

*The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare  
The Ritual of the Caskets

**Background:** In Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*, the terms of her father's will require Portia to marry whichever suitor chooses the 'casket' (box), out of a choice of gold, silver or lead, which contains her portrait. If a suitor chooses incorrectly, he is condemned to remain unmarried forever.

**Directions:** Now that your classmates have reenacted the casket ritual from *The Merchant of Venice* and you listened as each scroll was read aloud, read and analyze each scroll more closely. Work with a partner or small group to accomplish this task.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Scroll from the Gold Casket</b></p> <p>All that glitters is not gold; Often have you heard that told: Many a man his life hath sold But my outside to behold: Gilded tombs do worms enfold. Had you been as wise as bold, Young in limbs, in judgment old, Your answer had not been inscroll'd: Fare you well; your suit is cold.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Duke of Morocco, Act II.7</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Paraphrase</b></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>What does this choice reveal about the chooser?</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Scroll from the Silver Casket</b></p> <p>Some there be that shadows kiss; Such have but a shadow's bliss: There be fools alive, I wis, Silver'd o'er; and so was this. Take what wife you will to bed, I will ever be your head: So be gone: you are sped.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Duke of Arragon, Act II.9</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Paraphrase</b></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>What does this choice reveal about the chooser?</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Scroll from the Lead Casket</b></p> <p>You that choose not by the view, Chance as fair and choose as true! Since this fortune falls to you, Be content and seek no new, If you be well pleased with this And hold your fortune for your bliss, Turn you where your lady is And claim her with a loving kiss.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Bassanio, Act III.2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Paraphrase</b></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>What does this choice reveal about the chooser?</b></p>

\*This handout should not be distributed until after the three "suitors" have made their choices and read the scrolls aloud.

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Use the chart below to capture information and notes from our class discussion.

Gold	Silver	Lead
<p>Those who choose the gold casket are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>Those who choose the silver casket are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>Those who choose the lead casket are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p>List below the names of people, organizations, etc., (fictional or real) that seem to fit this description. Be prepared to explain your choice.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> </ol>	<p>List below the names of people, organizations, etc., (fictional or real) that seem to fit this description. Be prepared to explain your choice.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> </ol>	<p>List below the names of people, organizations, etc., (fictional or real) that seem to fit this description. Be prepared to explain your choice.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Optional Activity:</b> Choose one of the people from these three lists and describe that person in a short poem.</p> <p><b>Example:</b>  Gold I am, Wall Street, you see.  It's all about stocks and salary --  The crisp greenbacks and Texas crude.  A little guy? – who would that be?  America's Main Street is foreign to me.</p>		