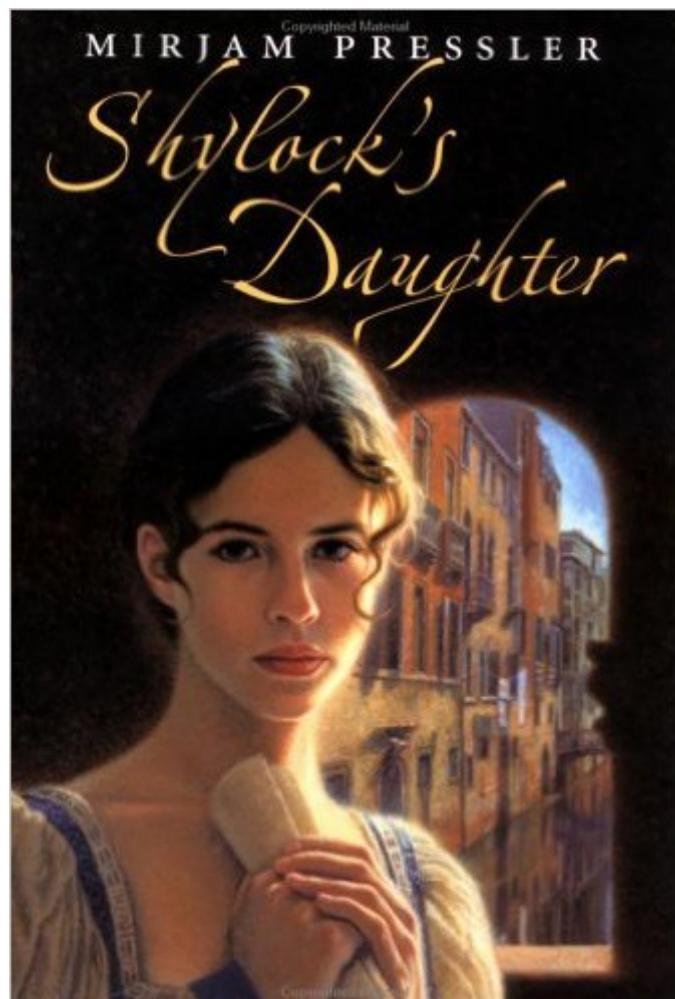


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Shylock's Daughter



Synopsis

As the beautiful daughter of a wealthy moneylender, Jessica leads a relatively privileged life in the Jewish Ghetto. But during her rare walks through the main streets of Venice, she has caught glimpses of the colorful, exciting world outside. Then, by chance she meets a handsome aristocrat named Lorenzo who has, it seems, everything that Jessica longs for, and who promises to make her his wife. There is one painful condition, however: She must convert to Christianity. Will Jessica follow her desires, even if it means leaving behind everyone she loves, and abandoning her religion? Will her father, Shylock, survive this betrayal? Mirjam Pressler cleverly expands upon Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*, offering a richly complex portrait of life in sixteenth-century Venice. This fascinating historical novel has been beautifully translated by Brian Murdoch, whose afterword gives readers a meaningful perspective on the difficult relations between Christians and Jews during that period.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (5 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

...Never ever abandon your faith to run off with a goy! *Shylock's Daughter* provides a fascinating response to Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, as author Pressler strived to humanize the play's more one-dimensional characters. Providing a rich and complex view of Jewish life in sixteenth-century Venice, Pressler does her best to provide a variety of different viewpoints as she tells her story. Unfortunately, Pressler's array of narrators are as defensively pro-Jewish as Shylock's character was virulently anti-Jewish. The title leads us to expect Shylock's daughter Jessica to be the martyred heroine of Pressler's book, but the plot systematically paints her as the

most unlikeable character in it. Contrasted with her ugly but righteous foster sister Dalilah, who does most of the early narration, "free-thinking" Jessica is depicted as spoiled, selfish, and capricious. Jessica's desire for "freedom," which might be understandable to a modern teenager if it were coached in more meaningful terms, seems shallow and sinful when contrasted with Dalilah's pious obedience. "Freedom," as far as the early narrators are concerned, is nothing more than a catch-word for "extravagance," and is respected (or not) as such. "Love" also takes a back seat. Jessica's seduction by Lorenzo is complete by the time the story begins, and we never see what caused her to fall in love with him in the first place. (We do of course hear the theory that he is only interested in her for her money.

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