• **Janus**: A Roman god of doors, who had two faces, one frowning and the other smiling; one head looking inwards and the other looking out. His reference is given to indicate that nature creates two different types of men with different outlooks.

• **Nestor**: Nestor was an Argonaut who helped fight the centaurs. He was an old and wise Greek general, who fought in the Trojan War along with his sons Antilochus and Thrasymedes on the side of the Achaeans. A joke had to be extremely funny if Nestor laughed at it.

• **Oracle**: Oracle was believed to be the voice of the gods, uttered through the mouth of the priests. In classical antiquity, an oracle was a person or agency considered to provide wise and insightful counsel or prophetic predictions or precognition of the future, inspired by the gods.

• **Portia**: She was the daughter of Cato (a Roman statesman) and the second wife of Brutus (a brave Roman general), the leader of the conspiracy against Julius Caesar. She is famous for her suicide, reputedly by swallowing hot coals.

• **Jason**: He was an ancient Greek mythological hero who was the leader of the Argonauts and whose quest for the Golden Fleece featured in Greek literature. He was the son of Aeson, the rightful king of Iolcus. He was married to the Sorceress Medea. He was also the great-grandson (through his mother's side) of the messenger god Hermes.

• **Golden Fleece**: In Greek mythology, the Golden Fleece is the fleece of the gold-haired winged ram, which was held in Colchis. The fleece is a symbol of authority and kingship.

• **Argonauts**: The Argonauts were a band of heroes in Greek mythology, who in the years before the Trojan War, around 1300 BC, accompanied Jason to Colchis in his quest to find the Golden Fleece. Their name comes from their ship, Argo, named after its builder, Argus. "Argonauts" literally means "Argo sailors".

• **Colcho’s Strand**: The ancient kingdom of Colchis or Colchos

• **Heraclitus**: A Greek philosopher who lived before the time of Socrates. He was a native of the city of Ephesus. His philosophy of life is famous for its confusing nature. He was also known as the weeping philosopher.

• **Sibylla**: The Sibyl is a prophetess in Roman mythology. Apollo granted her as many years of life as there were sand grains she held in her hand. She is used as the traditional old woman.

• **Diana**: The goddess of virginity in Roman mythology. She was also the goddess of the hunt, the moon, chastity and nature, associated with wild animals and woodland and who had the power to talk to and control animals. She fell in love with the beautiful Endymion and came down from heaven every night to live with him.
English II: Merchant of Venice: Mythological References (NOTES) Compiled by Dr. Ulfat Baig and Aiyra Baig

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- **Abraham**: The founder of the Jewish race. Isaac and Ishmael were his sons, and Jacob was the grandson of Abraham.

- **Jacob**: Later given the name Israel, he is regarded as a Patriarch of the Israelites. According to the Book of Genesis, Jacob was the third Hebrew progenitor with whom God made a covenant. He is the son of Isaac and Rebecca, the grandson of Abraham, Sarah and Bethuel, the nephew of Ishmael, and the younger twin brother of Esau.

- **Esau**: In the Hebrew Bible, Esau is the older son of Isaac and the elder twin brother of Jacob, the patriarch of the Israelites.

- **Laban**: He is a figure in the Book of Genesis of the Hebrew Bible. He was the brother of Rebecca, who married Isaac and bore Jacob. Laban welcomed his nephew as a young man and set him the stipulation of seven years’ labour before he permitted him to marry his daughter Rachel. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying his elder daughter Leah instead. Jacob then took both women as wives.

- **Phoebus**: The classical Sun god (also known as Apollo). He was said to ride his chariot across the sky every day, making the sun rise and set.

- **Sophy**: Emperor of Persia

- **Sultan of Solyman**: Suleman the Magnificent, Turkish Sultan (1490-1566), continuously at war with Persia.

- **Hercules/Alcides**: He was a divine hero in Greek mythology; the son of Zeus. He was also the Gatekeeper of Olympus and the god of Strength.

- **Lichas**: In Greek mythology, Lichas was Heracles' servant, who brought the poisoned shirt from Deianira to Hercules because of Deianira's jealousy of Iole, which killed him.

- **The Three Sisters**: They were also known as the Destenies; their names were Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos (the oldest and smallest).

- **Fortune**: Depicted as a woman to indicate the inconstancy of fate.

- **Black Monday**: The Monday following Easter (a festival to celebrate the resurrection of Christ). It took place on Easter Monday (1360) during the Hundred Years' War (1337–60), when Edward III's army was caught in the black fog and cold outside of Paris. Many soldiers froze to death. The storm was so devastating that it caused more English casualties than any of the previous battles of the war.

- **Ash-Wednesday**: Ash Wednesday is a Christian holy day of prayer, fasting and repentance. It is preceded by Shrove Tuesday and falls on the first day of Lent, the six weeks of penitence
before Easter. On this day, people put ashes on their forehead to remind them that man was made from dust and he shall return to dust.

- **Lent**: It is a solemn religious observance in the Christian liturgical calendar that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends approximately six weeks later, before Easter Sunday.

- **Sarah**: Sarah (alternatively spelled Sara) is a Hebrew feminine. The name refers to Sarah, the wife of Abraham in the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Old Testament.

- **Prodigal Son**: A character from a parable told by Christ. In the story, a father has two sons. The younger son asks for his inheritance, and becomes destitute after wasting his fortune (the word prodigal means "wastefully extravagant"). He returns home with the intention of begging his father to be made one of his hired servants, expecting that his relationship with his father is likely severed. Instead, his father welcomes him back and celebrates his return. The older son refuses to participate. The father reminds the older son that one day he will inherit everything, and that they should still celebrate the return of the younger son because he was lost and is now found.

- **Hagar**: She is a biblical person in the Book of Genesis. She was an Egyptian handmaid of Sarai (Sarah), who gave her to Abraham to bear a child.

- **Michael Archangel**: He is an archangel in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

- **Cupid**: In classical mythology, Cupid (meaning "desire") is the god of desire, erotic love, attraction and affection. He is often portrayed as the son of the love goddess Venus and the war god Mars.

- **King Midas**: The famous King Midas is popularly remembered in Greek mythology for his ability to turn everything he touched into gold.

- **Alcides**: Also known as Heracles, a divine hero in Greek mythology and the son of Zeus and Alcmene. He was the greatest of the Greek heroes, a paragon of masculinity, the Gatekeeper of Olympus, and the god of strength, heroes, sports, athletes, health, agriculture, fertility, trade, oracles; and the divine protector of mankind.

- **Dardanian Wives**: The Dardanian wives of Troy are Trojan women. They are the descendants of Dardanuf, who founded Troy.

- **Hesione**: The prominent Hesione was a Trojan princess, daughter of King Laomedon of Troy, sister of Priam and second wife of King Telamon of Salamis.

- **Sabbath**: It refers to Saturday, which is the seventh day of the Jewish week and considered a sacred day.
• **Turks and Tartars**: Certain Asiatic races around northern, eastern, central and western Asia; and patches of Eastern Europe. The Elizabethans believed them to be uncivilised.

• **Pythagoras**: He was a Greek philosopher and the famous mathematician who discovered the ratio of the sides of a triangle (known as Pythagoras’ theorem). He believed that the souls of men and animals appeared several times on the earth, assuming sometimes higher and sometimes lower forms of life.

• **Daniel**: A great Jewish character (of the Old Testament) in the Bible who was known for his wisdom. [Ref: The story of Susana and the elders in the Apocrypha. During a skilful cross examination, Daniel demonstrated that Susana, who had been falsely accused and condemned by two elders, was innocent.]

• **Barrabas**: He was a notorious Jewish criminal. Pilate, the King of the Jews, asked the Jewish mob whom he should set free: Jesus Christ or Barrabas. The mob said that Barrabas should be set free and Christ should be crucified. He was thus, freed at the Passover feast in Jerusalem.

• **Godfather**: When a man is admitted to the Christian faith by baptism with water, he has two godfathers. They bear witness to the child's baptism and then aid in his catechesis as well as his lifelong spiritual formation.

• **Troilus**: He is a legendary character associated with the story of the Trojan War. He was the son of the King of Troy. Troilus and Cressida were lovers and had exchanged vows of eternal fidelity. However, during the siege of Troy, Cressida was handed over to the Greeks in an exchange of prisoners. She had vowed to remain loyal but soon fell in love with Diomed. For a long time, Troilus stood every night on the wall of Troy, looking at the Greek Camp. Thus, Cressida became a symbol of unfaithful lovers.

• **Thisbe**: Pyramus and Thisbē are a pair of ill-fated lovers, whose story forms a part of Ovid's Metamorphoses. They are two lovers in the city of Babylon who occupy connected houses/walls, forbidden by their parents to be wed because of their parents' rivalry. Through a crack in one of the walls, they whisper their love for each other. They arrange to meet near Ninus' tomb under a mulberry tree and state their feelings for each other. Thisbe arrives first, but upon seeing a lioness with her mouth bloody from a recent kill, she flees, leaving behind her veil. When Pyramus arrives, he is horrified at the sight of Thisbe's veil, assuming that a wild beast has killed her. Seeing this, Pyramus killed himself. Thisbe returned, saw her lover’s body, and killed herself, too. Therefore, both became symbols of faithful lovers.
• **Dido**: According to ancient Greek and Roman sources, Dido is the founder and first queen of Carthage. The love story of Aeneas and Dido is narrated by Virgil in Aeneid. Aeneas was the Trojan warrior who founded the city of Rome. During his voyages, he reached Carthage where he loved Queen Dido. After a long stay with her, he sailed away, leaving Dido heartbroken. She killed herself out of grief. Shakespeare says that it must have been a beautiful moon-night that Dido walked sadly on the seashore, holding in her hand a willow, the symbol of deserted love. She beckoned (wafted) to Aeneus to come back to Catharge.

• **Aeson**: In Greek mythology, Aeson was a king of Iolcus in Thessaly. Aeson was the father of Jason and Promachus. He was the father-in-law of Medea, the wife of Jason, who helped him win the Golden Fleece. She gathered herbs of magical properties and administered them to her aged father-in-law Aeson to restore his youth. (Elizabethans believed that certain herbs had magical properties if gathered by night.)

• **Orpheus**: He is a legendary musician, poet, and prophet in ancient Greek religion and mythology. The major stories about him are centred on his ability to charm all living things and even stones with his music. He could make trees, streams and stones move from place-to-place by the power of his music.

• **Ovid**: He was a Roman poet who lived during the reign of Augustus. He narrated the story of Orpheus.

• **Erebus**: In classical mythology, it is the home of the dead; an area of darkness near hell.

• **Endymion**: He was variously a handsome Aeolian shepherd, a hunter, or a king who was said to rule and live at Olympia in Elis. He was a beautiful youth who was loved by the moon. When he slept at night, the moon kissed him by pouring her silvery light on him.

• **Manna**: In the Old Testament of the Bible, the Jews are described as wandering people, in the desert, on a long journey. Manna (or Mana) is an edible substance that God provided for the Israelites during their travels in the desert when they were starving. They found it lying on the ground. This happened in answer to Moses’ prayer to God.