

The Three Caskets

The three **caskets** (gold, silver and lead) not only symbolize **money**, they also symbolize the importance people give to money. A riddle (*adivinanza*) is written on each casket aimed to help the suitors decide which to choose.



GOLD – The gold casket is a symbol of greed and of materialistic, superficial people who value appearances over substance. The Prince of Marbella chooses the gold because it is the most expensive metal, and because he adores everything that money can buy.

SILVER - This casket represents a more cautious greed. The desire for silver is still a desire for wealth, but the person who chooses it does not want to seem too greedy: Nonetheless, he still has a high opinion of himself. (*"Who chooses me shall get as much as he deserves."*) The Prince of Qatar opts for silver because he is in love with himself more than he is in love with money.

LEAD - Lead is the most humble (*humilde*) choice. Bassanio chooses lead because it is not pretentious, like silver or gold. Bassanio wants to appear "unpretentious" to impress Portia. (But is Bassanio being truthful? You will decide when you see the play.)

Look at these adjectives. Which box do you think they belong in? We give an example.

unpretentious	greedy	spiritual
materialistic	hypocritical	honest
mean	pretentious	deceitful
intellectual	false	wealthy
beautiful	superficial	truthful
simple	luxurious	dishonest
	deep	compassionate
	kind	poor
		generous
		ugly

GOLD

SILVER

LEAD

unpretentious

Extract 1

Scene II *In this scene, Antonio seems depressed and Bassanio asks him what is wrong. Bassanio then talks about money problems. Read it and answer the TRUE/FALSE questions below.*

BASSANIO: Why the troubled face? Something's bothering you. Is it a woman?

ANTONIO: Don't be ridiculous! Who's this girl you wanted to talk to me about?

BASSANIO: It's a long story. You know I owe some people a lot of money, including you.

ANTONIO: I'm not worried about my money Bassanio. I know I'll get it back.

BASSANIO: Well this girl could be the solution to all my problems. Her name's Portia, an heiress who lives on the island of Belmont. Her father died recently and left her fortune. She may be the richest woman in all Italy. What's more, she's single, and extremely beautiful.

ANTONIO: All the better.

BASSANIO: The thing is, her father stipulated in his will that all her suitors must participate in a sort of competition, to win her hand. I want to take part, and if I succeed and become her husband, I'll have half of her fortune for the rest of my life. I could pay you back double, triple even.

ANTONIO: But first you need money to get to Belmont?

BASSANIO: You know me too well, old friend.

ANTONIO: How much?

BASSANIO: I want to make a good impression when I arrive, so I'm thinking of hiring a private jet.

ANTONIO: You're joking!

BASSANIO: A yacht, then...

ANTONIO: How much?

BASSANIO: Three thousand ducats.

ANTONIO: Is that all? The problem is I have no ready money - all my finances are tied up with my ships. But I'm sure a merchant like myself can raise some credit around Venice. Why don't you go and speak to the moneylenders in the Jewish quarter? I'll ask around too. Don't worry. We'll see you get to Belmont and to your rich heiress.

	TRUE	FALSE
1. Antonio confesses that he is having trouble with a woman.		
2. Bassanio has borrowed money from more than one person.		
3. Bassanio owes Antonio money.		
4. Portia was left a lot of money in her father's will.		
5. Bassanio doesn't want to marry Portia:		
6. Bassanio must win a competition before he can marry Portia.		
7. If Bassanio marries Portia, he will get half of her riches.		
8. Bassanio does not need money to make the journey to Belmont.		
9. Bassanio will travel to Belmont by air.		
10. Antonio can lend Bassanio money immediately.		
11. Antonio is going to look for credit to help Bassanio.		