



William Shakespeare's

# The Winter's Tale

February 9–April 11



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*All the best,*

Alicia Green  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



Pictured: Trisha Miller, *Argonautika* 2019, PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

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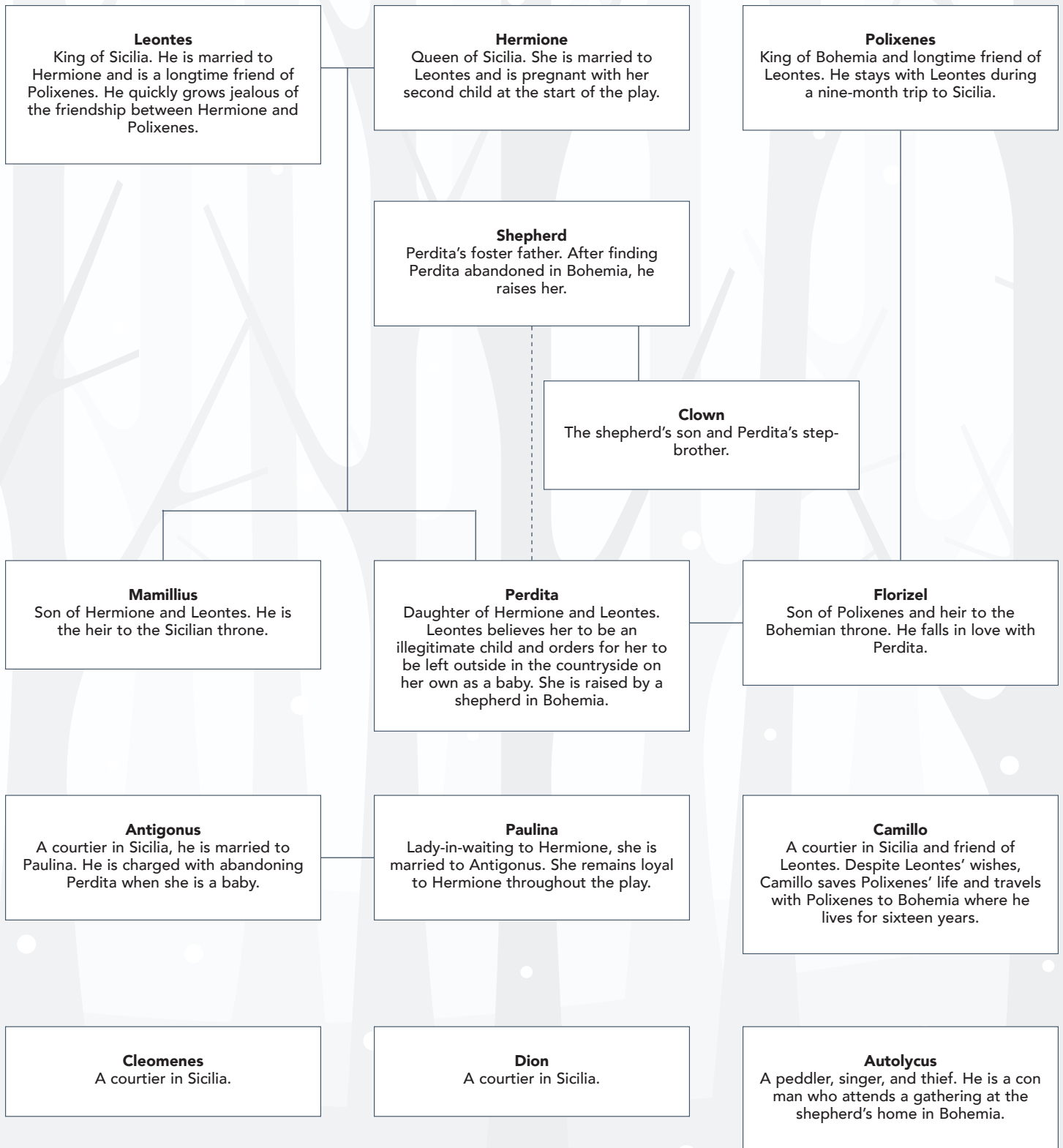
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# CHARACTER MAP



## SYNOPSIS

Polixenes, the king of Bohemia, has been in Sicilia for some time as a guest of the king, Leontes—the two are old and dear friends. Eager to see his wife and son as well as to attend to matters in his own land, Polixenes decides his stay must come to an end. However, when Hermione, Queen of Sicilia and Leontes' wife, pleads that he delay his trip home, Polixenes concedes to stay in Sicilia for one additional week.

Seeing the effect that Hermione's persuasion has had on Polixenes, Leontes begins to suspect that Hermione and Polixenes are having an affair. Leontes then enlists his friend, Camillo, to poison Polixenes. However, Camillo is confident that both Hermione and Polixenes are innocent, and instead of poisoning the king of Bohemia, Camillo helps Polixenes escape Sicilia and travels with him to Bohemia.

Desperate to know if there is truth in his suspicions, Leontes sends a messenger to seek advice from Apollo's oracle in Delphos while he sends Hermione to prison for adultery. While awaiting trial, she gives birth to a baby girl. As she recovers, Paulina, Hermione's lady-in-waiting, brings the baby to Leontes, hoping that the sight of the child will cause Leontes to realize that he has

made a false accusation. However, the sight of the child sends Leontes into a great fit of anger. Convinced that the baby is the illegitimate child of Polixenes, Leontes orders Antigonus, Paulina's husband, to take baby into the wilderness and to abandon it. Antigonus reluctantly agrees.

After Antigonus leaves, Leontes calls Hermione into court to stand trial. In front of a panel of judges, Hermione maintains her innocence. During the trial, the messenger who travelled to Delphos returns, carrying a scroll from the oracle that confirms Hermione's innocence. Unsatisfied with the oracle, Leontes decides to punish Hermione regardless. However, before he is able to pass a sentence, a servant enters with the news that Mamillius, Hermione and Leontes' first child, has died. Shocked at the news, Hermione faints and is carried out of the courtroom by her maids. Paulina soon returns to the courtroom to announce that Hermione, herself, has died with grief. With this news, Leontes begins to see the falseness of his accusations and vows to spend the rest of his life repenting.

Meanwhile, Antigonus arrives in Bohemia with the baby. He names the baby Perdita and leaves her on the shore with a bag of gold and a box of documents that reveal her true identity. However, before he returns to his ship, Antigonus is chased and killed by a bear. Not long after Perdita is left on shore, a shepherd finds her. He and his son decide to rescue her and raise her.

Sixteen years later, Perdita has grown into a young woman. She and Florizel, Polixenes' son and the prince of Bohemia, have fallen in love. Polixenes, having heard a rumor that Florizel has been spending an inordinate amount of time at a house in the countryside, enlists Camillo, who is still in Bohemia, to help him get to the bottom of Florizel's business at the house. The two disguise themselves and attend a sheep-shearing celebration that Perdita



"Shakespeare—The Winter's Tale—Act V, Scene III" by William Hamilton, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Century.

## SYNOPSIS CONTINUED...

is organizing. At the celebration, Polixenes learns of Florizel's love for Perdita and forbids Florizel from seeing her any longer.

Camillo has been gone from Sicilia for sixteen years—ever since he escaped from the land with Polixenes. While he has enjoyed his time in Bohemia, he would like to return to Sicilia and sees the dilemma Perdita and Florizel find themselves in as a perfect opportunity to orchestrate a trip back to his homeland. Pitching the trip as a way to escape Polixenes' cruelty, Camillo sends Florizel and Perdita to Sicilia promising that the king there, Leontes, will receive them. Meanwhile, Camillo convinces Polixenes that they must pursue Florizel and Perdita. Ultimately, this plan allows Camillo to travel back to Sicilia.

However, before Polixenes and Camillo can follow the pair, the shepherd reveals to Polixenes the documents that he found next to Perdita when he first spotted her on the shore sixteen years ago, revealing that Perdita is the princess of Sicilia. With this information, Camillo and Polixenes set sail for Sicilia.

When Florizel and Perdita arrive, Leontes welcomes them. Polixenes and Leontes make peace with each other, and Camillo and Polixenes reveal that Perdita is Leontes' daughter. There is much celebration with this news. The whole group decides to pay a visit to Paulina's home, where she keeps a statue of the late Hermione, so that Perdita may see what her mother looked like. When Paulina unveils the statue, Leontes is astonished—the statue is so life-like that Leontes thinks he sees it breathe. Paulina orders the statue to come to life and as it does, we learn that this is the real Hermoine, who was in the care of Paulina for the past sixteen years. As the play ends, the family is reunited, and the promise of a wedding between Perdita and Florizel rings in the air. ♦

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

**William Shakespeare**, a poet, playwright, and actor, was born on April 23, 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon in England to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden. While Shakespeare's plays and poetry have endured the test of time and are of the most well-known works in Western literature, very little documentation of Shakespeare's life exists beyond public records of his birth, death, marriage, and financial transactions.

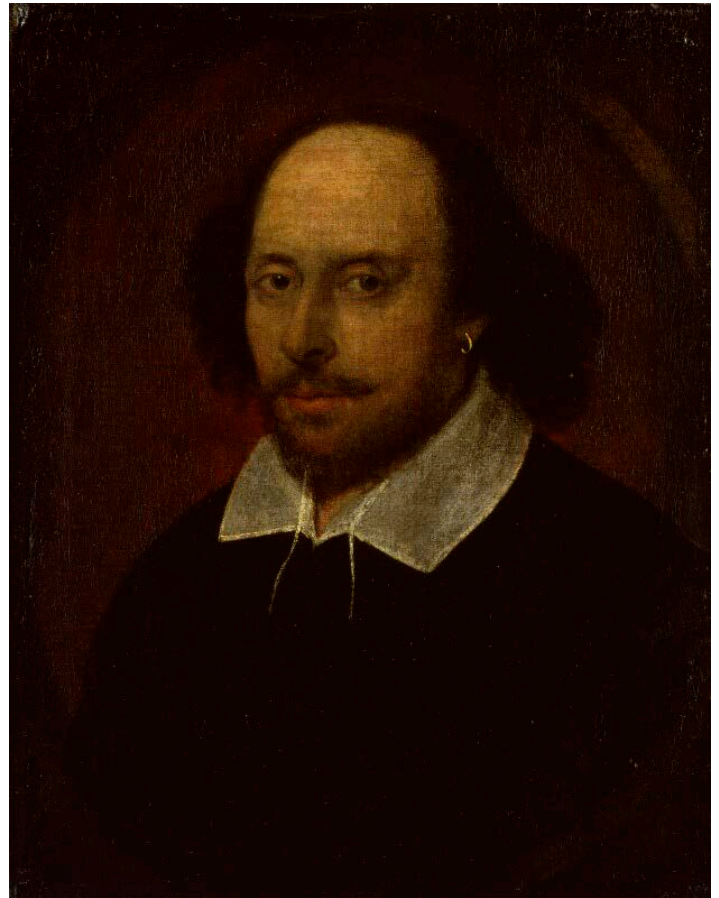
Shakespeare's education began at home. The fact that Shakespeare's mother was the executor of her father's will suggests that she was literate. Shakespeare would have grown up hearing fairytales and fables from her and his father. He also would have learned to read the Bible at home. In addition to his home education, Shakespeare most likely attended the King's New School, a grammar school in Stratford, where his studies would have been almost exclusively in Latin.

When Shakespeare was 18, he married Anne Hathaway, who was 26 years old. The two had a rushed marriage because Anne was already pregnant at the time of the wedding. The couple welcomed their first child, Susanna, six months after the ceremony. Anne later gave birth to twins Hamnet and Judith, however, Hamnet died when he was just eleven years of age.

From 1585-1591, not much is known about Shakespeare's life and this period is often referred to as the "lost years." However, it is clear that he moved to London to pursue theatre at some point during this time (probably around 1587). In 1592, Shakespeare had established his reputation as an actor and playwright in London. During that year, it is believed that the Lord Strange's Men, a prominent acting company at the time, performed one of Shakespeare's plays—most likely *Henry VI, Part I*. Shakespeare later became an original member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, one of the two theatrical companies legally approved to perform within London city limits at the time. During his time as a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare wrote many of his most prolific works.

In 1599, Shakespeare became the chief shareholder in the Globe Theatre, a newly-built performance space in London. His plays were regularly performed there until 1613 when a fire that began during a production of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* burned the theatre down. The Globe was rebuilt by 1614, but was destroyed again in 1644, two years after the Puritan English government closed all theatres.

Over the course of about twenty years, Shakespeare created a staggering body of work including 154 sonnets,



"William Shakespeare" associated with John Taylor, c. 1600-1610.

3 narrative poems, and 38 plays that continue to be performed around the world today. Sometime Between 1610 and 1612, Shakespeare retired to Stratford-upon-Avon, where he died in 1616 at the age of 52. It is believed that he died on the same day he was born, April 23<sup>rd</sup>. He is buried in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Stratford-upon-Avon. ♦

## TIMELINE OF SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

- 1564** William Shakespeare is born on April 23 in Stratford-upon-Avon to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden.
- 1582** Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway. Their marriage license is issued on November 27<sup>th</sup>.
- 1583** Shakespeare's first child, Susanna, is born in May, just six months after the wedding of Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway. Susanna is baptized on May 26<sup>th</sup>.
- 1585** Anne Hathaway gives birth to twins, Hamnet and Judith. They are baptized on February 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- 1585 - 1591** "The Lost Years." No records of Shakespeare's life during this period exist. At some point, he travels to London.
- 1590 - 1592** Shakespeare begins to write plays during this time. His earliest works are *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Henry VI Parts I, II, and III*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Richard III*. The exact dates these plays were written and first performed is unknown.
- 1592** While it is unclear when Shakespeare left Stratford-upon-Avon, by this time, Shakespeare has established a reputation in London as an actor and a playwright. This same year, a plague breaks out in London, and theatres are closed.
- 1593** Shakespeare writes *Venus and Adonis*, a long, narrative poem based on Book 10 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.



"The Original Globe Theatre," artist unknown.

- 1594** Theatres re-open after the plague. Shakespeare becomes a founding member of The Lord Chamberlain's Men. *The Comedy of Errors* is performed for the first time.
- 1596** Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, dies at age 11.
- 1599** The Globe Theatre opens in London. Shakespeare becomes a shareholder of the theatre.
- 1600 - 1610** Shakespeare writes a number of his most loved tragedies during this time including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*.
- 1603** Queen Elizabeth I dies, and King James I ascends the throne. He becomes the patron of Shakespeare's theatre company, The Lord Chamberlain's Men, who change the name of their company to The King's Men in honor of King James I.
- 1609** Shakespeare's sonnets are published. Shakespeare is believed to have written the sonnets at some point during the 1590s.
- 1611** *The Winter's Tale* is first performed at the Globe Theatre in May and *The Tempest* is first performed in court in November.
- 1613** The Globe Theatre burns down during the first performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*.
- 1614** The Globe Theatre is rebuilt.
- 1616** Shakespeare dies at the age of 52 in Stratford-upon-Avon. It is believed he died on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. He is buried in the Church of the Holy Trinity.
- 1623** John Heminges and Henry Condell collect and publish Shakespeare's plays in Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies. This publication is also known as The First Folio.



"Shakespeare's Birthplace," Stratford-upon-Avon.



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT: ELIZABETHAN SOCIETY

*The Winter's Tale* is set in an ambiguous and mythical time period. Frequent references to Greek gods and goddesses as well as the interest characters have in prophecy and Apollo's oracle suggest that the action of the play draws upon ancient Greek mythology. However, the social structures and hierarchies of both Sicilia and Bohemia seem to draw upon the social structures and hierarchies of Elizabethan England.

### Social Structure

Shakespeare was a prominent playwright during the late Elizabethan Era. This historical era began in 1558, when Queen Elizabeth I became the ruling monarch of England. The structure of English society during this period was rigid and provided little opportunity for social mobility for members of lower classes. Opportunities for social advancement for women and people of color were even more limited. In Elizabethan society, a person's birth often determined their social status. During this period, many people believed and operated according to The Great Chain of Being. This concept is rooted in the idea that all things have a proper place in an overarching social hierarchy—from the smallest grain of sand all the way up to the highest angel. The tiers of Elizabethan social structure can be broken down as follows from highest to lowest status:

- The Queen
- The Court—Made up of the English Nobility.
- Merchants—Well-off citizens without royal connections. Individuals in this social class often took positions in town councils and local government.
- Livery Companies—Institutions that controlled what was bought and sold. Companies specialized in certain products such as wine, cloth, and jewelry.
- Apprentices—Young men who paid workers in Livery Companies in exchange for experience learning trades.
- The Poor—The lowest status of citizen. By 1569, a welfare system was in place in the City of London to help the able poor find food and work.

### Art and Culture

The Elizabethan Era is considered a "golden age" of art and culture in English history. During this time, there were two trends in art and communication that caused significant shifts in the country's cultural landscape—the



"Queen Elizabeth I" (The "Darnley Portrait") by an unknown artist, c.1575.

popularization of printed materials and the popularization of live entertainment.

While Johannes Gutenberg, an inventor who was politically exiled from Germany, had invented the Gutenberg Press over one hundred years prior to the start of Elizabeth's reign in England, printed materials were among the greatest commodities actively produced and sold in Elizabethan London. Advances in printing technology made it possible to churn out printed pamphlets, sermons, plays, poems, proclamations, and diatribes at a remarkable rate. The increased popularity and accessibility of printed materials allowed for stories and ideas to circulate among English urban centers faster than ever before.

Live entertainment proved to be a cultural staple in Elizabethan society. In fact, despite the disparity that existed among social classes in the era, live entertainment provided members of all social classes the opportunity to gather and experience anything

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT: ELIZABETHAN SOCIETY CONTINUED...

from stories to songs to sports. Theatre proved to be particularly popular with members of all social classes. From the poor, who stood on the ground level of theatres throughout theatrical productions and who were thus called “groundlings,” to the nobility who sat in the higher tiers of seats, theatre was accessible to people from all ranks of society. ♦

Edited from:

Picard, Liza. “The Social Structure in Elizabethan England.” *The British Library*, The British Library, 17 Feb. 2016, [www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/the-social-structure-in-elizabethan-england](http://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/the-social-structure-in-elizabethan-england).

and

Rasmussen, Eric, and Ian DeJong. “Shakespeare’s London.” *The British Library*, The British Library, 2 Oct. 2015, [www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/shakespeares-london](http://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/shakespeares-london).



“Civitates Orbis Terrarum” Map of London by Georg Braun, Frans Hogenberg, and Joris Hoefnagel, c. 1600-1623.

## A WOMAN'S LOT: THE ROLES AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN ELIZABETHAN SOCIETY

**Queen Elizabeth I** made history when she famously decided not to marry and instead rule England as the sole monarch. Before Elizabeth I, no woman had ever ruled the country alone. While Elizabeth's radical decision to rule without a husband heralded some degree of hope and progress in regard to the rights allowed to women at the time, women in Elizabethan England at large were not granted the same liberties as men.

The disparity between men and women began with the limited amount of education available to young girls. While some girls, typically girls of higher social status, were able to attend grammar school, they were not allowed to attend university or work in any professional field. Much of a young woman's education centered on how she might be a proper wife and mother.

Women were not able to own or inherit property. These laws regulating property ownership and inheritance at the time fundamentally excluded women from being able to achieve any kind of financial independence. A woman's financial status and stability depended entirely on the men in her life. In childhood and adolescence, girls depended on their fathers for financial backing, and in marriage, women depended on their husbands. Any property belonging to a woman's family would be passed down to the family's eldest son, regardless of the eldest son's age—a family could have a 20-year-old daughter and an infant son, and the son would still be the sole inheritor of the family's property. Should a family have no male heirs, the eldest daughter would be allowed to inherit her family's property. However, even if the circumstances were such that a woman was legally allowed to inherit, a woman inheriting anything was often deemed socially unacceptable and, in many cases, families went out of their way to procure male heirs to prevent the eldest daughter from inheriting.

Because of the laws preventing women from owning and inheriting property, nearly all women in the Elizabethan Era married. Because marriage was an important aspect of society, there were many social and legal codes surrounding marriage practices. However, during the Elizabethan Era, marriage laws and practices began to shift slightly, allowing for a bit more marital freedom. For example, in 1604, a law was passed that allowed a man and woman to marry without the consent of either's parents. Before this period, marriages often functioned solely as alliances between families in order to protect or advance a family's wealth and social status. While marriages still often functioned like this in the Elizabethan Era, the new law appealed to the growing trend of placing affection and love at the core of a marriage.



"Portrait of a Woman and Child" by Anthony van Dyck, 1620-1.

### Women in Shakespeare's Plays

The women in Shakespeare's plays, particularly in Shakespeare's comedies and romances, tend to challenge what it meant to be a proper woman in Elizabethan England. In *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, we see heroines cross dress as they travel through a forest or to a land. When they do so, they adopt an appearance and manner so precise that tricks nearly everyone they encounter. In presenting as men, these comedic heroines contradict the social expectations assigned to them by their gender and social status, even if only for the time that they present as male.

Other comedic and romantic heroines in Shakespeare's canon use language and wit to defy social expectations. Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* engages Benedick in frequent battles of wit and word play, often outshining him; at the start of the play, she embodies a fierce sense of independence. Paulina in *The Winter's Tale* similarly uses language as a means to combat and refute Leontes' false accusations against Hermione. Breaking away from the expectation of a woman of her status to quietly allow Leontes to proceed in wrongfully condemning Hermione, Paulina makes clear that Leontes has lost her respect.

Sir Walter Raleigh, a contemporary of Shakespeare and

## A WOMAN'S LOT: THE ROLES AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN ELIZABETHAN SOCIETY CONTINUED...

a poet, notes how the women in Shakespeare's plays, particularly comedies and romances, "are almost all practical, impatient of mere words, clearsighted as to ends and means. They do not accept the premises to deny the conclusion, or decorate the inevitable with imaginative lendings." ♦

Edited from:

McManus, Clare. "Shakespeare and Gender: The 'Woman's Part'." *The British Library*, The British Library, 10 Feb. 2016, [www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/shakespeare-and-gender-the-womans-part](http://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/shakespeare-and-gender-the-womans-part).



"Portrait of a Woman" by Imitator of Gonzales Coques, circa 1650.

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S ROMANCE PLAYS

**Shakespeare's canon of plays** can be roughly divided into four basic genres: tragedies, comedies, histories, and romances. Seven years after Shakespeare's death, John Heminges and Henry Condell published the First Folio, the first published collection of Shakespeare's plays. The official title of the First Folio printed on the title page of the collection is "Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies." This collection was the first time that Shakespeare's works had been grouped by genre.

Since the publication of the First Folio, interpretations of Shakespeare's plays have evolved. New interpretations and analyses of the plays have led to the creation of a fourth category for the few Shakespeare plays that do not seem to entirely fit the traditional archetypal mold of a tragedy or that of a comedy—romances.

Shakespeare's romance plays are a mix of tragedy and comedy. The mark of a Shakespearean tragedy is that the play ends in a number of deaths, onstage and off, while Shakespearean comedies characteristically end in marriages. Romances typically begin as tragedies, but do not end that way. Because of this, romances are often referred to as "tragi-comedies." The plays that fall into this particular category include:

- *Pericles* (written in 1608)
- *Cymbeline* (written in 1610)
- *The Winter's Tale* (written in 1611)
- *The Tempest* (written in 1611)

It is interesting to note that Shakespeare began to write these romances toward the end of his career and the end of his life, as these plays focus greatly on the effects of the past on the present. These plays are imbued with a melancholy tone, and the action of the play tends to center on remedying a past injustice. Forgiveness is central to the endings of the romance plays. While not all of the wrongs committed over the course of the play are righted, much of what is broken is mended.

Romance plays take a looser approach to time than Shakespeare's comedies, tragedies, and histories. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare explores how time functions in narrative storytelling by adhering to what is known as the Unity of Time—that is, that all of the action in the play takes place in the same amount of time it takes for



Viola Allen as Hermione (Act 5, scene 3), 1904. Byron Company, New York.

the play to run its course. Conversely, in *The Winter's Tale*, Time appears on stage as a character to bridge a sixteen-year gap in the narrative. Reflection plays a key role in these plays as characters grapple with events of the past and embark on a physical or emotional journey toward a place of peace and reconciliation. By the end of a romance play, the surviving characters have changed and matured.

Elements of magic and fantasy play significant roles in the romance plays. These elements contribute to an ambiguous and mystical setting for each of the plays—none of the romance plays take place strictly within the realm of a familiar reality. The elements of magic and mystery complement the transformations that the characters make throughout the play. ♦

## A TALE RE-TOLD: THE SOURCE MATERIAL FOR *THE WINTER'S TALE*

**Shakespeare was notorious** for using extant texts and stories as the inspiration for his plays. *Othello* is based on a short story by Giovanni Battista Giralaldi called "Disdemona and the Moor." *Romeo and Juliet* draws inspiration from Arthur Brooke's 1562 poem titled "The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet," which itself is based on a story well-known in French and Italian literature. *Much Ado About Nothing* has its roots in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. Similarly, *The Winter's Tale* is not an entirely original narrative. Critics have long regarded *The Winter's Tale* as a play, in large part, derived from Robert Greene's 1588 romance novella, *Pandosto, The Triumph of Time*.

The prime inspiration Shakespeare took from Greene's novella appears to be Greene's basic plot. There are also many verbal echoes of Greene's work present in *The Winter's Tale*—that is, Shakespeare incorporated some of the language and language style from Greene's original work into the play. However, even in drawing significant inspiration from Greene's novella, Shakespeare made the play distinct from its source text by changing all character names and introducing several changes and additions to the plot. For example, Shakespeare modifies Leontes' character arc. While Shakespeare makes Leontes' suspicion more groundless than it appears in the original, he also revises the original story's tragic ending in which the Leontes character kills himself after discovering he has lusted after the Perdita character, unaware that she is his daughter. Shakespeare also creates the characters Paulina and Antigonus—characters who are integral to the unfolding of the play's particular telling of the events. Probably the wildest addition to the original's plot is Shakespeare's inclusion of a bear. In regard to the reason for the bear's presence in the narrative, Shakespeare may have been inspired to introduce the animal by *Mucedorus*. A chivalric romance, *Mucedorus* includes scenes featuring a bear and had been revived in court around 1610, approximately the same time Shakespeare began to write *The Winter's Tale*.

While Robert Greene's work acts as a source text for the basic plot of *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare turns to tales rooted in classical Greek mythology as additional source material for the play. The names Shakespeare chooses for the characters in the play instantly call upon classical Greek traditions. The names of each of the major characters in *The Winter's Tale* function as allusions to Greek tales specific to a character's nature. Some of the classical Greek names in *The Winter's Tale* include:

- Leontes—based on the misogynistic Leonidas I, King of Sparta from 489-480 BCE
- Hermione—in works by Homer, Euripides, Plutarch, and Ovid, she is the daughter of Menelaus and Helen of Troy. What is more, the 1592 novel, *Eupheus Shadow* by Thomas Lodge, includes the story of a slandered wife named Euromine (nearly a homophone of Hermione) who dies and is transformed into a painted statue.
- Polixenes—possibly rooted in Polyxemus, the son of Medea, a character who is innocent and wronged.
- Autolycus—perhaps based on Autolycus, son of Hermes and Chione, a famous thief who could make himself invisible, sailed with Jason and the Argonauts, and was Odysseus's grandfather.

The influence of Greek mythological stories in *The Winter's Tale* extends beyond providing backstory through character names. Apollo and his oracle play an important role in the action of the play. In his search for more definitive evidence of the affair between Hermione and Polixenes, Leontes sends two messengers to consult Apollo's oracle in Delphos. This is the same oracle that appears throughout ancient Greek drama and literature—characters in the classical Greek canon consult this specific oracle frequently in times of confusion and chaos.

The structure of Shakespeare's play also echoes that of ancient Greek drama. Typically, in ancient Greek tragedy, all violence and death occurs off stage. The same is so in *The Winter's Tale*—we do not see Mamillius or Hermione die, we only learn about their deaths through others who announce them to the court. Usually, the most violent act in a Greek drama would occur at the climax of the narrative. While there is no violence or death at the climax of *The Winter's Tale*, we still only hear about the reconciliation between Leontes, Polixenes, Camillo, Florizel, and Perdita through three messengers who describe the action. In using a third party character to describe important action, including Apollo's oracle in the narrative, and including distinctly Greek character names in the play, Shakespeare situates his work within the realm of ancient Greek theatrical and literary traditions. ♦

Edited from:

"Dates and Sources | *The Winter's Tale*." Royal Shakespeare Company, [www.rsc.org.uk/the-winters-tale/about-the-play/dates-and-sources](http://www.rsc.org.uk/the-winters-tale/about-the-play/dates-and-sources).

and

Showerman, Earl. "Look Down and See What Death Is Doing: Gods and Greeks in *The Winter's Tale*." *The Oxfordian*, 2007.

## A CHANGE IN THE WEATHER: THE ROLE OF THE SEASONS IN *THE WINTER'S TALE*

**Seasonal change** is at the core of *The Winter's Tale*. The title of the play hints at as much. From its tragic and wintry beginnings to its hopeful and spring-like end, the seasons in *The Winter's Tale* underscore and emphasize the emotional states of the characters and the tonal styles of the narrative. Overall, the play could be seen as the progression from winter to spring.

The play begins in wintertime. We learn this from Mamillius in the second act when he says, "A sad tale's best for winter. I have one / Of sprites and goblins." In literature, winter is often seen as a symbol of death, isolation, and sadness. These symbolic feelings toward the season are based in the physical changes the environment undergoes in wintertime. In winter, trees have lost their leaves, and animals go into hibernation or migrate south. The days are shorter, the nights longer. As a result of the changes in the environment, people in winter are subject to changes in mood and behavior. Psychological research on the effects of winter on moods indicates that the season can cause increased feelings of irritability, agitation, anxiety, and social withdrawal along with increased instances of feeling hopeless and low energy.

We see effects of winter impact and impede Leontes' judgement when he convinces himself that Hermione and Polixenes are having an affair based on no concrete evidence. In winter, Leontes' anxiety about his wife's infidelity runs high. He ultimately withdraws socially as he maintains his accusations even against the advice of his trusted courtiers.

What is more, the action of the first half of the play is wintry in tone. Hermione is sent to prison without concrete grounds to support a criminal charge. There, she is forced to give birth to her second child before standing trial for a crime she did not commit. From there, grief has a domino effect on the royal family. Mamillius, overcome by the drastic changes in his family's dynamic dies, and Hermione dies—so we are told—out of the grief she feels in the wake of Mamillius's death. The domino effect continues as Leontes, struck by the amount of destruction his jealous accusations have caused, spirals into a state of profound heartache as he vows to atone for his actions.

Sixteen years later, spring is in the air, literally and tonally. We learn that it is late spring or early summer when we hear that Perdita is hosting a sheep-shearing celebration. Traditionally, sheep-shearing festivals occurred in England in the early summer. Beyond the practical purpose of shearing sheep's wool, these festivals were celebrations of the change in season. Perdita clarifies this when she

describes the time of year as "growing ancient,/ Not yet on summer's death or on the birth/ Of trembling winter" in Act 4. What is more, at the festival, Perdita hands out flowers to Camillo and Polixenes. Symbols of growth and change, the presence of the flowers in the text reinforces the more hopeful tone of the second half of the play. Music also plays an increasingly prominent role in the second half of the play, highlighting the shift from a somber tone to one of relative joviality.

Spring and summertime tend to serve as symbols of growth, transformation, rebirth, renewal, and return in literature. Like with winter, these symbolic meanings have basis in the physical changes the environment undergoes as the weather warms. Leaves begin to sprout on trees, and flowers bud and bloom. The rain the world receives in spring cleanses the earth and air. The days grow longer, and the nights shorter.

In the second half, the tone of the play becomes spring-like as the action of the play shifts its focus to the



"Winter" by David Teniers the Younger, circa 1644

## A CHANGE IN THE WEATHER: THE ROLE OF THE SEASONS IN *THE WINTER'S TALE* CONTINUED...

budding relationship between Perdita and Florizel. Newly in love, the two are ready and excited to take the next step in their relationship and marry. In stark contrast to the first half of the play, which explored the destruction and death of a relationship, this half focuses on the promise of the couple's future. Even when Polixenes threatens the relationship by forbidding Florizel from seeing Perdita anymore, the love that the two share persists, and they take Camillo's advice to flee to Sicilia.

In Sicilia, the springtime tone of the play continues as Leontes and Perdita are finally reunited. In their reunion, Leontes has a rebirth in his identity as he is once again able to be a father figure. What is more, when Paulina's statue of Hermione animates and transforms into the Hermione, the family, as a whole, is reborn—minus Mamillius. As the play comes to a close, it offers a promising and budding future for each of the living characters. ♦



"Spring" by David Teniers the Younger, circa 1644.



## THEMES

### Justice and Injustice

The search for justice drives the action of *The Winter's Tale*. When Leontes begins to suspect Hermione and Polixenes of having an affair, he immediately begins to devise a plan that he believes will bring due justice to the wrong that has been committed against him—to have both Hermione and Polixenes killed, a severe punishment for a crime based purely on conjecture.

As much as Leontes may feel that an injustice has been done to him, his accusations are baseless. In enacting his plan to seek out justice for the crime he believes Hermione and Polixenes have committed without seeking out hard evidence and ignoring the advice of his courtiers, Leontes inherently acts unjustly. Sending Camillo to poison Polixenes, throwing Hermione in prison to await a trial for her life, and ordering that Hermione's baby be disposed of, Leontes lets the idea of justice consume him.

When Leontes sends Hermione to prison, she maintains her innocence in the crime with which she has been charged and for which she will face a potential death sentence. Before she is escorted out, she invokes the power of natural law and the divine to dole out justice and to protect the innocent.

Nevertheless, Leontes persists in his quest and causes great devastation to those he loves most along the way. It is not until Apollo's oracle has been read and both Mamillius and Hermione are dead that Leontes begins to see his error. When he recognizes that he has acted unfairly, Leontes continues to seek out justice, this time for his own actions.

In Acts 4 and 5, as Leontes takes a back seat in the narrative, the quest for justice continues to drive character conflict. Despite the fact that Polixenes was the subject of a false accusation, he is quick to dole out unfair punishments in the name of justice. When he learns that his son, Florizel, is in love with Perdita, the adopted daughter of a shepherd, Polixenes forbids Florizel from seeing Perdita again and threatens to punish the shepherd for allowing the relationship between Perdita and Florizel to develop. Polixenes believes Perdita to be the daughter of the shepherd and, in the name of preserving royal family lines, takes steps to seek justice for the perceived betrayal he has experienced at the hands of Florizel, Perdita, and the shepherd. Polixenes' justice also proves to be unfounded and unjust when he learns that Perdita is, in fact, the princess of Sicilia.

### Jealousy

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“But thus: if powers divine  
Behold our human actions,  
as they do,  
I doubt not then but innocence  
shall make  
False accusation blush and tyranny  
Tremble at patience.”

—Hermione, Act 2 Scene 2

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At the root of Leontes' desire for justice is a profound jealousy. Leontes' jealousy feeds on the idea that Polixenes has won the favor of Hermione's love. Almost instantly after Hermione convinces Polixenes to extend his stay in Sicilia by one week—something that Leontes was not able to persuade Polixenes to do. Leontes begins to feel the physical impact of his near-instant jealousy:

“Too hot, too hot!  
To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods.  
I have *tremor cordis* on me. My heart dances,  
But not for joy, not joy. This entertainment  
May a free face put on, derive a liberty  
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,  
And well become the agent. 'T may, I grant.  
But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,  
As now they are, and making practiced smiles  
As in a looking glass, and then to sigh, as 'twere  
The mort o' th' deer—O, that is entertainment  
My bosom likes not, nor my brows.”

—Leontes, Act 1 Scene 2

After Leontes decides that Hermione and Leontes are having an affair, his jealousy begins to cloud his judgement and his capacity for reason. He will not listen to his friends and advisors, all of whom maintain that Hermione and Polixenes are innocent. He will not even entertain the idea that Hermione's newborn child may, in fact, be his. Instead, he sees the child as a physical symbol for the betrayal and jealousy he feels and orders the child to be left for dead in the wilderness. Leontes' jealousy is so pronounced and so profound that even when Apollo's oracle states that Hermione and Polixenes are innocent, Leontes is still compelled to punish Hermione, regardless. Ultimately, Leontes' baseless jealousy leads to the destruction of his family.

### Honor and Loyalty

## THEMES CONTINUED...

Questions of honor and loyalty are key to many of the plot points throughout *The Winter's Tale*. As Leontes grows suspicious of Hermione and Polixenes' relationship, he questions Hermione's loyalty to him as his wife and Polixenes' loyalty to him as one of his oldest and dearest friends.

When it comes to her trial, Hermione emphasizes that she places great value on her sense of honor. In response to Leontes' proclamation that death will be Hermione's punishment if she is found guilty of adultery, Hermione proclaims that she places a higher value on her reputation as an honorable person than she does on her life:

"But yet hear this (mistake me not: no life,  
I prize it not a straw, but for mine honor,  
Which I would free), if I shall be condemned  
Upon surmises, all proofs sleeping else  
But what your jealousies awake, I tell you  
'Tis rigor, and not law."

Camillo also grapples with his own sense of honor and his loyalty when Leontes asks him to poison Polixenes. In his heart, Camillo is confident that Polixenes is innocent of the crime of which Leontes has accused him. And yet, Leontes is the king, and Camillo has vowed to serve him. Camillo must decide what is more important—acting honorably and refusing to poison a man he believes is innocent, or staying loyal to his king.

"But, for me,  
What case stand I in? I must be the poisoner  
Of good Polixenes, and my ground to do 't  
Is the obedience to a master, one  
Who in rebellion with himself will have  
All that are his so too. To do this deed,  
Promotion follows. If I could find example  
Of thousands that had struck anointed kings  
And flourished after, I'd not do 't. But since  
Nor brass, nor stone, nor parchment bears not one,  
Let villainy itself forswear 't. I must  
Forsake the court. To do 't or no is certain  
To me a breakneck."

Ultimately, Camillo opts for honor over loyalty, and decides to help Polixenes escape Sicilia. However, in his decision to do the honorable thing and save Polixenes, Camillo does not completely forgo his loyalty to his homeland. In fact, his loyalty to Sicilia is what drives him to persuade Florizel and Perdita to flee to the country when they are forbidden from remaining together in Bohemia. In this plan, Camillo sees an opportunity for him to return to his homeland and find reconciliation for the sixteen years he has been gone.

Florizel is also confronted with a situation in which he

must choose honor or loyalty when his father forbids him from remaining with Perdita. In remaining loyal to his father, Florizel would lose Perdita. However, because he has already promised to marry Perdita, he would be dishonorable if he went back on his promise. Like Camillo, Florizel ultimately puts more value on his honor.

### Redemption and Forgiveness

After he realizes the amount of destruction his jealousy and false accusations have caused, Leontes vows to spend the rest of his life repenting and mourning the loss of his wife and son. Ultimately, he follows through with his vow. Sixteen years after the trial that tore his family apart, Leontes continues to mourn. Cleomenes, one of Leontes' courtiers, has seen Leontes grieve for so long and pleads for Leontes to forgive himself and to move on. However, Leontes cannot:

**Cleomenes:** Sir, you have done enough, and have performed A saintlike sorrow. No fault could you make Which you have not redeemed—indeed, paid down More penitence than done trespass. At the last, Do as the heavens have done: forget your evil; With them forgive yourself.

**Leontes:** Whilst I remember Her and her virtues, I cannot forget My blemishes in them, and so still think of The wrong I did myself, which was so much That heirless it hath made my kingdom and Destroyed the sweet'st companion that e'er man Bred his hopes out of.

It is not until Florizel, Perdita, Polixenes, and Camillo appear in Sicilia that Leontes is given the opportunity for more tangible forgiveness and redemption—he has the opportunity to make amends with those his actions directly affected. Polixenes and Camillo are quick to grant Leontes forgiveness, as is Perdita. In Sicilia, Polixenes is also able to find forgiveness from Florizel and Perdita for being so harsh with his previous orders that the two end their relationship. As the play comes to a close, Leontes is given an additional opportunity for forgiveness when Hermione returns. When she reanimates in the form of a statue, the royal family of Sicilia is able to reunite somewhat, even though Mamillius is still gone. In reuniting with those he directly harmed, Leontes is able to move forward, redeemed. ♦

## SHAKESPEARE'S *THE WINTER'S TALE* AND THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THEATRE

### BY DR. MIRANDA JOHNSON-HADDAD

**William Shakespeare's** *The Winter's Tale*, written around 1611, is considered to be one of the author's last four plays, which are known as the late Romances (after the Italian "romanzo," a poetic form) because they defy standard genre definitions. Like the other Romances (*Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Tempest*), *The Winter's Tale* is primarily a family drama, in which the author explores such themes as betrayal, loss, and forgiveness through the prism of the father-daughter relationship. In *Winter's Tale*, however, Shakespeare seems even more intrigued by the bond between husband and wife, and by the destructive forces of male paranoia and male sexual anxiety, forces that today we might describe as reflecting a culture of "toxic masculinity." Although other Shakespeare plays, especially the mature tragedies, focus on similar themes—male jealousy, doubt about the legitimacy of one's own children—these fears as presented in *Winter's Tale* occur without any cause (unlike *Othello*, Leontes has no Iago whispering insinuations in his ear), and the punishment for these sins is carried out swiftly and ruthlessly. But in the end, because *Winter's Tale* is a Romance and not a tragedy, forgiveness is granted and redemption is achieved, though not all losses are capable of being reversed.

Shakespeare's late Romances share many thematic features, including bizarre supernatural elements; storms and shipwrecks; separations and reunions; plotlines that play out over many years; and young lovers who ultimately triumph against all odds. But the overarching theme is always familial love and loss, and the need that all of us have for forgiveness. The Romances are sometimes described as "tragicomedies" or "comedies of forgiveness," because like the earlier comedies, the Romances end happily. But it is a mature kind of happiness: the peace that comes with gaining a greater understanding of human nature, rather than the joy of youthful love and of the multiple weddings that conclude the earlier plays. The ending of *Winter's Tale* may be the most bittersweet of any of the late Romances, because in this strange and strangely moving play, some actions cannot be undone, and not all losses can be restored. Nevertheless, any lingering heartache renders the forgiveness a much greater of a gift, and the consequent redemption that much more of a blessing.

The first three acts of *Winter's Tale* unquestionably read like tragedy. Leontes, the king of Sicilia, has without evidence accused his pregnant wife, Hermione, of committing adultery with his best friend, Polixenes, the king of Bohemia. The craven courtiers who surround Leontes are too fearful to stand up to him. Instead,

Hermione's friend Paulina, one of Shakespeare's most remarkable female characters, must speak truth to power. Her efforts prove fruitless, however; Leontes doubles down on his accusations, even defying the Oracle of Apollo when it proclaims Hermione's innocence. The retribution for this sacrilege is immediate and relentless: word is brought that both Mamillius, the king's son, and Hermione are dead, and the baby, Perdita, abandoned in the wilderness of Bohemia at Leontes' command, is thought to be irretrievably lost as well. Too late, Leontes realizes the madness of what he has done. But unlike Leontes, the audience will very soon learn that Perdita has survived and has been found by a kindly shepherd. For the audience, at least, hope remains; and the possibility of a shift away from tragedy is signaled by the words that the Old Shepherd speaks to his son in one of the loveliest lines in all of Shakespeare: "Thou met'st with things dying, I with things newborn."

The transition that occurs in Act 4 from tragedy to comedy is so abrupt as to be almost jarring. Bohemia, which was largely understood to be a fictitious locale during Shakespeare's time, represents one of the playwright's many "other" worlds, similar to the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, Illyria in *Twelfth Night*, or Prospero's island in *The Tempest*. Anything can happen in these places that exist outside of the "civilized" or courtly world, for they represent alternative psychological spaces as well as physical ones. The sheep-shearing festival further recalls the idealized country scenes described in pastoral literature, which was enormously popular in Elizabethan England, though somewhat out of fashion by the time Shakespeare was writing *Winter's Tale*. Act 4, which is unusually long for a Shakespearean Romance, is often significantly shortened in performance; and though this practice is usually all to the good, productions that pare Act 4 down too much run the risk of defeating its evident purpose, which is to alert the audience that we are now safely out of the realm of tragedy, and that despite any troubles that arise for the young lovers, Perdita and Florizel, the ending of the play will be a happy one.

If the late Romances seem to embody contradictory literary genres, they also occupy a dramatic space that is both satisfyingly theatrical and notoriously difficult to stage. *Winter's Tale* in particular presents many wonderfully dramatic moments, including the Oracle of Apollo; that famous bear at the end of Act 3; the Chorus-like speech by Time that opens Act 4; and, most memorable of all, the statue scene at the play's conclusion. Such moments may strain credulity, yet they

## SHAKESPEARE'S *THE WINTER'S TALE* AND THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THEATRE CONTINUED...

also remind us of what we love most about theatre—its spectacle, its fantasy, and its ability to take us out of ourselves. Several characters in *Winter's Tale* call attention to and comment upon the improbable and fantastical nature of the play—and, by implication, of every play—even as they urge us to embrace this same unbelievability.

Nevertheless, despite the joy afforded by these moments, there's no denying that *Winter's Tale* can be challenging to stage. All too often, production choices that attempt to resolve certain problems have ended up creating new ones. One example is the choice that some directors have made to double cast Hermione and Perdita, as in the 1969 Royal Shakespeare Company production directed by Trevor Nunn, in which a young Judi Dench played both Hermione and Perdita. This choice has been repeated occasionally by later directors, but the text does not support this double casting, and it inevitably makes for an awkward final scene. A more successful doubling can be seen in the 1999 Royal Shakespeare Company production directed by Gregory Doran, in which actress Emily Bruni played both Mamillius and Perdita, a doubling that gave an added resonance to the Oracle's prophecy that "the king will live without an heir if that which is lost be not found." The biggest staging headache, though, is surely caused by the problem of what to do with that bear. We do not know whether in Shakespeare's time the bear would have been played by an actor in a bear costume or by an actual bear, perhaps borrowed from the Bear Garden next door to Shakespeare's Globe theatre (though the latter theory is no longer widely believed). This tricky dramatic moment, if not handled effectively, may cause the audience to laugh at what is, in fact, a tragic event; but if handled well, the moment can produce genuine awe and wonder. Similarly, the statue scene that concludes the play presents enormous physical challenges for the actress playing Hermione; but if navigated successfully, the statue's awakening truly feels like the emotional center of the entire play, as it should.

The tension inherent in these moments may account in part for why *Winter's Tale* is one of Shakespeare's less-performed plays. Certainly any audience viewing this play would be well-advised to take Paulina's words to heart: "It is required / You do awake your faith." Shakespeare often explores the implicit contract between actors and audiences. With characters such as the Chorus of *Henry V* and Gower of *Pericles*, and with the theatrical metaphors employed by so many of his characters, from Rosalind to Cassius, from *Lear* to *Cleopatra*, Shakespeare reminds us again and again that he was not only a playwright but an actor too; and these dual roles allowed him to

contemplate with special insight the way that suspension of disbelief must operate within the theatre. Perhaps in no other play does Shakespeare call attention to the need for an audience to believe in what they see onstage as clearly as he does in *Winter's Tale*, the very title of which alerts us to the inherent fictitiousness of what we are witnessing. As audience members, we always have the option to scoff at what we are seeing, to "hoot" at it, as Paulina says, "like an old tale." But if we choose to go this more cynical route, we inevitably rob ourselves not only of the delight that a given play can provide, but also of the profoundly redemptive power of theatre, and of the Romance plays in particular. We would do better, the playwright implies, to enter fully into the world we see onstage, fantastical and unrealistic as it may be, and to wholly embrace the play in all its glorious theatricality. Only then will we be able to participate fully in the play's transformative power, and only then may we truly appreciate the beauty and the wisdom that it offers us—much as Leontes himself is transformed and redeemed by Hermione's love and forgiveness. If we as theatregoers are able to do this, we will be the better for it; and we may well find that once we've done so, there isn't a bear in sight. ♦

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- For information about the source material for *The Winter's Tale*, see, among others, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), introductory material to *The Winter's Tale*.
- Marjorie Garber's *Shakespeare After All* (Anchor Press, 2005) offers insightful discussions of Shakespeare's plays by a well-known Harvard professor. Several of Dr. Garber's lectures can also be viewed on YouTube.
- For historical background on Shakespeare and his plays, see *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*, edited by Russ McDonald (Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, Boston and New York: 2001).
- For additional resources specifically on *The Winter's Tale*, see *The New Folger Shakespeare Library* edition, edited by Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), in the "Further Reading" section. NOTE: Although in general I recommend the New Folger editions, I do not recommend that edition for students who are reading *The Winter's Tale*. Teachers may wish to guide their students to the David Bevington or Arden editions instead.
- For a provocative re-imagining and updating of the play, see Jeannette Winterson, *The Gap of Time* (Hogarth Shakespeare Series: 2015). NOTE: Sexually explicit language and situations. For another re-imagining, see E.K. Johnston's YA novel *Exit, Pursued by a Bear* (New York: Penguin, 2016). NOTE: Disturbing themes, including rape. For yet another reimagining, see Helen Oyeyemi, *Gingerbread* (London: Penguin, 2019). NOTE: Disturbing themes, including what initially appears to be a suicide attempt by the young heroine (although she survives and explains that her intention was not to commit suicide, but that she was, in fact, tricked).

## TRY YOUR HAND AT SHAKESPEARE

The following expressions are a result of William Shakespeare's creativity with words.

You may have heard some of them used. Or perhaps you have used them yourself.

as luck would have it  
 green-eyed monster  
 not slept one wink  
 as white as driven snow  
 give the devil his due  
 one fell swoop  
 bag and baggage  
 hold a candle to  
 seen better days  
 be all and end all  
 in a pickle

sharper than a serpent's tooth  
 blinking idiot  
 it smells to heaven  
 stood on ceremony  
 budge an inch  
 laugh yourself into stitches  
 the more fool you  
 but me no buts  
 laughing stock  
 too much of a good thing  
 dead as a doornail

make a virtue of necessity  
 tower of strength  
 elbow room  
 merry as the day is long  
 vanish into thin air  
 for goodness sake  
 my own flesh and blood  
 what the dickens  
 foul play  
 not a mouse stirring  
 without rhyme or reason

Try your hand at using some of these phrases to create your own short story or poem.

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## WORDS COINED BY SHAKESPEARE

### **Accused**—*Richard II*, Act I, Scene I

How Shakespeare used it: To describe the person being charged with a crime or offense. This is the word's first known use as a noun. In this case Henry Bolingbroke and Thomas Mowbray are the accuser and the accused—Bolingbroke (the accuser) argues that Thomas Mowbray (the accused) is "a traitor and a miscreant."

"Then call them to our presence; face to face,  
And frowning brow to brow, ourselves will hear  
The accuser and the accused freely speak:  
High-stomach'd are they both, and full of ire,  
In rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire."—King Richard II

Modern Definition: someone charged with a crime or offense (particularly relating to a criminal case).

### **Addiction**—*Othello*, Act II, Scene II

How Shakespeare used it: meaning a strong preference for or inclination towards something. The herald encourages everyone to take pleasure in whatever most delights them or in whatever they are most inclined towards (their addictions.)

"It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant general, that, upon certain tidings now arrived, importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet, every man put himself into triumph; some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him."—Herald

Modern definition: noun—an intense and destructive need to have or do something excessively.

### **Assassination**—*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene VII

How Shakespeare used it: The word assassin was already known, but Shakespeare used assassination to describe a murder, or deed done by an assassin. In this soliloquy, Macbeth contemplates the murder or assassination of Duncan.

"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
It were done quickly. If the assassination  
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch  
With his surcease success; that but this blow  
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,  
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,  
We'd jump the life to come."—Macbeth

Modern Definition: The act of assassinating someone, where assassinate means to kill someone who is usually famous or important, often for political reasons.

### **Bedazzled**—*The Taming of the Shrew*, Act IV, Scene V

"Pardon, old father, my mistaking eyes, that have been so bedazzled with the sun that everything I look on seemeth green."—Kate

### **Dwindle**—*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene III

How Shakespeare used it: In this scene from *Macbeth*, the First witch tells the other two witches that she has been torturing a sailor whose wife was rude to her and explains to them how she will "drain him dry as hay" until he "dwindle, peak and pine". Dwindle in this sense is used to mean waste away.

"I myself have all the other,  
And the very ports they blow,  
All the quarters that they know  
I' th' shipman's card.  
I'll drain him dry as hay.  
Sleep shall neither night nor day

Hang upon his penthouse lid.  
He shall live a man forbid.  
Weary sev'nights nine times nine  
Shall he dwindle, peak and pine." —First Witch

Modern Definition: to gradually become smaller.

### **Fashionable**—*Troilus and Cressida*, Act III, Scene III

How Shakespeare used it: Ulysses describes time through a series of metaphors and similes. One of the comparisons he makes is with a fashionable host. In this context, fashionable means a host who abides by the most current etiquette—who follows customs that are of the current fashion.

"For time is like a fashionable host that slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand, and with his arms outstretch'd, as he would fly, grasps in the comer: welcome ever smiles, and farewell goes out sighing."—Ulysses

Modern definition: Representing a popular trend or influence, particularly regarding personal styles.

### **Inaudible**—*All's Well That Ends Well*, Act V, Scene III

"Let's take the instant by the forward top; for we are old, and on our quick'st decrees the inaudible and noiseless foot of Time steals ere we can effect them."—King of France

## THE ART OF THE SHAKESPEAREAN INSULT

When we think of Shakespeare, we usually think of his plays and poetry. However, Shakespeare has also penned some of the most amazing insults. Far more interesting and colorful than the curse words we usually hear in modern conversation, the witty and acerbic Shakespearean insult is truly an art form. Next time you feel additional color is required in your conversation, try something Shakespearean! Go ahead!

Below are a few of Shakespeare's well-known insults:

"Thou art a boil, a plague sore, an embossed carbuncle in my corrupted blood."

"Heaven truly knows that thou art false as hell"

"I do desire we may be better strangers"

"I am sick when I do look on thee"

"Poisonous bunch-backed toad!"

"Thou lump of foul deformity"

### ACTIVITY

Make Your Own Insult! Combine one word from each of the three columns below, then preface your combination with "Thou" to create your own Shakespearean Insult!

#### COLUMN 1

Artless  
Bawdy  
Bootless  
Churlish  
Clouted  
Craven  
Currish  
Dankish  
Dissembling  
Droning  
Errant  
Fawning  
Fobbing  
Forward  
Frothy  
Gleeking  
Goatish  
Gorbellied  
Infectious  
Jarring  
Loggerheaded  
Lumpish  
Mammering  
Mangled  
Mewling  
Paunchy  
Pribbling  
Puking  
Puny  
Qualling  
Rank  
Reeky  
Roguish  
Ruttiesh  
Saucy  
Spleeny  
Spongy  
Surly  
Tottering  
Unmuzzled  
Vain  
Venomed  
Villainous  
Warped  
Wayward

#### COLUMN 2

Base-court  
Bat-fowling  
Beef-witted  
Beetle-headed  
Boil-brained  
Clapper-clawed  
Clay-brained  
Common-kissing  
Crook-pated  
Dismal-dreaming  
Dizzy-eyed  
Doghearted  
Dread-bolted  
Earth-vexing  
Fat-kidneyed  
Fen-sucked  
Flap-mouthed  
Fly-bitten  
Folly-fallen  
Fool-born  
Full-gorged  
Guts-gripping  
Half-faced  
Hasty-witted  
Hedge-born  
Hell-hated  
Idle-headed  
Ill-breeding  
Ill-nurtured  
Knotty-pated  
Milk-livered  
Motley-minded  
Onion-eyed  
Pottle-deep  
Pox-marked  
Reeling-ripe  
Rough-hewn  
Rude-growing  
Shard-borne  
Sheep-biting  
Spur-galled  
Swag-bellied  
Tardy-gaited  
Tickle-brained  
Toad-spotted  
Urchin-snouted

#### COLUMN 3

Apple-john  
Baggage Barnacle  
Bladder Boar-pig  
Bugbear Bum-bailey  
Canker-blossom  
Clack-dish  
Clotpole  
Coxcomb  
Codpiece  
Death-token  
Dewberry  
Flap-dragon  
Flax-wench  
Flirt-gill  
Foot-licker  
Fustilarian  
Giglet  
Gudgeon  
Haggard  
Harpy  
Hedge-pic  
Horn-beast  
Hugger-mugger  
Lewdster  
Lout  
Malt-worm  
Mammet  
Measle  
Minnow  
Miscreant  
Moldwarp  
Mumble-news  
Nut-hook  
Pigeon-egg  
Pignut  
Puttock  
Pumpion  
Ratsbane  
Scut  
Skainsmate  
Vassal Whey-face

## PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: RESEARCH

**Purpose:**

These research prompts will help students develop an understanding of the historical and social context of William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*.

**Prepare:**

To prepare for seeing *The Winter's Tale*, have students break into small groups and research the following topics, either in groups or individually. When they are finished, have students present their findings to the class.

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**The Elizabethan Era**

- The social structure hierarchy
- Social norms and morals
- The role of women and women's rights
- Theatre and its role in society
- Prominent theatre companies and playwrights
- Prominent political figures
- Marital laws
- Popular art and entertainment

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**Romance Plays:**

- Their characteristics
- Their subject matter
- Examples of other Shakespearean Romance plays

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**Jealousy and Shame:**

- The psychology behind jealousy
- The psychology behind shame

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**William Shakespeare**

- His life
  - His work
  - His legacy
-



## PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: ACTIVITIES

### Purpose:

These activities will prompt students to think critically about the themes and ideas in *The Winter's Tale* and engage with the narrative.

**REWRITE SHAKESPEARE:** In this activity, students will have the opportunity to engage with the text of *The Winter's Tale* by translating a speech from the play into contemporary language.

- Have students read Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, or provide students with a contextual overview of the events in the play.
- Pass out the text of a speech from the play to students. Possible speeches include the following:
  - Hermione's Act III, scene ii speech beginning with "Since what I am to say must be but that..."
  - Antigonus's Act III, scene iii speech beginning with "Come, poor babe..."
  - Time's Act IV, scene I soliloquy beginning with "I, that please some, try all—both joy and terror..."
- Facilitate a class-wide discussion about the overarching meaning of the speech.
- After the discussion, have students break into groups, and rewrite the speech line by line using contemporary language.
- Allow students to present their translations to the class.
- Lead a discussion about the differences between Shakespeare's original text and the translations. Some questions to ask during this discussion include
  - What is added or lost in the translations?
  - Is the meaning of the speech still clear? Is the meaning of the speech more clear?
  - How does the process of translating the text add to your understanding of the speech?

**DEAR DIARY:** In this activity, students will have the opportunity to use their creative writing skills to explore potential thoughts and motivations for the actions characters take throughout *The Winter's Tale*.

- Have students read Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* or provide students with a contextual overview of the events in the play.
- Facilitate a class discussion about the characters. In this discussion, ask students to list words they would use to describe each of the following characters: Leontes, Polixenes, Camillo, Hermione, Paulina, Antigonus, Shepherd, Perdita, Florizel, and Autolycus.
- Instruct students to write a diary entry as one of the above characters. In their diary entries, encourage students to think creatively about the character's motivations for their actions. Diary entries could include the character's thoughts about other characters, thoughts about events that take place during the play, or hopes for the future.
- Allow students to share their diary entries with the class.

## PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: ACTIVITIES CONTINUED...

**DESIGNING TIME:** In this activity, students will have the opportunity to creatively explore the temporal elements of the *The Winter's Tale* through collage.

- Have students read Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* or provide students with a contextual overview of the events in the play.
- Facilitate a class wide discussion about the role of time in the play.
  - What is time?
  - In what ways do we, as a society, mark the passage of time?
  - What are some images that come to mind when you think of time?
- In this discussion, ask students to list words or phrases from the play that mention or pertain to the concept of time.
- In his play, Shakespeare anthropomorphizes Time as a character. Ask students to consider the following in regard to the character:
  - What would Time be wearing?
  - What props would Time have?
  - What environment would Time be in?
- Have students design the costume and setting for Act IV Scene i of *The Winter's Tale* in which Time gives his soliloquy using pens, colored pencils, markers, crayons, colored paper, or photos from magazines.
- Ask students to write a brief explanation for their design choices.
- Allow students to share their work with the class.

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. To what extent does Leontes change and grow over the course of the play? Support your stance with evidence from the text.
2. In a thesis-driven essay, characterize Paulina. Consider how Paulina adheres to or diverges from 16th century European expectations of women as well as how she interacts with other characters in the play. Use textual evidence to support your argument.
3. In a well-developed essay, analyze the role of justice in *The Winter's Tale*. Consider the ways different characters' relationship to justice drives the plot of the play forward. Support your argument with evidence from the text.
4. Read the following passage:
 

Is whispering nothing?  
Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?  
Kissing with inside lip? Stopping the career  
Of laughter with a sigh?—a note infallible  
Of breaking honesty. Horsing foot on foot?  
Skulking in corners? Wishing clocks more swift?  
Hours minutes? Noon midnight? And all eyes  
Blind with the pin and web but theirs, theirs only,  
That would unseen be wicked? Is this nothing?  
Why, then the world and all that's in 't is nothing,  
The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,  
My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings,  
If this be nothing.

—Leontes Act I, scene ii

What does this passage reveal about Leontes?  
Write well-developed essay in which you use textual evidence to support your characterization of Leontes.
5. In a well-developed essay, analyze the significance of Autolycus' character in *The Winter's Tale*. Use evidence from the text to support your claim.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### BOOKS:

Bloom, Harold. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. Fourth Estate, 2010.

Bloom, Harold. *Shakespeare's Romances*. Chelsea House Publishers, 2000.

Bryson, Bill. *Shakespeare: The World as Stage*. HarperPress, 2007.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. W.W. Norton, 2005.

Shakespeare, William. *Folger Shakespeare Library: The Winter's Tale*. Simon & Schuster, 2016.

### ARTICLES:

Schwartz, Murrury M. "The Winter's Tale': Loss and Transformation." *American Imago*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1975, pp. 145–199. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/26303104](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26303104).

Showerman, Earl. "Look Down and See What Death Is Doing: Gods and Greeks in The Winter's Tale." *The Oxfordian*, 2007.

### FILMS AND TELEVISION EPISODES:

*The Winter's Tale* (1999) directed by Robin Lough

*Branagh Theatre Live: The Winter's Tale* (2015) directed by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh

*Shakespeare Uncovered: "The Winter's Tale" with Simon Russel Beale* (2018) Episode by PBS

### VIDEO CLIPS:

Straight Outta Stratford-Upon-Avon - Shakespeare's Early Days: Crash Course Theater #14:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FS2ndY5WJXA&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtONXALkeh5uisZqrAcPKCee&index=15>

Comedies, Romances, and Shakespeare's Heroines: Crash Course Theater #16:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjAqfh9aY9Y&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtONXALkeh5uisZqrAcPKCee&index=17>

### ONLINE RESOURCES:

Folger Digital Texts' free online publication of *The Winter's Tale*:

<https://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=WT&loc=line-4.1.1>

*Pandosto: The Triumph of Time* by Robert Greene (the full text of the source material for *The Winter's Tale*):

<http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/Greene/Pandosto.pdf>

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Educational Resources:

<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/>

## ABOUT THEATRE ARTS: KEY THEATRICAL TERMS

Today, movies and television take audiences away from what was once the number one form of amusement: going to the theatre. But attending a live theatrical performance is still one of the most thrilling and active forms of entertainment.

In a theatre, observers are catapulted into the action, especially at an intimate venue like *A Noise Within*, whose thrust stage reaches out into the audience and whose actors can see, hear, and feel the response of the crowd.

Although playhouses in the past could sometimes be rowdy, participating in the performance by giving respect and attention to the actors is the most appropriate behavior at a theatrical performance today. Shouting out (or even whispering) can be heard throughout the auditorium, as can rustling paper or ringing phones.

After this *A Noise Within* performance, you will have the opportunity to discuss the play's content and style with the performing artists and directors. You may wish to remind students to observe the performance carefully or to compile questions ahead of time so they are prepared to participate in the discussion.

**blocking:** The instructions a director gives actors that tell them how and where to move in relation to each other or to the set in a particular scene.

**character:** The personality or part portrayed by an actor on stage.

**conflict:** The opposition of people or forces which causes the play's rising action.

**dramatic irony:** A dramatic technique used by a writer in which a character is unaware of something the audience knows.

**genre:** Literally, "kind" or "type." In literary terms, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally comedy and tragedy. It can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy such as the comedy of manners, farce or social drama.

**motivation:** The situation or mood which initiates an action. Actors often look for their "motivation" when they try to dissect how a character thinks or acts.

**props:** Items carried on stage by an actor to represent objects mentioned in or implied by the script. Sometimes the props are actual, sometimes they are manufactured in the theatre shop.

**proscenium stage:** There is usually a front curtain on a proscenium stage. The audience views the play from the front through a "frame" called the proscenium arch. In this scenario, all audience members have the same view of the actors.

**set:** The physical world created on stage in which the action of the play takes place.

**setting:** The environment in which a play takes place. It may include the historical period as well as the physical space.

**stage areas:** The stage is divided into areas to help the director to note where action will take place. Upstage is the area furthest from the audience. Downstage is the area closest to the audience. Center stage defines the middle of the playing space. Stage left is the actor's left as he faces the audience. Stage right is the actor's right as he faces the audience.

**theme:** The overarching message or main idea of a literary or dramatic work. A recurring idea in a play or story.

**thrust stage:** A stage that juts out into the audience seating area so that patrons are seated on three sides. In this scenario, audience members see the play from varying viewpoints. *A Noise Within* features a thrust stage.

## ABOUT A NOISE WITHIN

**A NOISE WITHIN** A Noise Within produces classic theatre as an essential means to enrich our community by embracing universal human experiences, expanding personal awareness, and challenging individual perspectives. Our company of resident and guest artists performing in rotating repertory immerses student and general audiences in timeless, epic stories in an intimate setting.

Our most successful art asks our community to question beliefs, focus on relationships, and develop self-awareness. Southern California audiences of all ages and backgrounds build community together while engaging with this most visceral and primal of storytelling techniques. ANW's production of classic theatre includes all plays we believe will be part of our cultural legacy. We interpret these stories through the work of a professional resident company—a group of artists whose work is critical to their community—based on the belief that trust among artists and between artists and audience can only be built through an honest and continuing dialogue. Our plays will be performed in rotating repertory, sometimes simultaneously in multiple spaces, and buttressed by meaningful supporting programs to create a symphonic theatrical experience for artists and audience.

In its 27 year history, A Noise Within has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle's revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

More than 45,000 individuals attend productions at a Noise Within annually. In addition, the theatre draws over 18,000 student participants to its arts education program. Students benefit from in-classroom workshops, conservatory training, subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, post-performance discussions with artists, and free standards-based study guides.

### Study Guides

A Noise Within creates study guides in alignment with core reading, listening, speaking, and performing arts standards to help educators prepare their students for their visit to our theatre. Study guides are available at no extra cost to download through our website: [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org). The information and activities outlined in these guides are designed to work in compliance with the California VAPA standards, The Common Core, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills.

Study guides include background information on the plays and playwrights, historical context, textual analysis, in-depth discussion of A Noise Within's artistic interpretation of the work, statements from directors and designers, as well as discussion points and suggested classroom activities. Guides from past seasons are also available to download from the website.

### Study Guide Credits

Alicia Green	.....	<i>Education Director and Editor</i>
Rebecca Wilson	.....	<i>Education Manager and Editor</i>
Rachael McNamara	.....	<i>Author</i>
Craig Schwartz	.....	<i>Production Photography</i>
Teresa English	.....	<i>Graphic Design</i>



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