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## Theme Of Justice Vs Mercy And Literary Techniques In The Play The Merchant Of Venice And Poem Justice

The common module gives an understanding of the human experience through collective and individual experiences. Through various modes of storytelling, texts have the ability to explore timeless issues which have always been faced by humanity, whilst illustrating lone perspectives of the individual characters. The universal themes portrayed in the texts are enhanced by the specific experiences of the characters, allowing for a more engaging representation of such issues. As the audience, we still seem to relate to the emotions evoked or the issues explored in these texts, despite it not being entirely reflective of our own lives. The Shakespearean play, *The Merchant of Venice*, and Langston Hughes' poem, *Justice*, both successfully reflect the individual and collective human experience through their use of various literary techniques and their exploration of the theme, Justice vs Mercy.

Shakespeare employs the use of various literary devices to explore the theme of Justice vs Mercy throughout *The Merchant of Venice*. Justice is the idea called for when someone feels as though they have been treated unfairly. Mercy on the other hand, is the gift of forgiveness, which is not truly given easily. The main antagonist, Shylock, demands justice but is asked to give mercy. In Scene 1 of Act 4, Shakespeare utilises disguise to sneak Portia into the courtroom, where she dresses up as a lawyer in an attempt to defend Antonio in the hearing about the bond. Portia begins by stating that mercy just occurs, without the need of showing it, it is just there. In an attempt to persuade Shylock to show mercy to Antonio, she says "It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes," which implies that mercy blesses the person who gives it and the person that receives it. Shakespeare personifies mercy to something which resembles God, as the person who shows mercy achieves Godly powers and that it holds greater value than the King's crown and sceptre. Portia concludes by stating "Tis mightiest in the mightiest," indicating that only the strongest of people can achieve mercy. Although Shylock initially seemed to seek justice, he failed to show mercy mixed with the justice he spoke of. The idea that justice cannot be given without mercy is influential to the justicial system of the Venetian society, as the decisions that were made were not always fair to the individual experience, however, may have been fair to the collective experience.

Hughes also uses various techniques to convey the individual and collective experiences of Justice vs Mercy throughout the poem. In contrast to *The Merchant of Venice*, *Justice* explores the bias of the justicial system towards African Americans, through poetry. Hughes employs the use of metaphor and rhyme to create a calm anger tone, which highlights the unfair nature of justice. The use of metaphor in "Justice is a blind goddess," represents justice as the legal system, which doesn't see any particular person. This disregards the individual experience, instead, providing a shared and collective human experience between African Americans. Hughes employs the use of rhyme for wise and eyes in "Is a thing to which we black are wise ... That once perhaps were eyes." This creates a link between the treatment of the African American community within the law and the information which is being revealed. The justice eyes are hidden by bandages to hide the truth which lies beneath. Although the speaker's tone does not change throughout the poem, as there aren't any exclamation marks which could symbolise anger, we can assume that they are calmly speaking with an attitude which despises the treatment of African American people by the justicial system. The quotes "Justice is a blind

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goddess,” and “Her bandage hides two festering sores,” symbolise the secretive nature of the law and court system. Through looking underneath the bandages, the truth will be found. Contrary to *The Merchant of Venice*, the poem deals with justice, not mercy. This indicates that anger overrules the ability to forgive, thus, the character is unable to be merciful as they are still full of anger.

Although the texts vary in form, vary in historical context, and have varying ideas of Justice vs Mercy, both texts successfully communicate and represent the individual and collective human experiences through their use of various literary techniques.

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