

A Journey into the Heart of Venice: Art, Culture, and Shakespearean Flashbacks

Our adventure began early in the morning, departing from Udine at 7:32 AM. The train ride was quiet and, as we sped through the misty countryside, the excitement for the trip grew. We were heading toward Venice, a city steeped in history and enchantment. The two classes, 3H and 3A, were accompanied by the teachers Lo Porto, Germano, Salierno, and Nocino. Despite the clouds overhead, the city's beauty shone through — its canals winding through narrow streets and its architecture grand and timeless.

As we made our way to our first stop, the renowned Gallerie dell'Accademia, we couldn't help but notice something quite startling: Venice had high water, which caused the canals to swell slightly over their banks. It was the first time we saw the iconic boardwalks, the raised wooden walkways the city sets up during high tide to keep pedestrians dry. There was something almost ethereal about the experience, walking above the gently lapping waters, with the gray sky mirrored on the surface below.

Despite the cloudy weather, we reached the Gallerie dell'Accademia on foot. Here, we spent the morning immersed in centuries of Venetian art. The gallery was everything we had hoped for and more. Standing before Titian's *Pietà*, we were overwhelmed by the raw emotions of the scene; the sorrowful figures seemed to come to life before us. Tintoretto's dramatic brushstrokes in *The Miracle of St. Mark Freeing the Slave* told a story so vivid that it felt like watching a play unfold on canvas. Every masterpiece held an individual story, a piece of Venice's rich cultural heritage.

In the afternoon, we took part in a guided tour with Mrs Simionato, who followed class 3H, and Mr Pasotto, who, instead, followed the 3A class. Our guides divided us into five teams in order to play a point-based, role-playing game about the "Merchant of Venice".

The play by William Shakespeare talks about Antonio, one of the most important merchants of Venice who also happens to be antisemitic, who takes a loan from the Jewish moneylender Shylock to help his friend, Bassiano, court the wealthy Portia. Antonio, unfortunately, is unable to repay his loan and Shylock, merciless, demands a pound of his flesh. For this exact reason, the Jewish moneylender insists on the fulfillment of his part of the deal and takes the merchant to court.

The experience ended with this thrilling scene from the play. We had the opportunity to see Shylock, interpreted by one of our classmates, as he was about to metaphorically stab Antonio, also played by one of us, in order to get his payback.

Our guides then asked us to guess what happened next, with the final question worth a hundred million points. No one guessed correctly, and they left us with a cliffhanger, telling us we'd have to read the play to find out how it ended.

It was a day that blurred the lines between past and present, a journey through time that left us with a deeper appreciation for Venice's enduring legacy.

The sounds of the city, the boats on the water, the distant laughter of tourists, and the sweet melodies of street musicians created a symphony that accompanied our journey; something that we'll never forget.

At every corner we turned, a new and different part of the city emerged, reminding us that Venice is wonderful both for its people and for its art.

Thanks to every moment spent in this enchanting city, we found ourselves amazed and ready to return for a trip to explore its hidden treasures and enrich our culture.

Authors:

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