
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Shakespeare Speaks

A pound of flesh: Lesson plan



The video to accompany this lesson plan can be found here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/shakespeare/unit-1/session-17>

Aims: Students will...

- listen for gist and detail in the context of a video on Shakespeare's life, language and plays.
- understand the meaning, use and form of the idiom **a pound of flesh**.
- be able to understand and use phrases for talking about revenge.

Task A: Lead in and gist

- Write on the board Shakespeare's famous quote from Hamlet: "Neither a borrower nor a lender be," and ask students to discuss what they think it means? And who they would and wouldn't feel comfortable lending money to or borrowing money from.
- Share some ideas as a class and then hand out the worksheets (pages three to five of this document).
- Students read the gist task. Play video from beginning to end for students to answer the question.
- They then check in pairs and as a class.

Answer: C) Antonio borrowed money from Shylock, but he didn't return it. Antonio now owes Shylock a pound of flesh!

Task B: Detail and language

- Give students a few minutes to read the questions and then play the video again for students to choose the correct options.
- Students discuss answers in pairs and then check answers as a class.

Answers

- 1) Antonio and Shylock made this agreement: if Antonio doesn't **return Shylock's money** Shylock can cut a pound of flesh from Antonio's body.
- 2) The court agreed that Shylock **was allowed** to take a pound of flesh from Antonio's body, but it also said he could not take **any** blood.
- 3) Therefore, Shylock **didn't take** his pound of flesh from Antonio, and Antonio **survived**.
- 4) Nowadays, if a person demands their 'pound of flesh', they want something which is owed to them, but in a way that seems **unfair** and more like **revenge**.

Task C: Prediction

- Tell students that they are going to watch a video discussion about two real-life news stories using the phrase **pound of flesh**.
- Tell students that the two sentences are taken from the two news stories. In pairs, students look at the sentences and images and discuss what they think the two stories are about. Share ideas as a class but don't confirm at this stage if they are correct.
- Play the video for students to find out if their predictions were correct. The video can be found on this page:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/shakespeare/unit-1/session-17/activity-2>
- Share ideas as a class.

Task D: Listening

- Tell the students that they are going to watch the video again, but first they need to read the questions.
- Play the video from beginning to end for students to answer the questions.
- Students discuss their answers in pairs and then as a class.

Answers

1. The first story has the headline, "California get \$5m pound of flesh from Samsung, LG, others in price-fix scandal." In this story, who committed a crime? **Technology companies such as Samsung and LG. (Check students have understood price-fixing. This means that they agreed between themselves to keep prices high.)**
2. How much do the technology companies have to pay as punishment? **Five million dollars.**
3. Why is this amount referred to as a 'pound of flesh'? **Because it's an unfair amount and this seems more like revenge than justice.**
4. According to the second story, where do the rugby players receive the lowest pay? **Wales.**
5. *True or false?* Rugby players in professional clubs in the Premiership get paid more, but they have to work extra hard. **True.**
6. Why does the rugby official say that "professional clubs in the Premiership want their pound of flesh"? **The phrase 'pound of flesh' is used here because they are asking for something which is owed to them, but it will be difficult to provide.**

Task E: Vocabulary and Listening

- **Tell students not to look at worksheet three yet.**
- Tell students that they will now listen to six short clips of people talking about **revenge**. For each clip they need to decide if the speaker thinks that revenge is a good idea or a bad idea.

- Play the audio from here (transcript can be found below):
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/shakespeare/unit-1/session-17/activity-3>
- Students discuss answers in pairs and then as a class.
Answer: All of the speakers think that revenge is a good idea, except the last one. He says that it's better to forgive and forget.
- Students can now turn over their sheets and work in pairs to complete the revenge phrases that they heard in the audio. They read the definition and then fill in the gaps in the phrase.
- Play the audio again for students to check their own answers and fill in any missing words.
- Check answers and comprehension and drill the phrases to practise pronunciation.

Answers

- 1) I'll get my own back one day.
 - 2) Well, don't get mad, get even
 - 3) Revenge is a dish best served cold!
 - 4) It's payback time
 - 5) Revenge is sweet.
 - 6) I think you should just forgive and forget.
- Play one of the games from [Eight Vocabulary Activities for the classroom](#) to practise these phrases.

Transcript

- 1) I can't believe you told everyone that it was my fault! I'll get my own back one day.
- 2) "I'm so furious, because of him I've lost my job and my house, and..."
"Well, don't get mad, get even"
- 3) I'll get my revenge one day - you know what they say, revenge is a dish best served cold!
- 4) They always cheat when they play us and now it's payback time - we're not going to play fair any more!
- 5) I made him wait for me in the rain for hours! Revenge is sweet.
- 6) I think you should just forgive and forget. There's no point going over everything - move on!

Task F: Discussion

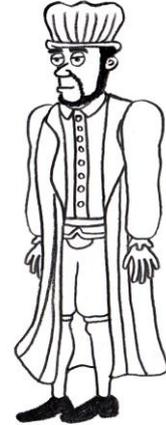
- Give students time to prepare and then put them into new groups to share ideas; encourage them to use the new phrases they've learnt in this lesson.
- Share interesting answers and focus on good examples of language and errors to correct.

A pound of flesh: Worksheet one



Task B: Gist

- A) Antonio stole some money from Shylock.
- B) Shylock refused to **lend** Antonio any money.
- C) Antonio **borrowed** money from Shylock, but he didn't return it.



Task B: Detail

- 1) Antonio and Shylock made this agreement: if Antonio doesn't **return Shylock's money / lend Shylock money** Shylock can cut a pound of flesh from Antonio's body.
- 2) The court agreed that Shylock **wasn't allowed / was allowed** to take a pound of flesh from Antonio's body, but it also said he could not take **much / any** blood.
- 3) Therefore, Shylock **took / didn't take** his pound of flesh from Antonio, and Antonio **died / survived**.
- 4) Nowadays, if a person demands their 'pound of flesh', they want something which is owed to them, but in a way that seems **fair / unfair** and more like **justice / revenge**.



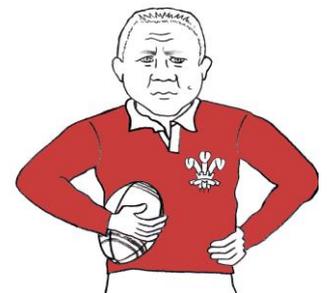
Task C: Prediction

Story one:

"California get \$5m **pound of flesh** from Samsung, LG and others in price-fix scandal."

Story two:

"professional clubs in the Premiership want their **pound of flesh**"



A pound of flesh: Worksheet two

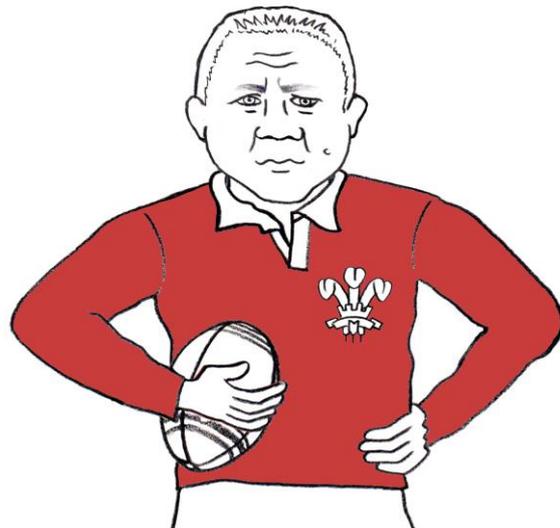
Task D: Listening

Story one

- 1) The first story has the headline, "California get \$5m pound of flesh from Samsung, LG, others in price-fix scandal." In this story, who committed a crime?
- 2) How much do the technology companies have to pay as punishment?
- 3) Why is this amount referred to as a 'pound of flesh'?

Story two

- 4) According to the second story, where do the rugby players receive the lowest pay? France, Wales or England?
- 5) *True or false?* Rugby players in professional clubs in the Premiership get paid more, but they have to work extra hard.
- 6) Why does the rugby official say that "professional clubs in the Premiership want their pound of flesh"?



A pound of flesh: Worksheet three

Task E: Vocabulary and listening

1) I'll get revenge one day.

I'll get my _____ one day.

2) Get revenge instead of getting angry about it.

Well, **don't get mad**, _____.

3) It's more satisfying to wait until the time is right to get revenge.

Revenge is a _____ best _____ !

4) It's time to get revenge.

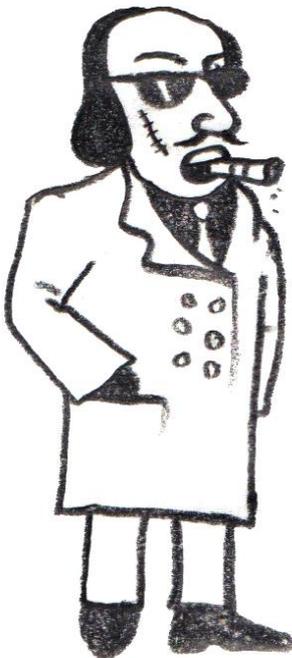
It's _____

5) It feels good to get revenge.

Revenge is _____.

6) Don't try to get revenge: forget about people's mistakes and move on.

I think you should just _____ **and** _____.



Task F: Discussion

1) Can you think of any examples where someone wants their **pound of flesh**? (This could be in your own life, in the news or in a film/book.)

2) Which of the speakers in the audio clips do you agree with? Do you think that **revenge is sweet** or is it better to **forgive and forget**? Why?

3) Have you ever done something to **get your own back**?