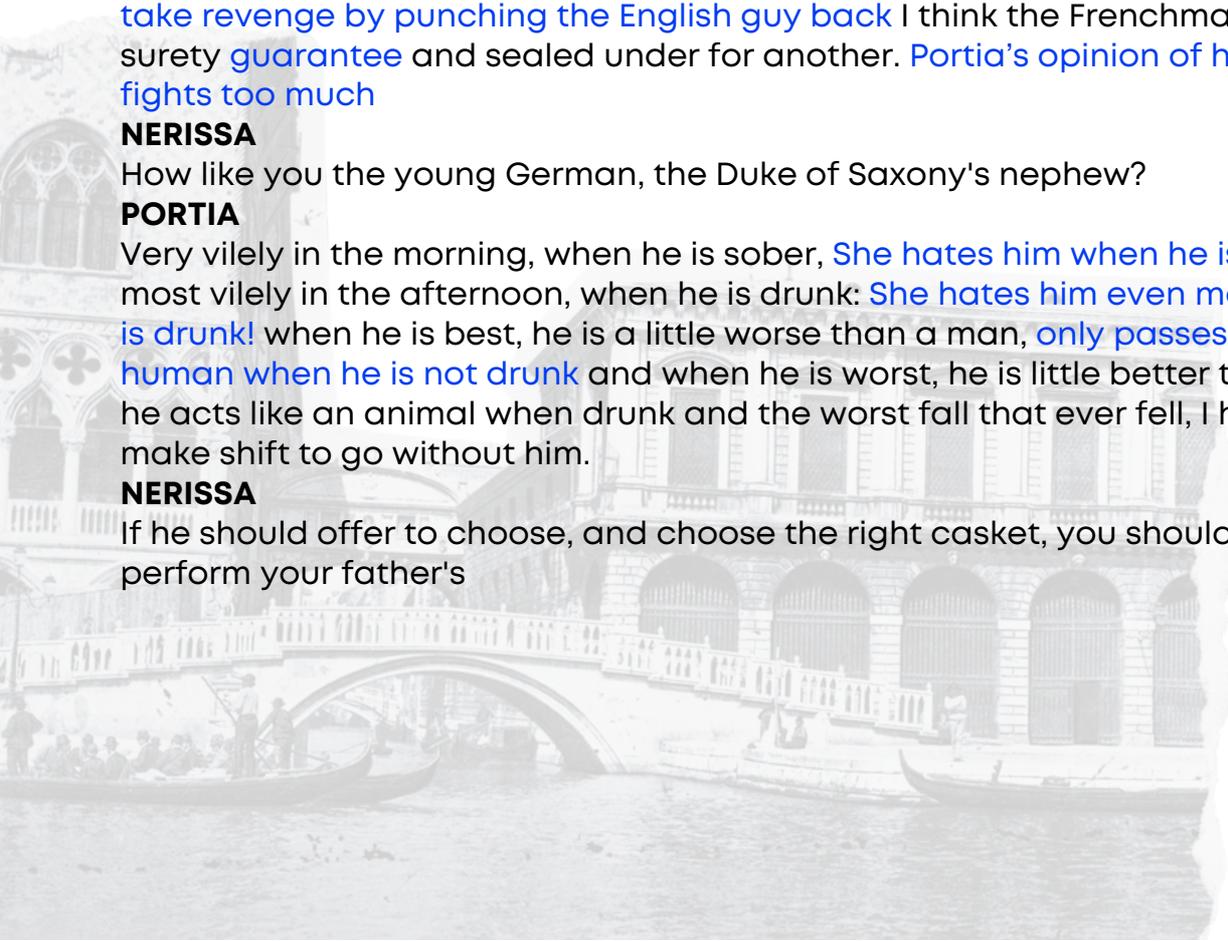
How like you the young German, the Duke of Saxony's nephew?

PORTIA

Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, **She hates him when he is sober** and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk: **She hates him even more when he is drunk!** when he is best, he is a little worse than a man, **only passes off as slightly human when he is not drunk** and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast: he acts like an animal when drunk and the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I shall make shift to go without him.

NERISSA

If he should offer to choose, and choose the right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's



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will, if you should refuse to accept him. **Rules: The father placed it in his will that Portia has to get married to the person who chooses the correct casket**

PORTIA

Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee, set a deep glass of rhenish wine on the contrary casket, **Place a glass of wine on the wrong box so that he will pick that box** for if the devil be within and that temptation without, I know he will choose it. I will do any thing, Nerissa, ere **before** I'll be married to a sponge. **Something that absorbs a lot of liquid/drun kard**

NERISSA

You need not fear, lady, the having any of these lords: they have acquainted me with their determinations; which is, indeed, to return to their home and to trouble you with no more suit, unless you may be won by some other sort than your father's imposition depending on the caskets. **The suitors all do not want to do the father's test, they are asking if they can do something else to win her hand in marriage**

PORTIA

If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. **She will only agree to getting married with her father's rules as per his will - loyal to her father as well as filial** I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable, for there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence, and I pray God grant them a fair departure.

NERISSA

Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, **Bassanio** that came hither in company of the Marquis of Montferrat?

PORTIA

Yes, yes, it was Bassanio; as I think, he was so called.

NERISSA

True, madam: he, of all the men that ever my foolish eyes looked upon, was the best deserving a fair lady. **Nerissa points out that Bassanio seemed like an appropriate suitor**

PORTIA

I remember him well, **she has already taken notice of him** and I remember him worthy of thy praise. *Enter a Serving-man* How now! what news?

Servant

The four strangers seek for you, madam, to take their leave: and there is a forerunner come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco, who brings word the prince his master will be here to-night.

PORTIA

If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good a heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach: **Hoping that the 5th arrival, the prince of Morocco will also leave quickly** if he have the condition of a saint **good person** and the complexion of a devil, **dark-skinned** I had rather he should shrive me than wive me. **would rather not be married to a dark skinned man** Come, Nerissa. Sirrah, go before. Whiles we shut the gates upon one wooer, another knocks at the door.

Exeunt

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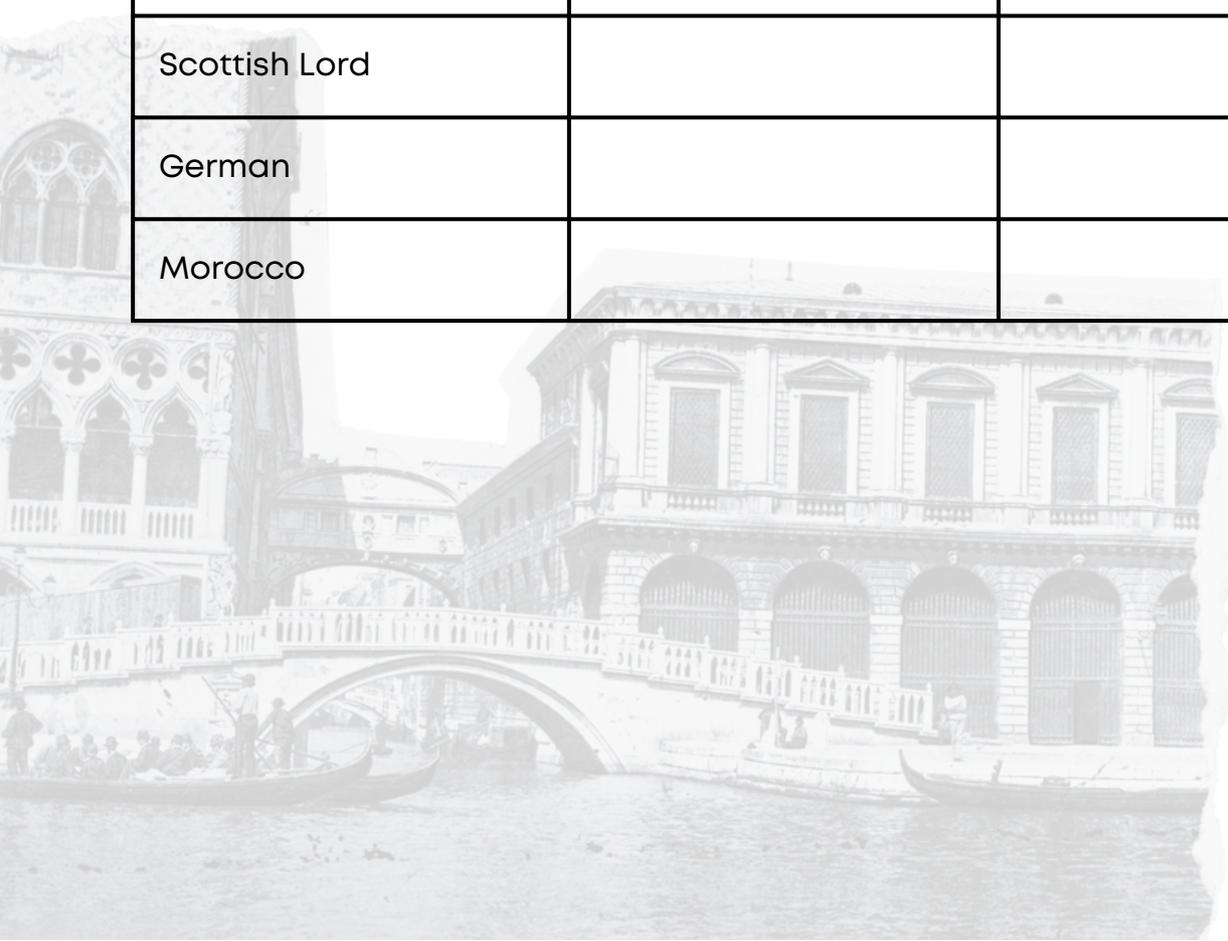
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What are the main reasons that Portia does not like her suitors? Provide quotes with your reasons.

SUITOR	QUOTE	REASON
Neapolitan Prince		
County Palatine		
Monsieur Le Bon		
Falconbridge		
Scottish Lord		
German		
Morocco		



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ANSWERS

What are the main reasons that Portia does not like her suitors? Provide quotes with your reasons.		
SUITOR	QUOTE	REASON
Neapolitan Prince	“he doth nothing buttalk of his horse”	The prince has no intelligent conversation as he is obsessed with his horse and talks of nothing else.
County Palatine	“He doth nothing but frown”	He looks unpleasant and is very different compared to other people when they hear a joke. He does not laugh and looks unhappy all the time.
Monsieur Le Bon	”why, he hath a horse better than the Neapolitan”	He is very egoistic and tries to be everyone else which results in him not having a personality.
Falconbridge	“You know I say nothing to him, for he understandsnot me, nor I him”	He may find it hard to communicate with portia
Scottish Lord	“That he hath a neighbourly charity in him for heborrowed a box of the ear of the Englishman”	Portia does not like that he fights so much

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German	“Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk”	Portia has the impression that he is an alcoholic.
Morocco	“ if he have the condition of a saint and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me”	Portia did not like the fact that he was dark-skinned.

