

# The Role of Story Mapping Technique in Comprehending William Shakespeare's Selected Plays<sup>1</sup>

Ali Sabah Jameel

College of Arts, University of Anbar, Ramadi, Iraq

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal the role of Story Mapping Technique in understanding the characters and the relationships among them in Merchant of Venice play and Hamlet play, and how the characters being developed during the plot of the play. The sample is consisted of 43, from this sample only 5 participants' replies were valid to be analyzed from grade four at the Department of English, College of Arts, University of Anbar. The study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023. A Story Mapping Technique (SMT) was used to collect the data of the study, which was distributed via a "Google Form" via the following link: <https://forms.gle/eR9LZpzHD4pN5YEz6>. The results revealed that the story mapping technique had a significance effect on students' comprehending of the relationships among the characters of the two plays, it is a visual representation of the plot, which outlines the story's structure and major events in a chronological order. This tool is useful in understanding the characters' motives and the relationships between them. In addition, it helps students to understand the role and the nature of each character. It had helped them to save time, effort, and the use of dictionary in understanding the main and the major characters of each play. Finally, the story mapping helps to visualize the overall structure of the play and identify the key events that shape the characters' motivations and behaviors.

**Keywords:** Story mapping; University Students; Merchant of Venice; Hamlet.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

English language is a foreign language to the Iraqi people, the official and formal institute to learn English language is the Departments of English at the universities. Learning English literature needs to activate the imagination and pay attention to details, form relationships, and develop their individual ideas. Reviewing the literature, it was found that Haikal (2023); Guo (2023); Hossain (2023); Leitzel (2023); Alexander (2022); Fitzpatrick (2022); Rose (2022) investigated the role of selected learning strategies that promote students' understanding and comprehending the events, relationships, characters, lessons (moral, dignity, revenge, sacrifices, etc.), and even the era of a certain time. To this end, the researcher conduct this study to reveal the role of story mapping technique in understanding the characters' relationships in " Merchant of Venice play and Hamlet play ". It is hoped that the selected technique will be benefit for comprehending the characters' background and the relationship between these characters and how they affect the events of the novel.

## Aim of the Study

This study aims to reveal the role of Story Mapping Technique in understanding the characters and the relationships among them in Merchant of Venice play and Hamlet play, and how the characters being developed during the plot of the play.

## Question of the Study

To achieve the aim of the study, the following question was set:

"To what extent does the Story Mapping technique helps the Grade Four students to comprehend the characters and the relationships among them in the "Merchant of Venice play and Hamlet play"?"

## Significance of the Study

The outcomes of this study will be significance for the university professors who specialized in English literature to be aware of the role of Story Mapping technique as one of the graphic organizer techniques in understanding the characters of a play and how the relationships of the characters develop during the events and the plot of a play, to

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understand the background of a character to be able to judge on him/ her or to judge on his/ her action and decision. To know the reason behind the personality and the behavior of a character, in order not to give unfair judgment.

### Limits of The Study

The study is limited to:

- 1- Participants: the participants were 5 male and female students from the grade 4 at the Department of English.
- 2- Location: The location of the study is in the College of Arts, University of Anbar, in the Anbar Province in Iraq.
- 3- Duration: The study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023.
- 4- Instrument: story mapping diagrams and a close question were used to collect the data of the study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction of The Merchant of Venice

The Merchant of Venice is one of William Shakespeare's most famous plays, written in the late 16th century. It is a comedy that explores themes of love, friendship, money, and justice. The play has been the subject of much scholarly debate and analysis, with interpretations ranging from a critique of anti-Semitism to a celebration of the triumph of love over prejudice. In this essay, we will examine the play's historical and cultural context, its major themes and characters, and its enduring relevance (Shahwan, 2022).

### Historical and Cultural Context

The Merchant of Venice was written in a time of great political and social upheaval in England. Queen Elizabeth I was on the throne, and the country was experiencing a period of prosperity and expansion. However, there were also tensions between different religious and ethnic groups, particularly between Christians and Jews. Jews had been expelled from England in 1290, and although a small number were allowed to return in the late 16th century, they faced discrimination and persecution. The play reflects these tensions and prejudices, but it also challenges them in subtle ways (Wright, 2023).

### Themes and Characters

The Merchant of Venice is a complex play with multiple themes and subplots. One of the main themes is the nature of justice and mercy. This theme is explored through the character of Shylock, who demands a pound of flesh from the merchant Antonio as payment for a loan. Shylock's insistence on this harsh penalty is seen as a form of revenge for the way he has been treated by Antonio and other Christians. However, when Shylock is himself subjected to the law, he begs for mercy, and the Duke of Venice ultimately shows him leniency (Kim, 2022).

### Characters of the Merchant of Venice

"The Merchant of Venice" by William Shakespeare is a play that explores themes of love, revenge, justice, and prejudice. The characters in the play are complex and multi-dimensional, each with their own unique personality traits and motivations. Here are some of the key characters in the play, along with brief descriptions and references to their actions and speeches as cited in Heschel, (2006); Cusack (2015); Flickinger (2020); Anténe (2021); Mi (2022); and Shahwan (2022):

**Antonio** - A wealthy Venetian merchant and the title character of the play.

**Shylock** - A Jewish moneylender who lives in Venice and is often portrayed as a villain in the play.

**Portia** - A wealthy heiress who is sought after by many suitors and eventually marries Bassanio.

**Bassanio** - A young Venetian nobleman who borrows money from Antonio in order to woo Portia.

**Gratiano** - A friend of Bassanio who accompanies him to Belmont and later marries Nerissa.

**Nerissa** - Portia's lady-in-waiting who marries Gratiano.

**Jessica** - Shylock's daughter who elopes with Lorenzo, a Christian.

**Lorenzo** - A friend of Antonio and Bassanio who elopes with Jessica.

**Duke of Venice** - The ruler of Venice who presides over Antonio's trial.

**Prince of Morocco** - A suitor who seeks Portia's hand in marriage.

**Prince of Arragon** - Another suitor who seeks Portia's hand in marriage.

**Launcelot Gobbo** - A comical servant who works for both Shylock and Bassanio.

**Old Gobbo** - Launcelot's blind father.

**Salanio and Salarino** - Friends of Antonio and Bassanio who appear throughout the play.

**Tubal** - A friend of Shylock who delivers news about Antonio's ships.

## INTRODUCTION TO HAMLET PLAY

Shakespeare, William, "Hamlet" the first published was in 1603. "Hamlet" is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare in the early 17th century. The play is set in Denmark and tells the story of Prince Hamlet, who is mourning the death of his father, King Hamlet. Hamlet's mother, Queen Gertrude, has married his uncle, Claudius, who has now become king (Bloom, 2003).

The play explores themes of revenge, madness, and the human condition. Hamlet becomes consumed with the idea of avenging his father's murder, which he believes was committed by Claudius. However, as he struggles with his own inner turmoil and madness, he becomes unsure of what actions to take (Greenblatt, 2001).

### The Characters of Hamlet Play

There are major and minor characters that have roles in the Hamlet play, each one has a significant role that influence the plot. The following are the authors who interest in the Hamlet's characters and conduct studies about them such as Guo (2023); Haikal (2023); Hossain (2023); Litzel (2023); Rose (2022); Holderness (2021); Bandin and Gonzalez (2021); and Hanson, et al. (2021). To summarize the mentioned authors' studies, the following is a brief list of the characters that appeared in studies:

<b>Hamlet</b> - Prince of Denmark, the protagonist of the play	<b>Claudius</b> - King of Denmark and Hamlet's uncle.
<b>Gertrude</b> - Queen of Denmark and Hamlet's mother	<b>Polonius</b> - Lord Chamberlain and father of Ophelia and Laertes.
<b>Ophelia</b> - Daughter of Polonius and love interest of Hamlet	<b>Horatio</b> - Hamlet's close friend and confidant
<b>Laertes</b> - Son of Polonius and foil to Hamlet	<b>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern</b> - Childhood friends of Hamlet and courtiers of Denmark
<b>The Ghost</b> - The spirit of Hamlet's deceased father, King Hamlet	

### The Relationships Among the Characters in Hamlet

The relationships among the characters in Shakespeare's Hamlet are complex and multi-layered, with many characters connected to each other through blood ties, friendships, and political alliances. At the center of the play is the relationship between Prince Hamlet and his uncle, King Claudius. Claudius has married Hamlet's mother, Queen Gertrude, soon after the death of Hamlet's father, King Hamlet. This familial relationship sets the stage for much of the play's drama and tragedy. Below are some of the key relationships in the play:

Overall, the researcher realizes that the relationships among the characters in "Hamlet" are characterized by tension, conflict, and betrayal. The play explores the complex web of family ties and political alliances that underpin society, and highlights the ways in which these relationships can be both a source of strength and a cause of great pain and tragedy. Laertes and Ophelia: Laertes is the brother of Ophelia and the son of Polonius. He is fiercely protective of his sister and is outraged when he learns that Hamlet has been mistreating her.

### The Technique of Story Mapping

A story map is a strategy that uses a graphic organizer to help students learn the elements of a book or story. By identifying story characters, plot, setting, problem and solution, students read carefully to learn the details. There are

many different types of story map graphic organizers. The most basic focus on the beginning, middle, and end of the story. More advanced organizers focus more on plot or character traits (Heschel, 2006).

### The Implementation of Story Mapping Technique

To implement the story mapping inside the classroom is done as follow:

1. Discuss the main components of a story (e.g., characters, setting, plot and theme OR beginning, middle, end).
2. Provide each student with a blank story map organizer and model how to complete it.
3. As students read, have them complete the story map. After reading, they should fill in any missing parts (Antene, 2021).

### The Use of Story Mapping Technique

The teacher decides to read and determines the key elements that the students should identify. Teachers choose (or create) a Story Map that is most appropriate for the type of assigned reading (i.e., fiction or non-fiction). As with all strategy instruction, teachers should model the procedure to ensure that students understand why and how to use the strategy. Teachers should monitor and support students as they work (Hanson, et al., 2021).

## THE METHODOLOGY

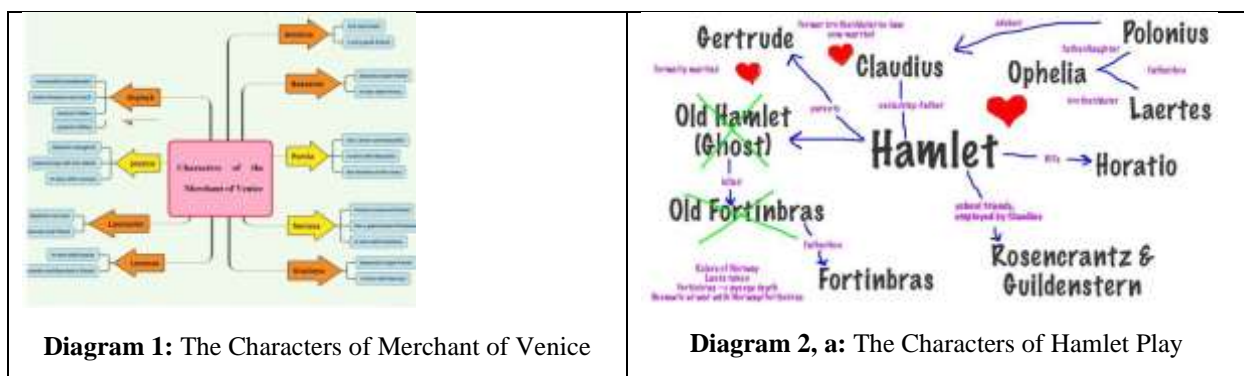
### The Participants

The population of this study is all the EFL undergraduate students from grade four at the Department of English in the College of Arts in all Iraqi Universities.

The sample of this study is consisted of 43 (14 males and 29 females) students from grade four at the Department of English, College of Arts, University of Anbar. Only 5 students' replies were valid to be used, thus the participants were only 5 students. The study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023.

### The Instrument

To collect the data, the researcher used Story Mapping Technique (SMT), and design two diagrams which illustrate the relationships between the characters in the Hamlet and Merchant of Venice Works as show in diagram 1 and 2a, b:





**Diagram 2, b:** The Characters of Hamlet Play

An open question was distributed to the participants which stated "Please, see the Characters maps of the "The Merchant of Venice" play and the Characters of "Hamlet play", then, write down if the story map helped you to understand the relationships among the characters of the two plays. If your answer is "Yes" write how each map helped or guided you to comprehend the characters of the plays separately.

The instrument has been designed in a "Google Form" and distributed via the following link: <https://forms.gle/eR9LZpzHD4pN5YEz6>

### Validity and the Reliability of the Instrument

To verify the face validity and content validity, the instrument has been judged by a jury member from the University of Anbar, Tikrit University, and College of Education Ibn Rushd for Humanities experts in the field of English literature, English language teaching methods, and applied linguistics. The jury member suggestions and modifications have been taken in consideration.

The instrument reliability has been calculated by distributed the instrument to a pilot sample consisted of 3 students (who are excluded from the participants). The reliability was calculated by using measured and re-measured (after two weeks). The results of analyzing pilot sample, the total time to answer the question is between 15 to 25 minutes, also the diagrams are very clear. The total reliability score was 0.89 which is consider high.

### PROCEDURES

To answer the questions, the following main procedures were conducted:

- 1- Identifying the gap of the study.
- 2- Reviewing the literature.
- 3- Selecting the tool.
- 4- Identified the plays as a model.
- 5- Elicited the Department's agreement to conduct the study.
- 6- All participants provided informed consent.
- 7- Revealing the validity and the reliability of the instrument.
- 8- Reviewed the literature and identified the symbols of the novel.
- 9- Designed the characters of the play based on a Story Mapping Technique.
- 10- Uploaded the instrument in Google Workspace (Google Form) to be able to distribute the instrument to all participants via the following link: <https://forms.gle/eR9LZpzHD4pN5YEz6>
- 11- Collected the data, and the incomplete answers were excluded. The valid responses were 10 out of 43.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

To answer the question of the study which states "view and read the characters maps of the "The Merchant of Venice" play and the Characters of "Hamlet play", then, write down if the story map helped you to understand the relationships among the characters of the two plays. If your answer is "Yes" write how each map helped or guided you to comprehend the characters of the plays separately", the participants' responses were analyzed.

The researcher used a "sentence" as a unit of analysis since the students' responses were less than a paragraph.

The participants' responses statements (hence "S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5) are as following:

**S1: Male:**

" The story mapping helped me to understand the following:

**Hamlet character map.**

<p><b>King Hamlet's</b> Ghost is the former Husband of Gertrude and the father of Hamlet. He is a brother of: Claudius</p> <p>He Killed by: Claudius</p> <p>King Hamlet's Ghost, has returned to Castle Elsinore to tell Hamlet that Claudius is his murderer.</p>	<p><b>Claudius:</b> Brother: King Hamlet</p> <p>Killed: his brother, King Hamlet</p> <p>Wife: Gertrude</p> <p>Uncle to: Hamlet</p> <p>Step-father to: Hamlet</p> <p>His adviser: Polonius</p>
<p><b>Hamlet</b></p> <p>Father: King Hamlet</p> <p>Mother: Gertrude</p> <p>Uncle: Claudius</p> <p>Step-father: Claudius</p> <p>Murders: Polonius</p> <p>Loves: Ophelia</p>	<p><b>Gertrude</b></p> <p>Husband: Claudius</p> <p>Mother of: Hamlet</p> <p>Former husband: King Hamlet</p> <p>Gertrude: Queen; widow of the late King and wife of Claudius</p>
<p><b>Claudius:</b> King of Denmark; marries his sister-in-law and ascends to the throne after the death of King Hamlet</p>	<p><b>Polonius:</b> Claudius' Counselor</p>
<p><b>Laertes:</b> Son of: Polonius</p> <p>Sister: Ophelia</p> <p>Laertes returns home from France to avenge Polonius' death and conspires with Claudius to kill Hamlet.</p>	<p><b>Polonius:</b> Adviser to: Claudius</p> <p>Son: Laertes</p> <p>Daughter: Ophelia</p> <p>Murdered by: Hamlet</p>
<p><b>Childhood friends:</b> Rosencrantz &amp; Guildenstern</p> <p>Friend/Confidant: Horatio</p> <p>Hamlet Prince of Denmark, seeks to avenge his father's death</p>	<p><b>Ophelia</b></p> <p>Father: Polonius</p> <p>Brother: Laertes</p> <p>Loves: Hamlet Ophelia: Polonius' daughter, who goes mad and drowns herself after Hamlet mistreats her and murders her father</p>
<p><b>Horatio:</b> Friend and confidant to Hamlet. He supports Prince Hamlet in his quest.</p>	<p><b>Rosencrantz:</b> Hamlet's school chum, brought to Denmark to spy on the Prince for Claudius.</p>

**The Merchant of Venice Character map**

<b>Antonio</b> is a very somber person. He is also a loyal friend who is willing to do anything to help them out.	<b>Bassanio</b> is a man from Venice that used to be rich but is pretentious with money so he is now poor. Bassanio may be bad with his money but is a loyal friend to Antonio.
<b>Prince of Arragon:</b> is an arrogant person, who thinks that he is better than he actually is.	<b>Portia:</b> is judgmental but is also loyal in the fact that she will do what her father wants for her marriage.
<b>Gratiano:</b> is a loud and flamboyant character, who is friends with many of the Venetians.	<b>Nerissa:</b> is a loyal servant to Portia, but she is also a good friend. She also loves Gratiano.
<b>Jessica:</b> is rebellious and does not like to do what her father Shylock says. She converts to Christianity and runs away with her love, Lorenzo.	<b>Lorenzo:</b> is rebellious and willing to do whatever to be with his love Jessica.
<b>Solanio:</b> play practically the same role in the story. They are good friends with the Venetians.	<b>Shylock:</b> is a grumpy and stereotypical Jewish money lender. He hates Antonio and Lorenzo.
<b>Prince of Morocco:</b> is a suitor of Portia that judges people on outward appearance.	<b>Launcelot:</b> is a servant of Bassanio that is very sarcastic and makes a lot of jokes".

**S2: Male:**

Merchant of Venice is essentially a play about property: in telling the story of a merchant who treats his own flesh as property to secure a loan, and the moneylender who calls in the debt, the play asks questions about the value of life itself. Throughout the play, tangible objects such as rings and caskets stand in for intangible ideas about love and fidelity. A test where three suitors must choose between silver, lead, and gold caskets functions to remind audiences that "all that glitters isn't gold," and the true value of life has no financial equivalent. However, money plays a significant role for most of the characters, for whom financial security equals independence. Language about penalties, bonds, and forfeitures add to the sense of life reduced to commercial transactions. The fact that the most avaricious, greedy character in the play ends up having lost both his physical wealth as well as his daughter and his religion warn against the dangers of excessive greed. While the play culminates in a trial scene, Portia's soliloquy suggests that mercy, or forgiveness, is ultimately more important than legal justice.

**S3: Female**

To comprehend the characters of The Merchant of Venice, we can use a story map. A story map is a visual tool that helps us organize the key elements of a story, including the characters, plot, setting, and themes.

Here is an example of a story map for The Merchant of Venice:

**Characters:**

**Antonio** - a wealthy merchant of Venice who borrows money from Shylock to help his friend Bassanio.

**Bassanio** - a young nobleman who seeks the hand of the wealthy heiress Portia.

**Portia** - a beautiful and intelligent heiress who is sought after by many suitors.

**Shylock** - a Jewish moneylender who lends money to Antonio on the condition that if the loan is not repaid, he may take a pound of Antonio's flesh as a penalty.

**Jessica** - Shylock's daughter who elopes with Lorenzo, a Christian.

**Lorenzo** - a friend of Bassanio who elopes with Jessica.

**Gratiano** - a friend of Bassanio who marries Portia's maid Nerissa.

**Nerissa** - Portia's witty and loyal maid who marries Gratiano".

**S4: Female**

" A story map helps students to understand the story better. The connections between all the characters become clearer and within the development of the events, it gets easier to protect some foreshadowing. For example Hamlets characters map it shows the relationship between the main character Hamlet and other characters and how these relationships affect the story"

**S5: Male**

"By creating a story map of a play, readers or viewers can identify the major characters and their roles in the story. They can also track the actions and motivations of each character, as well as their interactions with other characters. This can help readers or viewers better understand the characters' personalities, beliefs, and goals, as well as the conflicts that arise between them. Additionally, a story map can help readers or viewers identify the major plot points of the play, including the inciting incident, rising action, climax, and resolution. By understanding how the characters fit into each of these plot points, readers or viewers can gain a deeper understanding of the play as a whole".

**DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS**

To answer the question of the study "To what extent does the Story Mapping technique helps the Grade Four students to comprehend the characters and the relationships among them in the "Merchant of Venice play and Hamlet play "?, the results revealed that the story mapping technique had a significance effect on students' comprehending of the relationships among the characters of the two plays, in addition, it helps students to understand the role and the nature of each character. The students' replies revealed that the story mapping technique had helped them to save time, effort, and the use of dictionary in understanding the main and the major characters of each play.

From the students' replies, it can be inferred that the story mapping helps to visualize the overall structure of the play and identify the key events that shape the characters' motivations and behaviors. A story map is essentially a visual representation of the plot, which outlines the story's structure and major events in a chronological order. This tool can be useful in understanding the characters' motives and the relationships between them. In the Merchant of Venice, story mapping can help to identify the key moments in the plot that drive the actions of the characters. For instance, the story map has highlighted the events that lead to Shylock's hatred of Antonio, the merchant, and his demand for a pound of Antonio's flesh as collateral for a loan. By understanding the events that led to Shylock's hatred of Antonio, we can empathize with his character and understand why he makes the decisions that he does.

Similarly, story mapping has helped to identify the conflicts that arise between the other characters in the play. By visualizing the key moments of tension and conflict, we can better understand the motivations behind the characters' actions and their relationships with each other. For example, the story map has highlighted the moment when Portia, disguised as a lawyer, outwits Shylock in court and saves Antonio from his fate. This moment is critical in understanding Portia's character, as it demonstrates her intelligence, wit, and courage.

Concerning the Hamlet play, One of the key elements of Hamlet is the complex relationships between the characters. By mapping out the various interactions and conflicts between them, it becomes clear that each character has their own unique motivations and desires. For example, Hamlet's desire for revenge against his uncle is complicated by his own internal struggles and the relationships he has with other characters such as Ophelia and his mother, Gertrude. Through Story Mapping, it becomes clear that Hamlet's journey is one of self-discovery as much as it is about avenging his father's death. His actions are driven by a deep sense of betrayal and a desire to uncover the truth, but he is also struggling with his own sense of identity and purpose. Mapping out his character arc in this way can help readers to understand his motivations and the reasons behind his sometimes erratic behavior.

Similarly, mapping out the character arcs of other key players in the story such as Claudius, Gertrude, and Ophelia can reveal their own struggles and motivations. For example, Claudius is driven by his own ambition and desire for power, while Gertrude is torn between her loyalty to her husband and her love for her son. Mapping out these characters' journeys can help readers to better understand the complex relationships that drive the story and the ways in which they impact each other.

**CONCLUSION**

It can be inferred that the students' positive trends toward the significance of the Story Mapping technique is may due to the fact that story mapping aim is to uncover the details of what is required to deliver. Also, it facilitates knowledge sharing between the characters, it creates superior visualization of the plot and events of the novel, and it inspires deep thinking. The story mapping visualized the life of the two plays, also, the mind mapping show a visualized picture of the story of Merchant of Venice and Hamlet play developments of the events of the characters. Overall,



story mapping is an essential tool in understanding the Merchant of Venice's characters, their motivations, and their relationships with each other. It helps to clarify the structure of the plot and identify the key events that shape the play's themes and messages. Story Mapping is a valuable tool for understanding the characters in Hamlet. By breaking down the narrative into its constituent parts and visualizing the various relationships and conflicts between the characters, readers can gain a deeper appreciation for the motivations and struggles that drive the story. The researcher suggests to use story mapping technique in learning English literature subjects such as Drama, Poetry, and Literature Criticism.

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