

## THE WHITE DEVIL TEXT ANALYSIS

### ACT ONE

#### SCENE 1

- ✘ Count Lodovico has been Banished from Rome. The first word of the play is “Banish’d” → a powerful start to the play and immediately provokes interest and raises question
- ✘ His friends, Antonelli and Gasparo, suggest that his violent behaviour has merited his punishment.
- ✘ Lodovico is angry and rejects their advice and promises to be revenged in the future. He compares powerful men to wolves, suggesting they’re dangerous and can destroy you. He is also bitter that the Duke of Brachiano has not suffered similar punishment for his crimes. He feels his banishment is due to an unjust ‘fortune’. This touches on one of the play’s central concerns; corruption and injustice of the law and its abuse by the rich. This is a society where talk of murder, prostitution, sickness, over indulgence and drunkenness are symptoms of the society.
- ✘ Antonelli argues that it is a fair punishment as he “acted certain murders”. Lodovico comes back saying he is not “justly” doomed as surely if it were just, he would have been hanged for taking lives. This further hints at how corrupt the justice system is.
- ✘ The use of astronomical imagery suggests the inevitable decline of great men and women.
- ✘ The setting is indoors, reflecting Webster’s interest in people’s inner lives (appearance vs reality when saying “leave your painted comforts”, similar theme to King Lear) and the way they interact; their hidden motives.
- ✘ The idea here of power and who has power is linked to The Wife Of Bath and the power (in her case within marriage)

#### SCENE 2

- ✘ By using the name Vittoria Coronbona Webster assures the audience knows who she is as she would have been known to the contemporary audience. The play is very consciously theatrical (metatheatrical), i.e. it makes it obvious it is a play and does not try to make it natural. There are three commentators in this scene; Flaminio is bawdy, Zanche is conspiratorial and Cornelia is the catholic figure who speaks of sin.
- ✘ This scene is set at Vittoria’s house and it is dark, suggesting there may be mischief afoot.
- ✘ Brachiano and Flaminio (Brachiano’s secretary) have been visiting Camillo and Vittoria.
- ✘ Brachiano tells Flaminio (Vittoria’s brother) about his passion for Vittoria because he feels “quite lost”. Flaminio reassures him that he will arrange a meeting for them with the help of Vittoria’s servant Zanche, and so he tells the Duke to hide in a cupboard (he says ‘shroud yourself’. A shroud is a cloth to cover a dead body so there’s implications that this will lead to his death).
- ✘ Flaminio here is clearly described as manipulative and deceitful as he’s encouraging an adulterous affair for his sister; he’s essentially taking the role of a “pander” and is clearly arranging this to climb up the social ladder.
- ✘ Once Flaminio knows Brachiano is on board, he relaxes and changes from verse to prose.

- ✿ Flamineo says what women do is an act as society dictates that women must not present themselves as sexual beings; he says they blush when sex is talked about yet are happy to engage in the act.
- ✿ Meanwhile Camillo (Vittoria's husband) confides to Flamineo that he rarely shares a bed with his wife (this raises questions about how happy a marriage it is) and that he is suspicious of the Duke's intentions.
- ✿ Camillo is described as losing his hair and as being impotent and these are symptoms of syphilis. This could have been attributed by engaging in extra marital sex probably with prostitutes.
- ✿ Flamineo tricks Camillo and advises him that the best cure for jealousy is to give his wife her freedom. He says locking her up will inevitably drive her to having an affair. This links with the Wife of Bath because she resented the restrictions imposed on her by her husband and her final agreement with Jankin is that she is free to come and go as long as the husband's honour is sustained. Both texts state that for a marriage to work there must be an element of trust but ironically Camillo is right not to trust.
- ✿ He argues that if you are pre-disposed to be jealous then you will find suspicious things in everything. There is dramatic irony as the argument may be a true one, the audience knows that in this case Camillo is justified in his suspicions.
- ✿ Flamineo speaks with naturalistic imagery (involving animals) which represents moral debasement from the human and rational to the baser instincts and desires. Vittoria's brow is compared to snow, white is symbolic of purity, however ironically she is also compared to "ivory of Corinth" – Corinth is also a slang word for a brothel and ivory can be used to describe sexually derogative flesh.
- ✿ There are two conversations; in the loud one we see Flamino talking to Camillo and pretending to be friends but in his whispered asides he is mocking and assaulting Camillo. This shows Flamino is a skilful manipulator; he succeeds his sister to sleep with the Duke and his Brother-in-law to sleep alone. (This device of whispered asides was often used by Webster to show the difference between seeming and being – we can see what's being projected and the reality of what is happening underneath, highlighting the idea of a corrupt society. His whispers show how beneath the façade of society there is hidden corruption).
- ✿ Flamineo ultimately persuades Camillo to not sleep with Vittoria in order to play "hard to get", Camillo falls right into his 'trap' by telling Flamineo to lock him in his room to ensure he does not go with Vittoria.
- ✿ Flamino refers to women as "cursed dogs" – he uses a lot of negative animal imagery to describe women
- ✿ We see that as Brachiano is professing his love, Zanche is preparing a bed for them...this shows that love is heavily linked to sex.
- ✿ Flamineo then persuades Vittoria to sleep with the Duke.
- ✿ Vittoria and Brachiano lie in bed together and she tells him of her dream of the death of Brachiano's wife and her husband.
- ✿ The dream has a very gothic and supernatural element. It could be seen as a sort of premonition. The yew-tree could be interpreted in different ways; they are symbolic of graveyards so it could also symbolise lawful marriage being destroyed and killed or it could be interpreted as symbolising Brachiano which will turn and wither into something less strong if this union with Vittoria goes ahead. Their spouses are killed by the tree which again is significant if we interpret it as Brachiano
- ✿ Flamineo thinks Vittoria has come up with that dream in an attempt to manipulate and urge Brachiano to kill their spouses.

- ✿ Brachiano says he will protect her and place her above the law – this further hints at corruption and Brachiano’s arrogant character as the law’s should apply to everyone but they don’t. The irony is that these vows bring about murders and social disintegration; not only are they going against religious rules, but they are also flouting the established social order.
- ✿ They are interrupted by Vittoria (and Flamineo’s) mother, Cornelia, who accuses them of adultery and curses her daughter, comparing her to Judas who portrayed Jesus with a kiss.
- ✿ Cornelia continues to compares Brachiano to mildew; a fungus/disease that will corrupt. She tells Brachiano that his wife has arrived in Rome and she then exits in despair. Brachiano leaves too. We don’t know how Cornelia knows that Isabella has arrived but it might signal that in some way she is connected with Isabella personally, since they are both represented as virtuous and devout.
- ✿ Brachiano should be a good Duchess and lead by example but he is the one corrupting Vittoria – if he is the one in power who sets the barometer where everyone is meant to be behaving and he is being deceitful, this does not seem good as to how other characters will act.
- ✿ We must note that Vittoria is much more polite when addressing her mother than Flamineo.
- ✿ Vittoria says that Brachiano has been trying after her for a long time and she alleges that there would be blood if it did not go on; would her brother be effected? Her husband? Webster might be creating sympathy for Vittoria by showing her as pressurised as not to enter the relationship might not only affect her but have other consequences.
- ✿ When Flamineo is alone her warns the audience about what is going to happen; that the duchess’s arrival will bring trouble. He also blames his mother for upsetting the Brachiano, he does not for a second reflect that it might be Brachiano and his lack of morality who is to blame for the situation. Cornelia though defends herself and asks whether poverty makes a person corrupt. She is voicing the conventional Christian view the being poor should not be an excuse for corrupt or immoral behaviour. Flamineo does not answer directly which suggests that he regards the inevitable outcome of poverty as crime and death. He says he is impoverished so he needs to find power with a more wealthy member of society and thus his getting together of Brachiano and Vittoria is just a necessity and not a choice, but it sure seems more of a choice.
- ✿ Flamineo details his family history and we find out that he has had the benefit of a university education from Padua but he complains that he has not got sufficient money to live on. He may be saying that he graduated simply by coming of age and reaching physical maturity with the growth of a beard (rather than by achieving any intellectual distinction) but the meaning may be more sinister and suggest that he graduated by entering into some nefarious activity with an older man, possibly of a sexual nature. It may even be an oblique reference to the activities of young men such as Christopher Marlowe who was allowed to graduate from Cambridge despite not completing his studies but simply because he had been engaged on government business, supposedly spying.
- ✿ Flamineo says he went straight from university into Brachiano’s service which suggests a link between his activities and Brachiano’s court.
- ✿ Flamineo argues that his lack of wealth restricts his independence; perhaps Webster is giving an insight into his upbringing and to why he feels he needs to act this way he does now.
- ✿ Cornelia’s response to Flamineo’s course of action is to disown him, which that she had never borne him but Flamineo argues that he would have preferred a prostitute for a mother since then he would have been provided for by lots of fathers. He suggests that she should go complain to the cardinal (Monticelso) – this seems ironic in the light of our later knowledge of this corrupt cleric and suggests that Flamineo was aware of his character.

- ✿ Everything the characters say seems ambiguous and this ambiguity works on many levels; it pervades the whole play with a sense of irony and produces a systematic level of irony.
- ✿ A metaphor is revealed – ‘pair of spectacles fashioned with such perspective art’ that to the wearer nothing is as it seems – it is perhaps the more revealing metaphor in the play and suggests the limited nature of human vision and the difficulty of knowing what constitutes truth.
- ✿ Flamineo seems to relish his villainy

## ACT TWO

### SCENE 1

- Here, like act 1 scene 1, we have two characters chiding one character.
- This scene is full of animal imagery which is intended as a sign of characters falling below the level of human. It is set in Francisco’s (Isabella’s brother) palace in Rome.
- The scene has many exits and entrances, with changes from a crowded scene to an intimate meeting.
- The scene highlights the conflict between marriage, a relationship based on political and financial interests (similar to the Wife’s first 4 marriages), and love, a connection based on passion and desire.
- Learning of her husband’s affair with Vittoria, Isabella has arrived in Rome with her son, Giovanni, to visit her brother Francisco to try and achieve a reconciliation with Brachiano. She forgives him; she is presented as sweet, virtuous and forgiving. There’s also hints later that she is too saintly, too pious to be a wife.
- Vittoria and Marcello (Flamineo’s brother) takes Giovanni to find him a suit of armour.
- Francisco tells Isabella to hide but she tells him that she is convinced she can win back her husband.
- Francisco and Monticelso then try to persuade Brachiano to give up Vittoria, but Brachiano is defiant. He says no one can take her away from him and threatens a war if they try to take her away from him.
- Monticelso ends up chastising Brachiano for what he is doing saying he is not just affecting his marriage but is also affecting his public persona.
- Francisco says Brachiano is lowering his standards in his pursuit of Vittoria and is annoyed he has cheated on his sister, Isabella. He says she wears expensive cloth yet her husband is not very wealthy, there is hints that she wants to up her social standing. Francisco even condemns her a whore here as he thinks Brachiano will get a STD from her.
- Monticelso sets in to try and make piece and prevent war. He sees Giovanni as an instrument of piece that could unite the two brothers-in-law. He urges Brachiano to be a leading father figure.
- The reference to Homer shows that Giovanni is well educated with a classical education. He is presented as lively and precocious (wise beyond his years) and innocent in the ways of the world with a very Black or white view. All the major characters treat him with affection and he is used by Webster as a measure of his fathers selfishness and lack of responsibility.
- In this scene Webster is trying to show how truth and morality takes a back seat because of the need for political expediency.
- Francisco calls for Camillo in order to discuss with him the capture of Lodovico, who has become a pirate
- Isabella enters and Francisco leaves her alone with Brachiano.

- Isabella accuses him subtly of adultery but he acts defensively telling her to go to her room; this tells us the women in that society were not treated as equals.
- Isabella says no, she will not go to her room. This prepares the audience for her strong character.
- She tries to kiss and embrace him but he just bluntly rejects her – he is seen as arrogant and being cruel to his wife who has done no wrong; in fact the opposite, he is the one who has done wrong.
- Isabella keeps trying to win her husband but he is angry and divorces her – here we see the play's major theme of the conflict between marriage due to a relationship based on political and financial interests, passion and sexual desire. Aristocratic marriage was a political arrangement used to cement alliances.
- Brachiano accuses her of stirring up her brother to war against him. Here, like the Wife of bath, he believes attack is the best form of defence by turning attack on the accuser. Brachiano seems annoyed that his pride has been wounded by Francisco and Monticelso, his anger seems to be heightened. He blames Francisco for organising the marriage between him and Isabella in the first place. He curses everything to do with the marriage, even curses his son who he was previously praising; there is a sense that he is a volatile man with changing attitudes.
- We see a reversal of the previous scene where he gave a jewel to Vittoria as a symbol of betrothal. Divorce was legal but re-marriage was not (so technically he should be not free to marry Vittoria, hence Isabella needs to die)
- Isabella then says that to make peace she will pretend that she is the one who had brought about the separation in order to avoid war (this shows the extent to what she will do for her husband, she is very kind, forgiving, pious and selfless) and when Monticelso and Lodovico returns she playacts that it is her who is rejecting him. Isabella is thinking of the greater good – something Brachiano should be doing but is not
- The men are fooled and blame Isabella's fury for the failure of her marriage. This shows how quick men are to blame women for everything.
- Francisco tells Isabella to stop crying and get to an agreement or he will not have anything to do with her – he is not concerned about his sister but rather about having some control over Brachiano. As long as Brachiano is his brother-in-law Francisco can hold some control in society.
- She reveals outwards in her pretend divorce that she wants to gauge out Vittoria's eyes. Her asides reveal this is just because she is taking responsibility for her husband's sake, but as an audience we question to what extent her feigned or pretend outburst portrays her true feeling.
- Isabella speaks about the affair as a "slight wrong" this shows that in that society adultery was a commonplace.
- When women speak and voice out their concerns they are condemned by men; when both Cornelia and Isabella speak out they are called a Fury (revenge Goddess) and thus women who speak out are perceived as not normal. Again she is sent to her room (this time by her brother Francisco) showing how they want to silence her voice. But she refuses again, showing that she is not as weak as she may have been perceived at the beginning.
- Flamineo and Brachiano discuss Isabella's poisoning with Doctor Julio and Flamineo says he will take care of Francisco's death himself.
- Brachiano calls Julio "honest doctor" but he is anything but, further highlighting the corruption of those who are in a state of power.
- They plan to kill Isabella by poisoning the portrait she kisses and they will kill Camillo by framing it that he's had a natural death.

- Francisco hopes to ruin Brachiano by the development of his scandalous affair
- Francisco gives a mythological tale that states that if the Sun had children it would be unbearable as it would be too hot. However, Webster twists the meaning to use the tale to claim that Vittoria should not have children as people would regret the fact that she has reproduced. The audience is left wondering why her children would be problematic as she is presented in a negative way so having many of her in the world would be bad. Potentially she's being blamed for what's happening and Brachiano isn't.
- Monticelso tells Camillo that he thinks Vittoria is unfaithful to Camillo but he objects saying that his going away will give Vittoria more opportunity, however Monticelso says he will watch over her.
- However when Camillo leaves, Monticelso and Francisco reveal their plan to destroy Brachiano because of his affair with Vittoria.

## SCENE 2

- Brachiano reminds a Conjuror that he has promised to show him the deaths of Camillio and Isabella.
- The Conjuror tells him to put on a 'charmed' night-cap which will allow him to see Isabella's death through a 'dumb show' (a silent pantomimed action).
- In the first dumb show we see Doctor Julio and Christophero (his assistant) put poison on a portrait of Brachiano which Isabella kisses and dies. Julio and Christophero "depart laughing" showing that they're even enjoying this.
- Giovanni and Lodovico grieve at her death
- It is even more malicious that the fact she dies is because she's kissing a portrait of Brachiano showing her devotion to him.
- Julio calls the portrait "your dead shadow" - the irony is that through this act he is setting a chain of events that will lead to his death.
- Brachiano's chilling response is "excellent, then she'd dead" – it shows a total ruthlessness and lack of any redeeming qualities. However, Brachiano questions the presence of Lodovico
- In the second dumb show we see Flamineo, Marcello, Camillo and others. Marcello leaves the room and, using a vaulting horse, Flamineo pitches Camillio on to his neck, breaking it. He tries to frame it that he died naturally.
- This is a very physical and close death
- The two dumb shows are deliberately distanced and stylised and attention is drawn to their theatricality by the presence of Brachiano watching.
- Marcello arrives and sends for Francisco and the cardinal who arrest Flamineo and Marcello and then arrest Vittoria.
- Vittoria has hardly been involved with the murders yet she is arrested but Brachiano is not because he's a stronger, more influential male character
- Brachiano is delighted by the scenes and pays the Conjuror. He even calls the Conjuror "noble friend" – he clearly has a warped sense of nobility.

## ACT THREE

### SCENE 1

- 🐾 Vittoria is put on trial for the murder of Camillo. However, there are also subtle hints that she is also being charged for adultery.
- 🐾 Ironic that the woman is the one put on trial. However, Brachiano is also being embarrassed by being known as her lover.
- 🐾 Monticelso actually admits there are no circumstances to charge her with – “we have naught but circumstances to charge her with”. They only wish to damage her reputation.
- 🐾 Flamineo and Marcello enter under guard with a lawyer.
- 🐾 Marcello wishes he had killed Vittoria (his sister) when she first saw Brachiano (as he adheres to traditional notions of honour in which he would have had the right to kill his sister for dishonouring the family name) and accuses his brother, Flamineo, but Flamineo defends himself saying he acted in the best interests of himself and his sister
- 🐾 Marcello rejects this and begs Flamineo to reform claiming that he’s “an honest heart”. Flamineo continues to argue that for all his virtues, Marcello barely has enough money to provide for his necessities.
- 🐾 Flamineo says that the good often comes with the bad, you cannot have just good and likewise just bad. Even within the same person there is the capacity for good and for bad.
- 🐾 The 3 Ambassadors arrive. Francisco congratulates Monticelso for arranging for the foreign ambassadors to attend as it makes the scandal much more formal and official. Flamineo’s satirical comments about the ambassadors suggest that they’re not immune from corruption.
- 🐾 The lawyer is also presented as a corrupt character as is shown through his language which is crude
- 🐾 Flamineo and the Lawyer mock the ambassadors. They even mock the ambassador’s clothes perhaps hinting at the façade and mask they put on in court.

## SCENE 2

- 🐾 This is a central scene and is signified unusually by a title – “the Arraignment of Vittoria”. The trial reveals the vulnerable position of women in society
- 🐾 Brachiano arrives to witness the arraignment. Monticelso objects saying that there is no place for Brachiano (though ironically he is the one who should be there on trial).
- 🐾 Brachiano stays anyways showing his arrogance.
- 🐾 Monticelso will have a vested interest in the case as his nephew is Camillo, we know from the start that it won’t be a fair trial.
- 🐾 The lawyer, who’s supposed to defend Vittoria, charges Vittoria in Latin but she says objects to his Latin and legal jargon.
- 🐾 Monticelso then accuses her in English, insulting her. In the absence of any other evidence against her, his main charge is of immorality.
- 🐾 Vittoria argues that churchmen should not be lawyers; we have a blurring between the legal court and religion
- 🐾 Monticelso, in his fury, calls her a whore. He then launches into an analysis of the term, which he offers as negative, hostile and inflammatory.
- 🐾 He condemns her about the way she looks and calls her a whore due to her makeup. These problems can be seen nowadays such as with “invoking” rape and can also be linked to the ugly women in the Wife Of Bath
- 🐾 The images he selects are strange and unexpected and his tone is disturbing. He is angry and intensely personal, suggesting inappropriate emotional investment – the opposite of rational examination of the facts. His lurid language suggests a prurient interest in and an erotic fascination with the sexuality the whore represents and at the same time a desperate

attempt to deny it. In the 1996 Royal Shakespeare Company production, Philip Voss who plays Monticelso, conducted much of the arraignment of Vittoria whilst leering ostentatiously down at the cleavage of the actor playing Vittoria.

- 🐾 It is clear though that he believes in the dangerous threat which uncontrolled female sexuality, represented by the 'whore', was seen to pose to the ordered working of society by bringing about chaos both in the natural world and civilised society. He explains that from the whore, "devil, adultery inevitably follows" and then the "devil, murder".
- 🐾 There is misogyny and hatred in Monticelso's language, which could be argued to be against women in general – any woman who is overtly sexual is characterised as a whore.
- 🐾 He says she is like a "guilty counterfeited coin". Guilt can be a play on words for gilt which is a gold covering, suggesting that Vittoria is only golden on the outside.
- 🐾 We must be aware of the differences in the audience's opinions of Vittoria nowadays and in Webster's time. Modern audiences would be more forgiving of Vittoria because, even though adultery is seen as bad, perhaps it is not seen as bad as it would have in Webster's time as generally we are less religious.
- 🐾 Webster implies that in order to survive Vittoria must have to act like a man – "personate masculine virtue"
- 🐾 Vittoria describes herself as a "mine of diamonds" – precious, strong and unbreakable.
- 🐾 Monticelso asks directly who was in her house the night her husband died but Brachiano reply's saying he was there to comfort her (he is only concerned in self-interest as he wants to provide an alibi for himself) and he threatens to destroy Monticelso and storms out (he's free to leave because he's been offended but Vittoria is not free to leave – he is deserting Vittoria)
- 🐾 Francisco points out that there is no evidence against Vittoria.
- 🐾 However Monticelso then produces evidence; a letter from Brachiano, arranging to meet Vittoria (she just received the letter yet she is the one being condemned for it). Vittoria argues that it does not make her guilty and all she can actually be charged with is enjoying herself – she uses a quote from *Ovid's Amore's* to back up her argument (much like the Wife of Bath uses 'authoritees' like the Bible)
- 🐾 Her argument that she only likes to have fun and is not guilty of adultery is known to the audience to be a lie, she is hiding things inside.
- 🐾 Monticelso then says that Brachiano gave her money but she says it was to save her husband from prison and tells him if he is her accuser then he should stop being her judge (she is not afraid to speak out and call out what is wrong – the Judge cannot also be the prosecutor)
- 🐾 Monticelso then recites the story of her courtship and marriage to Camillo. he wants to blacken her reputation so that it will rub off on Brachiano's reputation as the scandal would have been known all over Rome. He says she was born in Venice and Venice had a reputation for prostitution and Camillo "bought you of your father" – women were seen as commodities to be bought, it also suggests a reason as to why she wanted to have another affair as she never really loved Camillo
- 🐾 He then dismisses charges against Flamineo and Marcello (so they too were supposedly on trial for murder but they have not been attacked like Vittoria)
- 🐾 He sentences Vittoria to be confined with Zanche to a house of converitites (Zanche is also being condemned for something she has had nothing to do with). As the only one tried and condemned for Camillo's death, the audience is bound to feel that she has been treated unjustly, especially in contrast to Brachino and Flamineo who we know to be guilty – it suggests that a woman is the easier target. It recognises the way in which socially powerless

women are in fact central to a system based on the legal inheritance of lands, titles and money, through their reproductive function, but by which they are oppressed.

- 🐾 The men's escape and the whole scene serves to highlight the power of the Church and state and its abuse by corrupt noblemen and clergy.
- 🐾 Vittoria rages anger but then recollects herself, and in a speech of superb pride (her performance is remarkable for its rhetorical sophistication, confidence and assurance – she refuses to break and bow down to them), and she announces that her will and presence have the power to overcome her doom. She defends herself with logic and reasoned argument whereas her accusers stoop to unsupported accusation.
- 🐾 Brachiano re-enters and makes peace with Francisco before leaving again.
- 🐾 Flamineo interprets this as a precaution before he hears about Isabella's death and he says he will feign madness as a result of his sisters disgrace (ironic as he was the result of his sisters disgrace)
- 🐾 Giovanni and Lodovico enter and announce Isabella's death. Giovanni recounts his own and Isabella's suffering while Francisco is overcome with grief. We find out that Isabella breast fed Giovanni, this was not common at the time but shows that she had a strong mother-son bond and valued the personal over the public – she's presented as the perfect mother in contrast with Vittoria, the whore, who has no children.

### SCENE 3

- 🐾 Flamineo, putting on the act of madness that he promised in the previous scene (this is a typical device in revenge tragedy), is bitter at the injustice of the court's judgement and his lack of reward. He feigns this madness as an attempt to deceive his enemies.
- 🐾 He says that a person who is upfront about their agenda can and will be perceived as a threat. He argues that politicians, like the devil. Are far too sly and cunning to do this and will instead disguise their attack, often in the form of friendship.
- 🐾 The Ambassadors attempt to reconcile him but he blames politicians, money and Monticelso's corruption of the law and walks out
- 🐾 He then re-enters and reveals his suspicion of Lodovico, believing him to be linked to Isabella and Giovanni.
- 🐾 Flamineo greets Lodovico and they both share their sense of grievance against the world. They make a temporary alliance, a pact.
- 🐾 Antonelli and Gasparo arrive with news that, at Francisco's request, the Pope on his deathbed has pardoned Lodovico for his charges of murder (showing the corruption is also religious by having a Pope release someone who's murdered)
- 🐾 Now he has been pardoned he dissolves his agreement/pack with Lodovico as he is now in a better position of power and so no longer needs Flamineo – this is a society where people use each other to gain social status, a society which is self-serving.
- 🐾 But Flamineo is even more resentful at Lodovico's pleasure and they both taunt each other and Flamineo strikes Lodovico but their fighting is parted by Marcello, Antonelli and Gasparo.

## ACT FOUR

### SCENE 1

- 🐾 Monticelso encourages Francisco to reveal his thoughts and to accept Isabella's poisoning, urging him to avenge her death through murder. Monticelso is the person who will be the

next Pope and yet his character seems such a mischievous one; Webster is criticising Catholic religion.

- ✚ Monticelso does not counsel prayer which would be appropriate to his position as a member of the clergy.
- ✚ However Monticelso suggests that more insidious means are likely to be better and he lets Francisco borrow his 'black book' which records all the names and details of all the criminals in Rome. This black book suggests the workings of the secret police. Monticelso is encouraging the murder. The fact that Monticelso has kept a record of all these names shows us a clearly immoral side to him as it suggests he will want to use these people some time in the future. Both a contemporary and modern audience would be shocked by it.
- ✚ Francisco plans to use it to locate a list of murderers to kill Brachiano (Franciso, as with Brachiano, do not physically commit murder but instigate it).
- ✚ Francisco says that these men have in some way been blackmailed as they've been allowed to not have to pay for their crimes and instead their names are placed in the book.
- ✚ He then closes his eyes and calls Isabella to mind to help him decide how to avenge her death. Her ghost appears but he thinks it is just a figment of his imagination and becomes inspired by an idea for revenge so dismisses the vision. (the use of a ghost is a typical device of a revenge tragedy, as is murder and madness.)
- ✚ He announces that he is 'in love' with Vittoria and writes her a poem (to make Brachiano jealous and provoke him to abduct Vittoria from the house of convertites and marry her. He wants this to happen because if Brachiano did this the ensuring scandal would be one that would really damage his reputation) which he sends to the house of convertites and chooses Lodovico to help him with revenge.

## SCENE 2

- ✚ The majority of this scene is like the trial scene – Vittoria spends it defending herself against charges of immorality. This time she's defending herself to her brother and her lover. She is not guilty at all of doing anything with Francisco so it is unfair to condemn her out rightly.
- ✚ Francisco's servant arrives, sees Flamineo speaking to the Matron and asks the matron to deliver a letter.
- ✚ Brachiano appears and Flamineo takes the letter and, after a tussle with Brachiano, he reads the letter aloud (he reads aloud something that's meant to be private; women had nothing that was considered to be theirs and private, they're seen as male property)
- ✚ In the letter, Francisco promises to rescue Vittoria and take her to Florence.
- ✚ Brachiano is distraught and threatens to destroy Vittoria as he believes she has been unfaithful to him. (again he wants to destroy the female when all she's done is receive the letter not written it, hinting further that it is the woman's fault for exciting the male). He uses violent language and himself calls her a whore.
- ✚ Brachiano has fallen for Francisco's trick. He is so quick to believe she is unfaithful; this shows that he thinks it is quite a likely action for someone would cheat as he did it. it also highlights how adultery was very common in that society.
- ✚ Brachiano is also angry with Flamineo, who stands up for Vittoria, reminding him of his role in Camillo's death.
- ✚ Vittoria enters and Brachiano confronts her with the letter and she realises that it's a trick
- ✚ But Brachiano refuses to believe her and blames Vittoria for tricking him and expresses self-pitying regret for Isabella's death which rouses Vittoria's anger, she changes her form of address to brachiano from the polite 'you' to the intimate 'thou'; a sign of emotion – both

love and scorn since the term was used to intimates and inferiors. Brachiano thinks Vittoria has “lead [him] to [his] ruin”

- ♫ Brachiano says “I was bewitched” – suggesting again that she tainted him. He says “all the world speaks ill of thee” – but they speak bad of her because of the affair she had which he was included in
- ♫ She refuses to accept other people’s condemnation of her and points out how much she has lost by her association with him and suggests that he has ruined other women in the same way (such as being guilty of Isabella’s death). She then denounces both Brachiano and Flamineo.
- ♫ Her speech reveals that she knew that Brachiano was responsible for his wife’s death, making it possible that her performance of injured innocence in court was an act. It also reveals Brachiano as weak to disclaim responsibility of Isabella’s death.
- ♫ Part of Vittoria’s speech here echoes the gospel of St. Mark 9:45: ‘and if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell’.
- ♫ In the speech Vittoria is seen as strong and refusing to be labelled
- ♫ When she breaks down and cries Brachiano backs down and tries to calm her but Vittoria refuses to give in
- ♫ Flamineo and Brachiano both then attempt to soothe her but she rejects them, vowing that she’ll speak no more – and she does actually not speak throughout the rest of the scene. However, the audience can never be sure with Vittoria what is genuinely felt and what is play-acting. He may be trying to manipulate Brachiano in order to get him to marry her so she will no longer be his whore
- ♫ Flamineo’s aside shows that he understands his sister’s temperament and that once her anger is roused it is likely to equal that of Brachiano, suggesting that they’re well-matched.
- ♫ Flamineo is scheming again, he tells Brachiano in an aside that he will get her to change her mind and so out loud says that he’s on Vittoria’s side so she trusts him. Yet in his next aside he says “no body wants left over goods” – thinking about his sister in such a way is scarily indicative of his attitude towards women. He also says that women’s anger is quickly calmed down, showing women as not steadfast and constantly changing their mind.
- ♫ Flamineo would be interested in them marrying because, as Brachiano’s brother-in-law and not just his sectary, he can further climb up the social ladder
- ♫ Flamineo says that men learnt to lie by suckling their mothers breast
- ♫ However, Vittoria’s action has had the desired effect and Brachiano claims to have forgotten all about it – she has done enough to convince him of her honesty. Eventually Brachiano embraces her and announces that he will pursue Francisco’s plan to take Vittoria away as he said in the letter. He says he’ll take her to Pauda and marry her. The whole family attend the wedding to show the corruption regardless of what people say outwardly (as ideally Cornelia and Marcello shouldn’t go as they didn’t agree with the affair beforehand)
- ♫ However, Vittoria will have nothing to do with him and rejects his advances angrily. When Flamineo attempts to make peace she turns on him too, arguing that it’s his fault for letting the affair take place.
- ♫ Webster, through Flamineo, uses a fable to relate their particular situation to man-kind in general. The meaning of the fable can be interpreted as highlighting the ungratefulness of those who’re powerful to those who have helped them
- ♫ These exchanges show the sudden reversals of fortune and the way the balance of power within relationships quickly changes- at the beginning of this passage Vittoria is on the defensive yet by the power of rhetoric she is able by the end to gain the upper hand over Brachiano and achieve everything she wants.

- ♫ The irony is the fact that they're falling into Francisco's trap.

### **SCENE 3**

- ♫ The Ambassadors prepare for the election of the new pope
- ♫ When people elect popes during a conclave, important people are enclosed in a room to decide and food is sent in to them. Their food is being searched by Lodovico to ensure there is no secret messages which is ironic of the corruption since Lodovico is a murderer so we have a villain guarding these important priests.
- ♫ Monticelso is elected Pope Paul IV. The pope is meant to be the highest representation of humans to God in the catholic church but even religion is susceptible to corruption.
- ♫ Francisco learns, to his joy, that Vittoria and Brachiano have fled, falling into his trap (he feels Brachiano couldn't do anything worse than to marry a whore). It is ironic that we learn of their flight immediately after the announcement of pope and that excommunicate them is the Pope's first act, he is only focused on using his religious power for personal revenge.
- ♫ Francisco tells Monticelso and his first act as pope then is to excommunicate the couple. Why are they punished not others? Is there a justice? Is justice used to serve the desires of those powerful enough to implement it?
- ♫ Monticelso questions Lodovico as to Francisco's motives for begging pardon for him. He surmises that Francisco plans to use Lodovico to commit murder and kill Brachiano.
- ♫ Francisco says he tells Monticelso as a confession and the sacrament of confession in the church is that they're bound to silence and cannot tell anyone. Here we see a religious sacrificed used totally in the wrong way. This is a parody of confession as we earlier saw a parody of divorce, of course the contemporary audience would have been in reformation England so they wouldn't agree with these
- ♫ Even though Monticelso and Francisco are close they even scheme and plot between them
- ♫ Lodovico 'confesses' and agrees to give up his murderous plan.
- ♫ However, Francisco sends Lodovico 1000 crowns, which the servant tells him are from Monticelso, and this convinces Lodovico that Monticelso was merely testing him and that he secretly approves of the plan to avenge Isabella's death (this reminds us that even though he is spurred on by Francisco, his love for Isabella and revenge on Vittoria makes this not just a hired murder but also a personal one). He therefore Lodovico changes his plan again and agrees to continue the murder.
- ♫ Francisco is plotting and scheming and manipulating (he's manipulated Lodovico to carry out his revenge, he is outwitting Monticelso and he's gotten Brachiano to fall into his plan)

## **ACT FIVE**

### **SCENE 1**

- 🌐 The wedding procession of Vittoria and Brachiano crosses the stage. They've just been excommunicated and are part of a big scandal yet he has a massive marriage ceremony, he believes he can do what he wishes and is above the law
- 🌐 We learn that "others" are there and these are likely to be ambassadors, there is political acceptance of a murderer and an adulterous/whore.
- 🌐 Vittoria is being elevated from whore to duchess when she marries Brachiano, this links with the wife of bath and the discuss on gentillesse and what makes someone noble. Yet in the

white devil nobody has shown to be gentile, they've just all gained it through birth and in Vittoria's case through marriage.

- Flamineo confides that he is happy for the first time in his life as his sister is marrying Brachiano so it means power and stability for him, however the fact he is happy acts as warnings that things are going to start to go wrong.
- We learn that a Moor named Mulinassar has attended but the audience is not aware yet that it is actually Francisco in disguise. This embodies on stage the idea of seeming and being, of how you cannot trust the external. This concept is also embedded in the psyche of humans as people can "look nice" but be corruptive inside and you can never be fully certain of their inside motives.
- People discuss the 'Hungarian noblemen soldiers' (who are Lodovico, Antonelli and Gasparo in disguise) who have become monks and friars.
- Brachiano welcomes the newcomers and awards Mulinassar a 'competent pension' and invites them all to stay for the 'barriers'. Francisco wants to murder Brachiano yet Brachiano is fooled by his disguise and ends up praising
- The soldiers debate about their military career and this debate allows for the recurring question as to whether the differences between people can be accounted by an individual's place in the social structure. Francisco's (as Mulinassar) answer, that social standing is simply a question of chance, is clearly what Flamineo wants to hear.
- The disguised conspirators discuss how to murder Brachiano. Lodovico wants something original that will make them famous – poison preferably in some situation where Brachiano will curse and hence go to hell.
- Francisco argues that he would prefer to fight Brachiano, but they agree to poison him in the end
- Marcello and Cornelia comment on the fact that Zanche has become attached to Flamineo, and chides him for it. Yet he is happy to go to Brachiano and Vittoria's wedding which can also be seen as morally wrong
- Flamineo discusses Zanche with Hortensio, saying that he (Flamineo) loves her.
- Cornelia enters and insults Zanche, telling her to go to the brothels. Flamineo reprimands his mother. When Zanche answers Cornelia back, Marcello kicks her. Their attitude towards Zanche is disturbing, especially since up until now they had seemed to represent a proper moral perspective so their outward presentation is different to their inward desires. Their dislike and violence towards her seems largely based on her colour – she is also a Moor.
- Cornelia before was the Christian figure and now she is beating Zanche, clearly showing the corruption within religion.
- Flamineo retorts by accusing his brother of being 'choleric' but Marcello is furious and swears the he will challenge his brother to a duel. Flamineo accepts.
- Zanche then unexpectedly tells Mulinassar (ironically Francisco) that she loves him but he responds that he is old and vowed never to marry, but Zanche says she can provide a rich dowry.
- This she liked Flamineo yet just said she loves Francisco – this shows that her loyalties are constantly shifting and are only done to increase power and social standing.

## SCENE 2

- Cornelia says that she's heard rumours that Marcello is to fight and she wants to know with whom.
- He, however, denies it.

- We learn that when Flameneo was a baby he broke off part of his crucifix, this suggests an innate evil. Now it is mended. But like the value system it symbolizes, it is not strong enough to stem the rampant flow of evil and sin engulfing the court.
- Flameneo enters and runs through Marcello with his own sword, killing him. He kills his own brother!
- Marcello dies believing that his death is divine retribution for their sins on the whole family. With his dying breath he makes a moral reflection on the dangers of ambition. He speaks of Vittoria's dream and his speech seems to play across notions of divine justice and the biblical saying that the sins of the father should be visited upon the children (Exodus 20:5) and it also articulates the idea that individuals are responsible for their own destinies by the conduct of their lives.
- Cornelia is distraught
- Brachiano returns with Flameneo and asks if this was his handiwork but Flameneo says 'it was my misfortune' which provokes the question as to what constitutes 'fortune' and the extent to which individuals shape their own destiny.
- Cornelia denies that Flameneo is responsible (she is now lying to protect a murderous son. Her struggle to protect her family is her only role and it has forced her to compromise her principles). She argues that those who prevented Marcello from receiving better help are the guilty ones. She then runs at Flameneo with her knife but cannot bring herself to strike him.
- Brachiano demands to know what happened but Cornelia covers up for her son and blames Marcello for starting it. She is lying because he is already dead so she might as well protect the other one. She's compromising the ethical and moral streak in her that she had at the beginning.
- Brachiano says that no one should tell Vittoria about Marcello's death and he also does not stop or spoil his own wedding celebrations from going ahead which implies both a casual attitude to death and failure of sympathy and understanding – these characteristics are kind of expected though from the man who calmly ordered his wife's death and enjoyed watching it. This is ironic as he didn't want to spoil his own wedding due to his self-centeredness yet this causes his death as if he's stopped the procession, he wouldn't have put on the helmet and wouldn't have died.
- Brachiano also refuses to pardon Flameneo (but makes him check in every day to see if he will be pardoned the next – so he's been allowed to be free just on some conditions – yet Vittoria was condemned even just for being involved in murder). This is Brachiano's revenge for Flameneo having stood up to him when they were in the house of convertites. However he is also unwilling to punish him, perhaps because Flameneo knows too much of him and is too close to him.
- Meanwhile Lodovico sprinkles Brachiano's beaver (face-guard) with poison. No words are spoken which recalls the dumb show we saw earlier where Brachiano witnessed the preparations for Isabella's death. It is also significant that it is the beaver that's poisoned as it approximates more closely to the place where Isabella was tainted on the lips.
- The last deed Brachiano did before he died was pardon murder, similarly the last deed the Pope did on his death bed was pardon Lodovico's murder.

### **SCENE 3**

- The fighting at the 'barriers' commences.
- Brachiano removes his beaver realising that it has been poisoned. He sees himself as a victim of revenge, and also sees himself as a victim of fate.

- He has the armourer arrested and sent off to be tortured.
- He then calls for Vittoria and his words at his point demonstrate his love as he does not want her to kiss him and get poisoned too.
- Brachiano then recognises the duke as responsible and compares 'soft natural death' to the harsher fate attending the death of 'princes.'
- We see Giovanni witnessing his father death (he's already seen his mother die)
- Brachiano is angry, even with Vittoria and departs into his private apartment.
- Flamineo reflects on the fate of 'dying princes' ironically with the disguised Francisco (the prince who is himself responsible for Brachiano's death).
- Lodovico (still disguised) says that although Brachiano's wits are becoming confused, he has made Vittoria his heir until Giovanni comes of age.
- Brachiano re-enters and his talk becomes disjointed but the visions he sees as he starts to lose his wits are painfully apt. He sees a devil and sees Flamineo 'dancing on the ropes there' – showing the very precarious path Flamineo walks to gain wealth, one wrong step and he will die. He sees Vittoria with her hair powdered for the wedding. Brachiano's words show that, at one level, he knows Francisco is responsible and that he is the victim of a revenge tragedy but at another level he sees himself as a victim of fate like him de casibus tragedy's.
- He points to (the disguised) Lodovico and Gasparo and advises them that they should avoid churchmen and likens them to rats. He then calls for Flamineo.
- As Brachiano is dying, Lodovico suggests that the dukedom be given to Vittoria – like the Wife of bath, Vittoria is given wealth and power through marriage.
- Lodovico and Gasparo prepare for Brachiano's death by reciting Latin prayers (as that was the language of the church – use of Latin could further be seen as some kind of tricking as the audience wouldn't have known what they were saying) over his body and send the rest away. We see a parody of the religious service when, when someone is dying, their souls are commended to god. They reveal their true identities and commend his soul not to God but the devil. Reciting all his sins. They relish in making Brachiano aware of all the reasons why he is dying.
- When Brachiano calls Vittoria they strangle him. (a reminder of the sins he is paying for – poison as he poisoned Isabella, and strangling because of the breaking of Camillo's neck)
- Vittoria is distraught – in a cynical view, this could be interpreted as her being sad that she's lost the security of Brachiano's power so she is no longer buffered from other people's anger
- Flamineo is only concerned that Brachiano had left him nothing.
- Flamineo says women cry for anything and so their tears are meaningless, it is just the appearance of grief.
- Francisco (still in disguise) ironically comments 'this was Florence' doing' to which Flamineo assents admiringly. Francisco's language here is interesting as it reveals his far greater powers of discretion and cunning – Flamineo even refers to Francisco as a Machiavellian, yet Flamineo is also one; it takes one to know one as Flamineo is also a Machiavellian (in the beginning his path in life is described as winding like a snake, linking him to the snake in the garden of Eden, thus linking him to hell)
- Francisco praises Lodovico and asks for details of Brachiano's death but Zanche arrives and Lodovico says he will have to wait.
- Zanche ironically tells Francisco (disguised as Mulinassar) that he has no cause to weep, only the guilty party need do so. She then recites a dream where she claims she knew something evil would happen but that it mainly concerned Francisco.
- Francisco pretends that he too had had a dream about her and she is flattered and tells him how Isabella and Camillo died (we learn that she's known of their deaths from the very beginning and feels that she participated as she feels guilty for keeping their secret). She

confesses she knew of it and feels guilty so she intends to rob Vittoria that night and escape with him, arranging to meet him at midnight. Her behaviour and self-justification tells us that corruption can happen to anyone – so far we've seen it happen to the powerful people but now it's happened to those down below – this society is corrupt from the bottom to the top. Linking with Cornelia earlier saying those in power should be careful of their behaviour as it rubs off on those lower down.

- This is another betrayal in the scene – there has been no direct conflict between Vittoria and Zanche yet she betrays her so easily.
- Lodovico now feels their killing of Brachiano is now justified as they've now been found for certain that Brachiano killed Isabella and Camillo – so before they were just revenging him on suspicion and weren't motivated for justice but for revenge.
- Despite its tragic nature, there is an uncomfortable amount of humour in this scene, which has a disturbing effect.

#### SCENE 4

- Flamineo and Gasparo (disguised as knight of St. John) discuss Giovanni, who is now the new duke (following his father's death)
- Flamineo disagrees with Gasparo's positive view of Giovanni but adds that he would not say so to his face (on the outside he prevents a positive exterior). Flamineo says that a peacock praises the eagle as the eagle will have power over the peacock, but that the eagle's talons will soon wear out. Giovanni is compared to the eagle and will become a powerful man and will strike down those who oppose him, eventually revealing his true nature. Flamineo here offers a realistic view of power and he's been right in his other comments (e.g. about the court) and so we feel we trust his analysis of Giovanni's character. He is so power-hungry than he believes Giovanni should be please his father is dead as now he can have power. The only things he values are wealth and power
- The more we see of Flamineo the more we understand his egocentricity and self-absorption. He is too clever and cannot keep his mouth shut. Even at his most cynical his description of the court has proved accurate, so that we are bound to consider whether these comments about Giovanni (that his is tyrannical and will reveal his nature in time) are also true.
- Giovanni is called Francisco (his uncle) miniature – highlighting the corruption in him
- Giovanni overhears these insulting remarks about him and tells Flamineo to leave. But Flamineo objects and Giovanni dismisses him, telling him to pray.
- A courtier tells Flamineo that Giovanni has forbidden him to enter any of his private rooms – already asserting his power. Flamineo is becoming increasingly isolated and jokes but privately threatens revenge.
- Francisco tells him that his mother, Cornelia, has 'grown a very old woman in two hours' – she's been driven mad by sorrow. Cornelia is sad as she's preparing Marcello's corpse for burial.
- Cornelia's madness scene (singing, handing out herbs and flowers..) is similar to Ofelia's mad scene in Hamlet (Hamlet is written before The White Devil). Her obsession with herbs like rosemary in her madness is similar to Lear in King Lear and his crown of weeds – there is a sort of regression to nature in madness.
- Flamineo is moved by the sight of his mother's madness and for the first time he confesses a sense of his own wrong-doing. Flamineo sees himself as captive of his circumstances ("caged birds sing") and feels he is just trying to do the best he can of his situation. It is this capacity

for insight, even a potential good within him, which finally makes him a tragic figure since the audience see that he is a man who has taken the wrong path in life but who has the capacity for redemption.

- Finally even Flamineo is moved to pity her and resolves to ask Vittoria for recompense for his service to the duke.
- Brachiano's ghost appears, throws earth at Flamineo and shows him a skull – perhaps an indication that he is going to die.
- The ghost makes Flamineo reckless and he resolves to kill Vittoria if she does not reward him. There is a terrible sense of inevitability of doom in his recklessness and despair – the only person left he can turn to is his sister but he vows to kill her if she does not give him what he wants (money and power).

### **SCENE 5**

- This is a very short scene which creates a break in the increasing momentum and explains Francisco's absence in the last scene whilst revealing that Lodovico is determined on revenge.
- Lodovico tells Francisco that he has done enough to avenge his sister (Isabella) and should leave the court and the conclusion of their revenge on Brachiano to him.
- He says he will refuse to continue if Francisco does not leave.
- Francisco says he will raise a memorial to him if he should die.
- Hortensio overhears and decides to summon the guard to put a stop to disorder. This indicates that order will ultimately be restored and that those who do not listen to the warnings of others often bring about their own downfall.

### **SCENE 6**

- Flamineo goes to Vittoria and finds her with a book (perhaps a bible)
- Their initial exchanges are insulting but it's unclear if this is simply banter or if he is really agitated. He promised earlier he would kill Vittoria if she didn't give him what he wanted.
- Flamineo demands that Vittoria write down how she will reward him for his service but all she offers is nothing except to allow him to wander the earth.
- He then claims that his lord has left him with jewels and returns with two pistols, claiming that he had made a vow to Brachiano that neither of them should outlive Brachiano by four hours – we don't know, as an audience, if this is true or not as we have not seen Brachiano say this
- Flamineo then assures her that he'll die with pleasure as he knows that if Brachiano is not safe from Francisco then there is no hope for them since they're less powerful than he.
- Vittoria is forced to try and argue herself out of the situation. Once again her rhetorical powers are called upon to defend herself, and she blames the devil. She argues that if he kills his body then he is also killing his soul as killing is committing a mortal sin and so the soul cannot go to heaven if he has killed.
- Zanche calls for help but Flamineo threatens her and claims that Vittoria's arguments are mere rhetoric and 'feminine arguments' (feminine arguments are not praised, the feminine are linked with the emotional and lacking meaning.)
- Zanche suggests to Vittoria that they humour him and persuade him to kill himself first and Flamineo agrees to their plan.

- Flamineo gives a moving farewell speech about dying and launches into a satirical vision of purgatory in which the great are reduced to inappropriate tasks. He then considers his own fate, claiming not to know nor care, and orders the women to shoot. He states that he will have as much pleasure in dying as his father had in conceiving him – this aligns death with the sexual act and this eroticises it, making a connection between birth and death.
- They shoot and he falls but they refuse to kill themselves (they are going to say he committed suicide and drive a stake through his body to show to others that he had committed suicide) and so triumph over him.
- However Flamineo then exclaims ‘cunning devils’ and tells them that he has been testing their love and jumps up. This provokes a misogynistic tirade from Flamineo who warns men ‘trust a women! Never’.
- In keeping with the rest of the play, this shows that nobody can be trusted, regardless of social position or familial relationship. From the Pope to the maid, from your sister to your lover, everyone will betray you.
- The conspirators enter and Vittoria calls for help, only to be greeted by Lodovico and Gasparo (still disguised as Capuchins) who announces that they have brought a courtly entertainment, before calling the name ‘Isabella’ and removing their disguises – they are intent on revenge for Isabella’s death on behalf of Francisco.
- Flamineo is still furious with her and angry that he will now not be able to punish her himself. Lodovico and Gasparo then bind him to a pillar.
- Vittoria begs for mercy, saying she’d rather trust her natural enemies (e.g. Francisco) than be left at the mercy of her predatory brother) but Gasparo points out the ironic truth that ‘Princes give rewards with their own hands, but death or punishment by the hands of another.’ – powerful men are never closely associated with their dirty work
- Lodovico remembers the time when Flamineo struck him and vows to take revenge but Flamineo objects saying that he cannot defend himself.
- Lodovico continues to taunt Flamineo and Vittoria but they both show no signs of fear. Vittoria refuses to show fear or any womanly attributes
- Vittoria strikes a heroic pose and claims that she will welcome and face up to death.
- The conspirators strike all three simultaneously.
- Vittoria acknowledges her fault and that she is duly punished for it.
- Flamineo recognises her strength and, as Vittoria is dying, he encourages her to go as ‘death will bring release’.
- Vittoria dies regretting the course of her life. Her last words emphasise the corruption that permeates this world
- Flamineo bids farewell before concluding with a reflection on life. His death is the real climax of the play. His final lines are two pairs of rhyming couplets which brings a sense of closure.
- Giovanni, guards and the Ambassadors arrive and the guards shoot the conspirators (Lodovico and Gasparo).
- Lodovico reveals his identity to Giovanni and that it was his uncle, Francisco, that ordered the deaths.
- Giovanni is shocked (giving the audience an impression of a strong sort of justice) and orders them to all be taken to prison and tortured. His response to knowing his uncle’s involvement leaves the ending unresolved.
- All we are left with is young boy, everyone else has died. This scares the audience as he says he will ‘torture’ in order to ensure justice, but the use of the word torture makes us think of personal revenge, maybe he will turn out as corrupt as his father and uncle.

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- Lodovico is unrepentant – he takes all the blame but (1. To protect Francisco and also 2. Because for him this revenge was also personal, not just about being paid to for it by Francisco) he cares nothing for the punishment that lies in store for him.
- The play starts with Lodovico's banishment and ends with him imprisonment. It ends on a dark and sombre note, apparently denying all hope for redemption or salvation as the audience is aware that the power now lies with Francisco (as Giovanni is a minor) and so he will become even more powerful. In terms of the religious Monticelso is in power and he too has shown himself to be corrupt. There is no hope for this society.