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Characterization Analysis Paragraph

When it comes to Shakespeare and his plays, the most concrete thing that sticks with the reader is his characters. His characters also relate to real life in any time period, whether you're reading the book in 1950, 1970, or present day you will still find characters who you relate to and who apply to people you have met. This is agreed upon by Dr. Samuel Johnson, who stated in his evaluation, "Shakespeare's characters do not belong to the society of a particular place or time; they are universal whereas in the works of other writers a character is often an individual." Most of the characters within each of his plays are very exciting to analyze and are quite memorable. This applies to his play *The Merchant of Venice*, where there is a few famous characters of his. Due to Shakespeare's excellent characterization skills, one of the characters that really stood out to me was Portia. He first introduces her character as more of a basic, phlegmatic cliché female. She is very obedient to her dead father's rule, not choosing a husband of her own and only waiting for the man to pick the right casket. She is seen telling Nerissa the details of her father's instructions and how she is not to break them stating, "I may neither choose whom I would nor refuse whom I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father." (I.ii.17). As the play continues and Bassanio chooses the right casket, her character seems to change and become more developed due to her now feeling more confident

and less worrisome about her father's rule over her. Once she is married to Bassanio, she now feels that she can take control of her life and in doing so she decided to risk her own reputation by disguising herself as a man in order to assist her husband's friend Antonio, who was in a predicament of life or death. This shows that her character broken out of her shell more and become more courageous. She is also shown to have gained a sense of intelligence when deceiving Shylock in his agreement with Antonio stating, "But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed one drop of Christian blood, thy lands in goods are, the laws of Venice, confiscate unto the state of Venice." (IV.i.163). Then toward the end of the play, she is even seen pulling a prank on her husband by staying in the disguise and asking for his ring. This shows the transformation of her from the beginning to the end of the play starting out as a person that kept to herself only and developing into what seems to be a very gregarious character. Shakespeare is able to make a character whose story is merely a side story evolve so that the character can make their way into the main basis of the play and become a key factor in changing the plot.

Works Cited

"Dr. Samuel Johnson's Evaluation of Shakespeare's Art of Characterization is His 'Preface to Shakespeare'." *Literary Articles*. Literary Articles, 2017. Web. 07 Mar. 2017. <<http://www.literary-articles.com/2010/02how-does-johnson-evaluate-shakespeares.html>>.