

ICSE English Literature 2020

Section A- Drama: The Merchant of Venice: William Shakespeare

Question 1

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow;

Launcelot: But, I pray you, ergo, old man, ergo,

I beseech you; talk you of young Master Launcelot?

Gobbo: Of Launcelot, an't pleases your mastership.

Launcelot: Ergo, Master Launcelot. Talk not of

Master Launcelot, father; for the young gentleman,

According to Fates and Destinies, and such odd

Sayings, the Sisters Three and such branches of learning.

Is indeed deceased; or, as you would say

In plain terms, gone to heaven.

- (i) What information does Gobbo seek from Launcelot at the beginning of this scene?
What does Launcelot say has happened to Gobbo's son? (3)
- (ii) Who are the 'Sisters Three'?
What role were they thought to play in the lives of humans? (3)
- (iii) Who was Launcelot's master?
What gift had Gobbo brought him?
What does Launcelot want him to do with it? (3)
- (iv) What reasons does Launcelot give for wanting to leave his present master's service?
Whom does he wish to serve instead? (3)
- (v) Why does Gobbo have trouble recognizing Launcelot?
What purpose does this scene serve in the context of the play? (4)

Ans. The above extract is taken from Act I, Scene II, of the Merchant of Venice, written by William Shakespeare (1564- 1616). This play is a romantic comedy, a typical Shakesperean genre. This year, 2021 marks 425 years of the composition of the play. Gobbo and Launcelot are father and son and they are minor characters of the play.

- (i) The information that Gobbo seeks from Launcelot at the beginning of the scene is that Gobbo is looking for directions to the house of the old Jew, Shylock.

Launcelot is referring to himself to his father, Gobbo. According to his fate or destiny, he is dead; or to say in plain words, he had gone to heaven.

- (ii) The Sisters Three are Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos of ancient Greece, were the Fates and Destinies.

The Sisters Three are significant in the lives of human beings. It was believed that the Fates would appear within three days of someone's birth to decide their fate.

- (iii) Shylock, the old Jew was Launcelot's master.

Gobbo brought a dish of doves which he would like to give to Bassanio, Launcelot's new master.

Launcelot wants the dish to be given to Bassanio, whom he wishes to serve.

- (iv) Launcelot doesn't want to continue to work for Shylock. He is a Jew, a Jew in every sense of the word. Launcelot says, "I am famished in his service; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs." On the other hand Bassanio is kind, generous, gives his servants brand new uniforms.

Now it is obvious that Launcelot wants to serve Bassanio.

- (v) Gobbo has trouble recognizing his own son, Launcelot. He say, "Alas, sir, I am half- blind. I cannot recognize you." Even if Gobbo's eyesight was good, he would have difficulty recognizing his son. Under Shylock, he has not been fed well. He has lost weight. His ribs are visible.

Act II, Scene II, is an important scene of the play. Launcelot teases his father Gobbo by pretending to be dead. Launcelot thinks of leaving Shylock's service, showing his racial prejudice. He wants to work for Bassanio, he feels he will be taken care of better. Later in this scene we see Bassanio preparing for his trip to Belmont.

This scene deals with some important issues such as- conscience, loyalty of a servant to his master, false expectations, prejudice and relationship of parents to children.

(This is a model for you as to how you should answer questions. The content of the answers, the length, etc. Pay careful attention to the introduction, numbering and spacing. The full paper will be given to you at the earliest. Please keep reading the text book.)