

Why does Portia speak in prose in this scene? What is Shakespeare's purpose?

While most of Shakespeare's plays are written in blank verse, he often switches to prose to suit his purposes. This is certainly the case with Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. Portia, a high born lady, would be expected to speak in verse, the language of the upper classes in Shakespeare's plays. But, when she makes her entrance in this play, she speaks in prose. This makes perfect sense, however, because she is weary, worn out by the ramifications of her father's will. Her feelings over her lack of choice also lead her to be very sarcastic in her descriptions of her suitors. For example, she mocks the Neapolitan prince's obsession with horses, suggesting that "his mother played false with a smith" (II ii 41-42). This sarcasm would not be seen as very "refined" for a lady, and therefore not language conducive for verse. The witty, playful banter that she and Nerissa engage in is also much more suited to the lack of structure found in prose. Portia could not make the quick turns of phrase necessary to poke fun at these men, if her words were written in the iambic pentameter of blank verse. Shakespeare, then, will stray from convention in order to make his character as realistic as possible.

- My topic sentence is focused on the question
- I gave a brief explanation of the convention (prose v verse)
- I provided context
- I used several examples to back up my points
- I chose effective quotations
- I embedded them properly
- I cited the quotations
- I have an effective concluding sentence
- My word choice shows careful thought
- There is variety to my word choice
- My sentence structure is varied
- I used transitions to tie my ideas together
- The paragraph was carefully edited