

Shylock's reaction?

Look at the lines below which are all from Act 2 Scene 8, after Jessica has eloped with Lorenzo. The speech is by Solanio to Salarino reporting Shylock's apparent reaction to his daughter's disappearance and the theft of his money by Jessica. Firstly, decide which order you think the lines go in by drawing a line from each number to its corresponding answer; the last one has been done as an example:

1	A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,
2	Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
3	And jewels – two stones, two rich and precious stones,
4	She hath the stones upon her and the ducats!
5	My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!
6	Of double ducats, stolen from me by my daughter!
7	Stolen by my daughter! Justice! Find the girl!
8	Justice! The law! My ducats and my daughter!

1. Whilst you are matching the lines, discuss how the audience hears Shylock's reaction to his daughter's disappearance. Is it through:
 - a) Shylock chatting to his best friend Antonio?
 - b) Shylock telling the police?
 - c) Solanio reporting it to Salarino?

2. Yes, it's (c) – it is stated at the top of this page so no prizes for that answer – but more importantly, think about why the speech is heard by the audience this way: consider how you report something you have witnessed to friends – do you sometimes exaggerate or 'flesh out' the reality to make a better story? Does it make a difference how you tell a story depending on whether you know the person(s) involved or whether they are your friends or not? Is Solanio a good friend of Shylock's? Look at some of the offensive ways he describes Shylock just before this speech – he calls him a 'villain Jew' and 'the dog Jew' – so maybe we shouldn't believe his telling of the story? Now consider what Shakespeare might have wanted to convey (show) to his audience by reporting the story this way.

3. Why is the order of the lines important? Look at what Shylock apparently shouts about: his daughter and his money. The way that Solanio reports it, it sounds as if Shylock is equally, if not more, concerned about his wealth as he is about his daughter. If, however, we consider that maybe Solanio does not report the story correctly are we more or less likely to sympathise with Shylock and see him in a more positive light?