

## Sample answer: 2010 based on *The Merchant of Venice*

**Note:** This is the second part of the question, and is worth 15 marks. That means you should write three paragraphs. Each paragraph should be a well-developed point. Make your point, develop it, and support it with suitable quotation from and/or reference to the play.

My answer is longer than you would be expected to write in the exam, but it is no harm to see what can be said on the topic.

*If I were directing the courtroom scene, I would use stage positioning, lighting, sound, costumes and posture to show the tension between Antonio and Shylock.*

*Assuming that the stage was a proscenium arch, I would place the Duke and members of the court upstage, and Antonio and Shylock centre stage. The onlookers would be gathered stage right and left, allowing Antonio and Shylock to face one another in a relatively isolated space, showing that they are the focus of this tense situation. The onlookers should mutter angrily when Shylock enters, but cheer loudly when the tide turns and Antonio is freed. Their taking sides would add to the sense that there is a great deal of hostility between the two men.*

*Antonio should be dressed in a stylish but sober Venetian costume, while Shylock should wear a dark robe and a Jewish skullcap. The contrast between their costumes would provide the audience with a visual clue to the contrast between their natures and their positions. I would use make-up and a green filter on the lighting to make Shylock look sallow and sinister: 'an inhuman wretch / Uncapable of pity', while Antonio would be more brightly lit and would look pale, but noble.*

*Antonio should stand up straight, shoulders back and head held high as he prepares to meet his death 'with a quietness of spirit', but Shylock should be hunched and furtive-looking. The pair should keep their eyes on one another,*

*The opening line reflects the wording of the question and shows the direction the answer will take. There is no need to name the play or playwright again, as this has been done in the first part of the question.*

*Even in an answer on setting and staging, you should try to use quotes to support your answer.*

*but Antonio's expression should be disdainful and resigned, while Shylock's should be gleeful and gloating. Shylock may rub his hands together in delight at the thought of the pain he will soon inflict on his enemy.*

*At the moment that Shylock moves to cut the pound of flesh, I would have him and Antonio look straight into one another's eyes; they would be picked out by spotlights while the other lights were dimmed, and I would have the onlookers fall silent. This is the moment of greatest tension, and I would draw it out for a few moments before having Portia call 'Tarry a little'.*

*After this moment, and when it becomes clear that Shylock will not get his pound of flesh, I would have Antonio slump slightly in relief, while Shylock should sink to his knees as he realises that the tables have turned and that it is he, and not Antonio, who will suffer. As Shylock has now lost his hold on Antonio, I would have them move further apart and allow Antonio to join his friends once again.*

*I would hope that through the use of these aspects of staging I could effectively convey the tension between Antonio and Shylock in this climactic scene.*