



## About this pack

We hope that students from Primary to Advanced Level will enjoy our production and use this education resource pack.

It may be used in advance of seeing the performance – to prepare and inform students about the play; and afterwards – to respond to the play and explore in more depth. Teachers may select, from the broad range of material, which is most suitable for their students.

The first section of this document is a detailed companion to our production: plot and character synopsis, interviews.

The second section seeks to explore the context of the play in greater depth.

The third section includes exercises and suggestions for study.



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## SECTION 1

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### INTRODUCTION

**THE WINTER'S TALE** did not appear in print until the publication of the First Folio in 1623 – seven years after Shakespeare's death. The date of the first performance, and therefore the year it was written, is not certain as no record of a performance exists.

The scholarly consensus is that this is a late play, written perhaps as late as 1611 – around the same time as **THE TEMPEST**, which is widely believed to be Shakespeare's last play. The posthumous publication would support this view but more than this, the characters, themes and language of the play itself identify the work as that of the mature playwright.

For Shakespeare's audience 'a winter's tale' would imply 'an old wives' tale' or 'an idle tale' --- something not too realistic, with a happy ending. Certainly there are pastoral and (arguably) magical elements in the story, but the poet's genius gives us something far richer than a simple diversion for the winter fireside.

The play is classed as one of the comedies, though young Mamillius says 'a sad tale's best for winter'. The truth is that Shakespeare weaves a beautiful, poignant story that is not entirely tragic or comic. Like real life it's a blend of both – and carrying a final message of hope, reconciliation and redemption.

## CHARACTERS

### LEONTES

The King of Sicilia. A good man seized by the sudden and irrational belief that his heavily pregnant wife, Hermione, has had an affair with his lifelong friend, Polixenes, and that the unborn child is not his. Leontes' jealous passion brings disaster and destruction to himself and his family.

### HERMIONE

The Queen of Sicilia. A witty and virtuous woman, falsely accused of adultery and treason. Despite being declared innocent by the gods, she collapses and dies of grief at the news that her young son is dead. Unknown to Leontes, she remains alive and hidden, awaiting the fulfillment of a prophecy.

### MAMILLIUS

The young son of Hermione and Leontes, who dies of grief at the ill-treatment of his mother by his father.

### CAMILLO

A nobleman of Sicilia and servant to Leontes, whose conscience prevents him from killing Polixenes at the King's behest. Instead Camillo warns Polixenes and then flees with him back to Bohemia.

### ANTIGONUS

A nobleman of Sicilia and husband to Paulina, Antigonus is charged with disposing of the infant Perdita. He takes her over the sea to Bohemia, and leaves her to her fate before being eaten by a bear.

### PAULINA

A highly respected noblewoman of Sicilia, who defends the Queen's honour vehemently – at some risk to herself. Following Hermione's death, Paulina is relentless in her condemnation of his actions – which also causes the death of her husband. She conceals the 'dead' Hermione until it is time for her resurrection.





### **POLIXENES**

King of Bohemia and Leontes' boyhood friend. Falsely accused of adultery with Hermione, Polixenes escapes with his life. However, his behavior is little better than Leontes' when he discovers his son, Florizel, is in love with a lowly Shepherdess.

### **FLORIZEL**

Only son of King Polixenes, prince Florizel falls in love with a lowly shepherdess. When the lovers are discovered, Florizel defies his father and elopes with Perdita to Sicilia still unaware of her true identity.

### **SHEPHERD**

An honest farmer, who finds the infant Perdita and raises her as his own daughter.

### **PERDITA**

Born during her mother's imprisonment at the hands of her father, Perdita is cast out by Leontes and abandoned by Antigonus on a hillside in Bohemia. Found and raised by a lowly shepherd, she meets and falls in love with the prince, Florizel. When Polixenes discovers and forbids the match the two elope to Sicilia, the place of Perdita's birth. The return of this lost child is prophesied – at which point her mother is restored to life.



### **AUTOLYCUS**

Peddler, pickpocket and all-round rascal, Autolycus makes good money at the Bohemian Sheep-shearing by fair means and foul. This likeable rogue is instrumental in the escape of Perdita and Florizel.

### **CLOWN**

The Shepherd's foolish son, and Perdita's step-brother.



# PLOT SYNOPSIS

## Act 1

In Sicilia, the King Leontes is feasting in honour of his boyhood friend Polixenes, King of Bohemia. Polixenes has been in Sicilia for a number of months and now plans to return home. Leontes pleads with his friend to stay, but it is only when the heavily pregnant Queen Hermione intercedes that Polixenes agrees to extend his visit.

We quickly see that the free and intimate manner with which Hermione and Polixenes interact is feeding a jealous passion in Leontes. The belief that his wife and friend have had an adulterous affair quickly overwhelms Leontes and becomes an unquestionable truth. He is irrational and aggressive with his young son, Mamillius, and in a private moment orders his closest servant, Camillo, to poison Polixenes.



Camillo is an honest man, and does not believe that the Queen is unfaithful. Instead of fulfilling the King's command, he warns Polixenes of the plot against him and the two flee to Bohemia.

## Act 2

The escape of Polixenes is seen as further proof of guilt by Leontes, who will not fail to exact his revenge on Hermione. She is arrested while at play with their son Mamillius, and taken to prison.

A nobleman, Antigonus, and other Lords appeal to the King on Hermione's behalf, but he is immovable. He does not need their advice as he has sent messengers to Apollo's temple at Delphi. Leontes is confident that the oracle will confirm Hermione's guilt, while the Lords are comforted that she will be acquitted.

At the prison Antigonus' wife Paulina demands to see the Queen, but despite her high status and sheer force of personality the jailer will only permit her to speak with one of Hermione's attendants. Emilia reveals that the distress has caused the Queen to go into labour prematurely, and that she has delivered a baby girl. Paulina asks to be entrusted with the child that she might take it and present it to the King.

In his private chambers Leontes receives news that Mamillius has become very ill at the disgrace of his mother. The King is anxious for his son, but still so blinded by jealousy that this alone dominates his thoughts.

There is a clamour outside as Antigonus and other Lords try to prevent Paulina from gaining access to the King. She forces her way in and presents the newborn baby to her father. Despite Paulina's brave and forceful defence of the Queen, Leontes declares the child a bastard. Paulina's insistence only enrages Leontes still further and she is ultimately obliged to retreat, leaving the baby behind.

Leontes blames Antigonus for the behavior of his wife and charges him with the disposal of the child by fire. When Antigonus pleads for the baby's life Leontes relents only so far. Antigonus must take her far away and then abandon her to the elements. With heavy heart, Antigonus vows to obey the King and takes up the child.

News arrives that the messengers from Delphi are returned with an answer from the oracle. All are summoned to hear the declaration at the trial of Hermione.

### Act 3

The Queen is brought to trial. She has suffered much already, but she defends her honour with dignity. Hermione sees that for both their sakes the King must be shaken out of this irrational and unfounded jealousy. Leontes is immovable and relentless in his accusations of her infidelity --- the final proof of which will be in the sealed oracle from Delphi. However, when the seal is broken and the oracle read out, it declares the Queen innocent. It also prophesies that Leontes '*shall live without an heir if that which is lost be not found.*'

All in the court are overjoyed, but Leontes is still locked in his rage and will not accept the truth of the declaration. He dismisses the oracle's pronouncement as falsehood and is about to proceed with the trial when news arrives that Mamillius is dead.

The shock of this finally jolts Leontes back to his senses, but too late. The Queen collapses from exhaustion and grief and is carried away to be revived by Paulina .

Now calm, the King begs forgiveness of Apollo and vows to be reconciled with Polixenes and Camillo. Pauline returns with the dread news that Hermione is dead.



She charges the King with the death of his entire family: wife, son and baby daughter. Grief stricken and repentant, Leontes leaves the stage a broken man.



Meanwhile, Antigonus has landed on the shores of Bohemia with the infant girl, whom he has named Perdita after Hermione appeared to him in a dream. He lays the child down on a hillside, wrapped in her mother's mantle, with a letter and some gold.

A storm is gathering, there is a hunt close by, and Antigonus must reboard the ship. As he says a tender farewell to Perdita another threat bears down upon him and he knows his time has come. Exit Antigonus – *pursued by a bear*.

A Shepherd appears. He is looking for some sheep that the hunters have scared off, but instead he finds the baby girl. He takes up the child 'for pity' and is joined by his son, the Clown. He has just seen two terrible sights --- a ship breaking up in the storm and a man being mauled by a bear.

The Shepherd shows his son the baby and the items found with her. They resolve to take the child home with them, and to bury the remains of Antigonus – once the bear has finished dining.

## AT THIS POINT IN OUR PRODUCTION THERE IS AN INTERVAL

### Act 4

A character called 'Time' enters and informs us that 16 years have now passed. Through these years Leontes has shut himself away in grief, while his daughter has grown up as a shepherdess in Bohemia. Now a beautiful young woman, Perdita has caught the eye of Florizel, son of King Polixenes – though he knows nothing of her true identity.

At Polixenes' palace Camillo is pining for Sicilia and wishes to return, but the King cannot part with him just yet. Polixenes has heard a rumour that his son Florizel is romantically entangled with a Shepherd's daughter. With Camillo's help he will disguise himself and attend the sheep---shearing festival to find out what's really going on.

Back in the Bohemian countryside a merry rogue called Autolycus meets with the Clown on the road. Autolycus tricks the Clown and relieves him of his purse. The Clown then proceeds on his way, unaware that he has been robbed, and Autolycus is pleased to have learned of the sheep---shearing festival – an opportunity to sell his wares pick a few pockets at the same time.



Finally we catch up with Perdita, being wooed by the lovestruck Florizel. Unlike her shepherd family, Perdita is aware of Florizel's true identity and is fearful of his father finding out about them. Florizel is reckless in his love and declares that if he cannot marry her he will never marry at all.



Crowds are gathering for the sheep---shearing, including a couple of newcomers – Polixenes and Camillo in disguise. They are welcomed by Perdita, who gives them flowers. Polixenes and Camillo are both impressed by her grace and beauty.

The young lovers join the dance while the Shepherd comments to Polixenes that the young man who is in love with his daughter will marry far better than he realizes. Little does the Shepherd know that the young man is Prince Florizel and the stranger to whom he speaks is his father, the King.

Into the midst of this celebration comes Autolycus, in a different guise, so as not to be recognized by the Clown, and laden with songs and wares to sell.

The joy of the occasion is brought to its fullness with the announcement of Florizel and Perdita's betrothal. Polixenes, still in disguise, questions whether the betrothal should go ahead without the consent of the young man's father.



When Florizel dismisses this idea and insists on immediate betrothal, Polixenes reveals himself. He forbids the match, threatens Perdita with disfigurement and her father and brother with death.

Once the King has departed Camillo remains to mop up the mess. The Shepherd, now knowing the true identity of his daughter's boyfriend steals away to think on his disgrace. Perdita is proud and furious, but ready to weep, but Florizel is determined to disobey his father. Convinced that Perdita is something more than a lowly shepherdess and seeing that Florizel has made up his mind, Camillo suggests that the young lovers elope to Sicilia. He will pave the way for them there with a letter of introduction, and then use his influence to soften Polixenes towards them.



Autolycus appears – flush from his exploits at the festival – and gives Camillo an idea to disguise Florizel. The prince and the pedlar exchange clothes and the lovers flee to embark for Sicilia.

As Autolycus muses that he will keep this knowledge of the prince's elopement to himself, the Shepherd and Clown appear. They decide that they must go to the palace and show Polixenes the objects found with baby Perdita so that he will

know she is no blood relation and spare their lives. Autolycus overhears and offers to help them – but persuades them that seeing the King is too much of a risk. Instead they must steal aboard the prince's ship. For a consideration, Autolycus will then arrange an audience for them to tell their story of the foundling. So off all three of them go – bound for Sicilia.

## Act 5

Back in the palace of Leontes, the Lords advise the stricken King to end his long years of penance and finally forgive himself, but he is inconsolable still. When he is further advised that he has no heir and so should consider remarrying, Paulina butts in and makes Leontes swear that he will never remarry without her approval.

The arrival of Florizel is announced and Leontes is amazed by this unexpected visit from the son of his estranged old friend – and that the young prince is also accompanied by his new wife.

Leontes resolves to put his griefs to one side and be a gracious host to his visitors.

Florizel and Perdita arrive and are made welcome, but news of Polixenes' arrival hot on their heels perplexes Leontes. It is also revealed that Perdita's father and brother



are also in Sicilia. They have been caught by Polixenes and Camillo, and detained for questioning. Florizel and Perdita then confess their predicament and that in truth they are not yet married. Leontes promises to intercede on their behalf.

At this point all the threads of the story are together in one place, and Perdita's true identity has been discovered. The Shepherds are thanked for saving Perdita and made gentlemen, the two kings are reconciled and the lovers have the blessing of all. These events happen off stage and are reported to Autolycus by a gentleman, who describes the joy of the fulfillment of the oracle's prophecy --- that the king shall live without an heir if that which is lost be not found.

### **But that's not the end of the story...**

Upon hearing of her mother's death Perdita wept and wished she had seen her. This had prompted Paulina to reveal that she has had a statue made of Queen Hermione -- which everyone wants to see.

The final scene of the play is in a deserted house, where Paulina reveals a statue of the dead queen, painted in such a realistic manner as to be indistinguishable from life itself. All are lost in wonder at the figure before them. Paulina would draw the curtain on the statue, but Leontes cannot tear himself away.

Finally Paulina relents and prepares the assembled company for a great surprise. She bids the statue step down and take her place again among the living. Hermione is alive and now the oracle's prophecy is fulfilled she may be reunited with her husband and daughter.

Faithful Paulina is now ready to step away from the happy throng to grieve. Through the Shepherds she has finally learned the fate of her long dead husband, Antigonus. But Leontes will not countenance sorrow on this day and matches Paulina to a new husband -- Camillo. Two such loving and loyal people will surely find companionship and happiness together.

Overwhelmed with joy, Leontes humbly begs forgiveness from his wife and his friend, which is freely given. He welcomes his son---in---law and blesses the union with his daughter. The curtain falls on a single family, united by Florizel and Perdita --- with 16 years to catch up on...



## OUR PRODUCTION

## THE COMPANY



Back row, left to right:

Russell Richardson, Adam Barlow, Conrad Nelson, Bex Hughes, Lauryn Redding, Andy Cryer

Middle row, left to right:

Andrew Whitehead, Jessica Dyas, Hannah Barrie, Ruth Alexander Rubin, Jack Lord

Front row, left to right:

Mike Hugo, Vanessa Schofield, Jordon Kemp

Photo: Nobby Clark

## The Acting Company --- in rehearsal



*Florizel/Dion*  
*Polixenes*  
*Old Shepherd/Archidamus*  
*Antigonus*  
*Camillo*

**Jordan Kemp**  
**Jack Lord**  
**Russell Richardson**  
**Andrew Whitehead**  
**Andy Cryer**

*Dorcas/Cleomenes*  
*Perdita/Mamillius*  
*Hermione*

**Lauryn Redding**  
**Vanessa Schofield**  
**Hannah Barrie**



*Clown/Lord*  
*Autolycus*

**Adam Barlow**  
**Mike Hugo**

*Paulina*  
**Ruth Alexander Rubin**



*Mopsa/Emilia*  
**Jessica Dyas**

*Leontes*  
**Conrad Nelson**



## The Technical Company

Company Stage Manager **Katie Bevan**

Director and Composer **Conrad Nelson**

Musical Director **Rebekah Hughes**



Designer  
Lighting Designer

**Dawn Allsopp**  
**Mark Howland**

Choreographer  
Production Manager  
Technical Manager

**Beverly Edmunds**  
**Kay Burnett**  
**Adam Foley**



Wardrobe Supervisor **Katie Worfolk**

ASM and Book Cover **Kate Eccles**



## IN DEPTH



### ***A word from our Director*** **CONRAD NELSON (Leontes)**

**Conrad is Resident Director at Northern Broadsides. He has directed 10 productions for the company including *Hamlet* in 2011.**

**Conrad is also Broadsides' Musical Director, having composed music for almost every show since the company was formed in 1992. He has also appeared in over 20 plays as an actor – including taking the title roles in *Richard III*, *Oedipus* and *Henry V* and playing Iago in the acclaimed production of *Othello*, starring Lenny Henry.**

*'The Winter's Tale' has been on my to-do list for a while. It's often considered a 'problem' play, though it doesn't contain some of those difficult gender and racial issues that are uncomfortable for modern audiences, such as you find in *The Merchant of Venice* or *The Taming of the Shrew*. I can only think it's a 'problem' because this play doesn't fit easily into a clean bit of marketing copy. Its definition cannot be summed up neatly in terms of any specific genre. It's classed with the Comedies because it ends in marriage and reconciliation – but only the fourth act really has any jokes in it...*

***...and the play over all is more a story of violence, injustice, grief and repentance.***

King Leontes is certainly flawed like a conventional Tragic Hero, but unlike Othello (another Shakespearean character with a similar flaw), Leontes' jealousy is his downfall in the first half of the play, and then he disappears for a whole act, during which we have a highly comic and joyous time at the sheep shearing festival in Bohemia. Finally, the play shifts back into a fifth act that has the quality of a myth – with a denouement that just stops short of being a resurrection from the dead.

So it's a tragedy, a comedy, a love story, a myth... It's a late play by a mature writer no doubt coming to terms with the truth about life -- that it is many things, and often all at once. Time is both our enemy and our friend – bearing lost things away, but with the potential to heal and restore.

Shakespeare's language in *The Winter's Tale* is the most unstructured of all his works, and despite the magical---realist elements of the story it's a very naturalistic play.



I wonder if those who find this play a 'problem' are simply looking at the wrong protagonist. Unfortunately, we still have a tendency to think that stories are all about the men. This play is more difficult to pull together as a whole if you think it's Leontes' story. It isn't.

Certainly, his irrational jealousy drives the narrative at the beginning, but it is the fates of his wife and daughter – two women at the mercy of the men around them and the Gods above them – that are paramount here. We don't stay with Leontes in Sicilia, but follow Perdita to Bohemia, and ultimately return with her.

***And all the while, holding everything together with wisdom and vision is the wonderful Paulina.***

For the first time I am also acting in one of my own productions. This is something I wouldn't normally do, but on this occasion it was the right decision for a number of practical and artistic reasons. Being an actor/director is not without its problems, but it does give me an interesting perspective on the play, and from the inside I feel certain that it's not about Leontes at all.



For me, the schism in the story that most offends the Gods is that separation of mother and daughter --- *And the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found*'. Thereafter the object of the play is the reuniting of Hermione and Perdita --- while Paulina, like a high priestess, keeps faith and hope alive.

***It isn't a story about one man, but about three women.***





## **Interview: Actor Mike Hugo (Autolycus)**

Mike Hugo is one of those actors who never seem to stop working. He's versatile and hard working, and has a wonderful rapport with audiences. In the midst of his busy career he has worked with Broadsides on no fewer than 6 occasions – each time on tours lasting 4 and 5 months, which adds up to over 2½ years of his life!

We asked Mike to reflect on the Broadsides productions he has appeared in, and to consider Autolycus in the context of the many different roles he has played...

'While I was rehearsing *Vacuum* (still my favourite play to this day), Broadsides' Artistic Director Barrie Rutter came into rehearsals and said, 'have you read *The Tempest*?' I said I'd read it at college and he said, 'read it again.' The next day Barrie came in again and said, 'have you read it yet?' It was a bit awkward as Conrad was directing me at the time, and I'd spent the previous night learning my lines. However, Barrie snatched me away for a quick audition and I was cast as Caliban – my first professional Shakespearean role.

The role of Autolycus in Conrad's production of *The Winter's Tale* is only my second professional Shakespearean role. I did excerpts all through my training, from plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* --- and for GCSE at school we looked at *Henry V* --- though in a much more classroom based way --- and, to be honest, I didn't do well at it.

***I was told I hadn't quite got it, so I had a nervousness about Shakespeare, which is quite common.***

So when I got to work with Broadsides on *The Tempest* this really dispelled any fears that I had. Nevertheless, when I started work on *The Winter's Tale* all those anxieties came back again. Worries --- that Shakespeare is something you can get wrong.

I think it's because there are some very dusty people who say, 'this is how it is,' and I don't understand the language that's spoken *about* the plays – the academic analysis, I suppose – and it makes you think that the plays themselves are also too difficult to understand. But one of the things I do get about Shakespeare is how he makes up words. It's like the worlds of Roald Dahl and Spike Milligan – where if you can't find a word to fit, you just make one up. And I get that.

I suppose it's down to the reverence and the red carpet that Shakespeare gets placed on. Which is daft, because there wasn't any red carpet at the time. It was spit, sawdust, bear---baiting round the back and orange wenches in the front. It was Blackpool wasn't it.



When I think about all the other parts I've played for Broadsides there is a bit of a theme, I suppose. Most of the characters I've played are, in one way or another, outsiders.

Mr Ashburner in *Vacuum*, Caliban in *The Tempest*, The Maniac in *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* and Simeon Duff in *The Grand Gesture* are all people who are on the edges of society – a little bit on the outside.

***Autolycus definitely fits this pattern of characters on the outskirts.***

Somebody asked me the question, 'what function does Autolycus serve in the play?' – and I don't really know. Because if you removed that character it wouldn't alter the story at all, but if you removed any other character the plot would be affected.

Although he does persuade the Shepherd and the Clown to board Florizel's ship, they have already decided to take Perdita's treasure to the king; and Camillo has already planned that Polixenes will follow his son to Sicilia --- so that bit of plot would be sorted with or without Autolycus.

Autolycus is not just outside the society of the play – as a thief and a pedlar – he's actually outside the plot. So what is his function? He's not the classic 'Fool' character that you find in other plays – a kind of wise clown who speaks truth to power. You've got to think that he's simply there for a bit of light relief. And Shakespeare wrote to please his audience.

***The first half of the play is so dark and tragic that when Autolycus arrives in Act Four the audience is desperate for some fun. It's like Bobby Davro turns up for a bit.***



One of the things I love about playing Autolycus is the license he seems to have within the play – and how wacky and outlandish he’s allowed to be. Shakespeare was an actor himself, and trusted his actors. It seems to me that he wrote this role for an actor to improvise around and Conrad has encouraged me to run with that idea. In that sense he’s like *The Maniac in Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, in that anything can just happen.



I’ve also been given toys to play with – in particular, a loop pedal, which enables me to record sounds with guitar and voice on a loop to create the musical layers of a song. Autolycus is a pedlar of ballads, so that makes perfect sense for the character. I’ve never used this kind of electronic instrumentation before, so I’ve had to practice a lot.

***You know when you pat your head and rub your belly – it’s that, with feet as well and counting... lots of counting.***

At first I didn’t understand it. I didn’t know how to play with it, and Rebekah Hughes who’s doing the music said, ‘don’t behave yourself with it’. I was worried. I didn’t know how it could break -- and there’s a whole load of gifted musicians at the back of me waiting for this thing to be correct so that they can get on and play what they need to be playing.

***I took it home at the weekends and really shouted at it.***

I’ve got to do it fresh and live every night – which is a bit nerve racking. For now we’ve settled on something fixed and will make the same one every night. Hopefully, within a week or two, I’ll start playing with it on stage.

Perhaps an element of playfulness is something that runs through all the characters I’ve done for BroadSides. I think because the company style is robust and the sort of work that isn’t delicate to begin with – you just jump in with both feet and clown around...



## Mike's previous roles for Northern Broadsides



**2006** – as the enigmatic Mr Ashburner in *Vacuum*

**2007** – as the creature Caliban *The Tempest* (right) and Will in *Lisa's Sex Strike* --- adapted from the Greek classic *Lysistrata* (below).



**2010** – playing multiple roles in Conrad Nelson's ensemble production of *The Canterbury Tales* (right).



**2011** – as The Maniac in *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (above).

**2013** --- as the hapless protagonist Simeon Duff, discovering the beauty of life in *The Grand Gesture* (right).



## SECTION 2

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### HISTORY AND CONTEXT

#### Shakespeare's Biography

##### 1564

- **William Shakespeare born in Stratford upon Avon.**
- He was christened on April 26<sup>th</sup>, but it isn't known exactly what day he was born. Popular tradition holds that his birthday was April 23<sup>rd</sup> – St George's day, and also the day on which we know he died, in 1616.
- His parents were John Shakespeare, a successful glove maker and his wife, Mary Arden.
- Two daughters, Joan and Margaret, had come before young William, but one had died in infancy and the other was certainly dead by 1569 when a second Joan Shakespeare was christened. So to his younger siblings Gilbert, Joan, Anne, Richard and Edmund, Will was big brother.



##### 1571

- As an Alderman of Stratford, John Shakespeare was entitled to have his son educated free at the local Grammar School – though it's possible to imagine, from all the enthusiastic references in his plays, that Will preferred sports to studying.
- Throughout Will's childhood Stratford was visited by The Queen's Players, who performed in the Guild Hall, and we can be sure that Will must have seen them.

##### 1582

- 27<sup>th</sup> November, eighteen-year-old William married Anne Hathaway, who was seven or eight years older than him – and pregnant.

## 1583-- 85

- Susanna Shakespeare was baptized on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1583
- 1585 --- The Shakespeares were blessed with two more children, twins – Hamnet and Judith.
- Anne stayed all her life in Stratford, and little more is known about her.

## 1585 – 92

- It isn't known exactly when Shakespeare first went to London, but by 1592 he was established actor in the theatre, and writing his first plays – the *Henry VI* trilogy.

## 1592 – 1600

- By 1594 Shakespeare was part---owner of a company known as the LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S MEN. Richard Burbage was the leading actor.
- In 1596 tragedy struck. Shakespeare's son Hamnet died, aged just eleven.
- Shakespeare wrote some of his most popular plays in this period, including *The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado about Nothing*. He was clearly very successful, as he had enough money to buy a posh house in Stratford.
- In 1599 the LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S MEN built a new theatre on the south bank of the Thames, called THE GLOBE.



## 1600 – 01

- Shakespeare was writing *Hamlet*, which was first performed around this time – with Richard Burbage in the title role.
- In 1601 Shakespeare's father, John, died.

## 1603

- 24<sup>th</sup> March --- death of Queen Elizabeth I and the accession of James I.
- King James became the patron of Shakespeare's company and so the LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S MEN are renamed the KING'S MEN

## 1604 – 08

- Shakespeare wrote his most famous tragedies, including *Macbeth*; *Othello* and *King Lear*.
- 1608 – death of Shakespeare's mother, Mary.

## 1611

- **THE WINTER'S TALE** written around this time
- Shakespeare also wrote *The Tempest* – the last play he wrote without collaboration.



## 1616

- 23<sup>rd</sup> April – death of Shakespeare in Stratford. He is buried at Holy Trinity Church. Between his death and the publication of the First Folio in 1623 a monument was installed in the church. The inscription beneath, reads as follows:

STAY PASSENGER, WHY GOEST THOU BY SO FAST?  
READ IF THOU CANST, WHOM ENVIOUS DEATH HATH PLAST  
WITHIN THIS MONUMENT SHAKSPEARE: WITH WHOM  
QUICK NATURE DIED: WHOSE NAME DOTH DECK THISTOMB  
FAR MORE THAN COST: SITH ALL THAT HE HATH WRIT  
LEAVES LIVING ART, BUT PAGE TO SERVE HIS WIT.



## THE WINTER'S TALE – Sources and influences

Shakespeare never really invented his own plots, but borrowed from many sources for his Tragedies, Comedies and History plays. For *The Winter's Tale* it's clear that he drew heavily on one source -- a popular novel by Robert Greene called *Pandosto*, first published in 1588.

Pandosto is the name of the King of Bohemia who suspects his wife Queen Bellaria of having an affair with his friend King Egistus of Sicilia...

Immediately, you will see the strong similarities, and also the differences, between *The Winter's Tale* and its source.

Shakespeare changes the names and the locations around, but it's definitely the same story. However, Shakespeare improves immeasurably on the original material, making a number of key alterations in the writing of his drama.

It is interesting when comparing *The Winter's Tale* with its source to note how Shakespeare's instincts as a dramatist inspire him to develop the novel's incidental character of Paulina into the towering, fearless figure of integrity and love that appears in the play. Another departure from the source is the life, music and colour of the sheep shearing, along with the endearing rogue Autolycus, fashioned from a minor character in *Pandosto*. Shakespeare is a man of the theatre and strives to please his audience with a burst of clowning, dancing and song in Act Four to bring light relief and augment his narrative.



In *Pandosto* the queen actually does die and the guilty king commits suicide at the end of the story – a just punishment for his crime, and fulfilling the moral argument of the plot. But Shakespeare takes the merciful route instead, restoring Hermione and offering forgiveness and redemption to the penitent Leontes.

However, he cannot save everyone – and the young prince Mamillius remains lost, as does the fatherly Antigonus. These elements have added poignancy when looking at Shakespeare's biography we see that by the time of writing this play his father was dead and his own son had died in childhood.

Shakespeare will have made his choices for many reasons, about which we can only speculate:

- **Artistic** – to adapt and flesh out the source material according to his own creative gift.
- **Pragmatic** (financial) – to please his audience and patron.
- **Practical** – to write to the strengths of his acting company.
- **Personal** – to express his own world view, and belief in mercy over justice.
- **Political** – it has been speculated that the play can be read as a parable on Queen Elizabeth I, whose mother was executed on a false accusation of adultery.

Whatever considerations were influencing him, Shakespeare elevated the original source material to the rich and complex blend of brutal realism and fantasy that is *The Winter's Tale*.

And for Shakespeare's original audience the challenge to suspend belief was not so great as it is for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century audience. Notably, the statue of Hermione would be quite a plausible thing for the Jacobean crowd that first saw this play. It was customary for a life--like wax effigy to be made of dead prince, queen or king and paraded with the coffin. Parts of the effigy made for King James' son, Henry, survive to this day.

In Shakespeare's time that most challenging of stage directions, 'exit pursued by a bear', could well have been presented using a real animal from the nearby baiting pits; it was a world where kings were anointed by God, dreams were prophetic, and the perils of everyday existence more present than in than in our sanitized modern world.

And finally – he calls this play *The Winter's Tale* – meaning an old wives' tale or a fable. A kind of fairy tale for the fireside that shouldn't be taken too seriously – and it's true that the plot is highly implausible almost from start to finish. However, if we surrender to its themes and receive the deeper messages of human frailty, suffering and redemption, then the closing image of the 'risen' Hermione embracing her guilty husband and blessing her long lost daughter has the power to move even the most resolutely rational among us.



## EXIT PURSUED BY A BEAR...

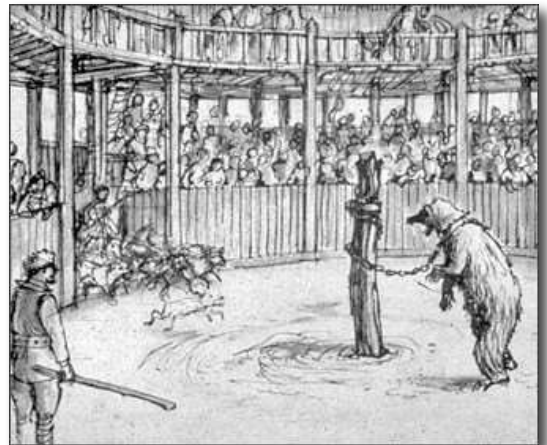
### *Animal baiting as entertainment in Shakespeare's time*

Every director who announces s/he is about to do *The Winter's Tale* always has to answer the same question – how are you going to do the bear?

There are probably as many solutions to the problem as there have been productions – and no doubt with varying degrees of success, related to ingenuity and also budget.

It is not known for sure how the first performance in 1611 fulfilled this demanding stage direction – but it is just possible that the bear was real.

Shakespeare will have grown up familiar with the popular sport of bear-baiting – whereby a bear was chained to a post and then attacked by trained mastiff dogs. Spectators would place bets on the outcome of the ensuing fight. Vast amounts of money were waged on these contests, which took place in purpose built arenas with capacity for up to 1000 people.



The practice, along with bull-baiting, was introduced in England during the medieval period and by Elizabethan times almost every town in England had a bull and bear-baiting ring.

Queen Elizabeth herself was a patron of these bloodthirsty forms of entertainment. One the most famous venues was the Bear Garden in Southwark – just a stone's throw from the site of The Globe Theatre. Bear baiting arenas feature on the early maps of the city, and in such detail that they even show the kennels with tied up dogs as well as the ponds where the animals were washed after their bloody battles.



Similarly, bull-baiting was a contest in which trained bulldogs attacked tethered bulls – fastened via a nose ring to a stake in the ground. The rope was about 15 feet long, so the bull had a circle of 30 feet in diameter in which to move. The dog owners held their dogs at bay and then released them one at a time, while spectators looked on and placed their bets. The contests lasted around an hour.

Bull---baiting was in fact more common than bear---baiting due to the scarcity and cost of bears. If Shakespeare did indeed have a live bear in his play, he had a valuable theatrical commodity for sure.

An Elizabethan Chronicler called Robert Laneham, described a bear-baiting as follows:

*'...it was a sport very pleasant to see, to see the bear, with his pink eye, tearing after his enemies approach; the nimble and wait of the dog to take his advantage and the force and experience of the bear again to avoid his assaults...'*

It's a sickening spectacle, and one that has given at least one expression to our language still in common use. A 'bear---pit' is an environment of the utmost savagery and violence – where catastrophe and possible death is likely.

Despite the horrific cruelty, the popularity and protection that blood sports enjoyed is evidenced in the fact that as the theatres became increasingly popular through the Elizabethan period (no doubt due to the brilliant plays of Master Shakespeare) a law was passed ordering the closure of all playhouses on Thursdays so that the bull and bear---baiting industry should not suffer from the competition.

Although not identical, the early playhouses obviously shared similar floor plans and construction methods to bear---baiting areas. However on Sunday 13 January 1583 one of the bear---baiting arenas that had stood on the Thames's south bank collapsed and several people were killed. Not everyone approved of this pastime – especially when conducted on the Sabbath – and some considered this accident a judgement from God. These disapproving individuals, no doubt also viewed the playhouses as dens of iniquity – but perhaps the theatre builders took note of this bear---pit collapse and made their constructions more robust.

Cock fighting was another popular blood sport during the Elizabethan period. Roosters were fitted with blades on their feet and released into a cock pit to fight to the death. Fighting birds were very expensive so were usually owned by wealthy men – although all classes came to see and gamble on these cock fights.

Bear---baiting and Bull---baiting were eventually prohibited in England by an act of parliament in 1835, but for Shakespeare and his audience, animal baiting was commonplace. In addition to Antigonus' sorry death, Shakespeare drops references to blood sports in a number of his plays. At the end of *Macbeth*, the king compares himself with a bear ---



***They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,  
But bear---like I must fight the course.***

## SECTION 3

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### STUDY



### ENGLISH

#### The Women's Tale

When studying a story (or when writing one) a primary question to always ask is – *who's story is it?*

Our director Conrad Nelson believes that *The Winter's Tale* is first and foremost a play about three women: Hermione, Paulina and Perdita. In fact, there is only one person in the play who appears in every act and that is Perdita.

In Act 1 she is still in the womb but as an unborn child she is a powerful presence, both in the shape of her mother's body and in the imagination of her father, who believes her to be the offspring of his friend.



In Act 2 she is born in prison and we see her as a baby, brought before her father to soften his heart. Leontes commands Antigonus to take the child to some distant place and abandon her to the elements.

Act 3 covers the trial of Hermione, in which the declaration of the Oracle is read – that Hermione is innocent and the king shall live without an heir if that which is lost be not found. The fate of the baby princess is bound by prophecy to that of Leontes. At the close of this act, Antigonus has arrived by ship on the shores Bohemia. On his journey he has had a dream of Hermione, and for the first time we hear the child's name – Perdita, meaning 'lost'. However, she is almost immediately found by the Shepherd and his son and we know she will be safe.

Act 4 is all about Perdita's romance with Prince Florizel and their discovery by King Polixenes; their flight to Sicilia, aided by Camillo and followed by the Shepherd, Clown, Autolycus and Polixenes himself.

In Act 5 Perdita and her father are reunited, though at first unaware of their relationship. The full realization happens off stage and it is reported how the Shepherds showed the letters, gold and mantle found with the child and some personal effects of the unfortunate Antigonus.

It's now time for mother and daughter to be reunited – stage---managed by Paulina. The risen Hermione embraces her husband, but speaks only to Perdita to tell her that she only remained alive in the hope that the Oracle would be fulfilled. Hermione would not have had the strength to endure for Leontes' sake – but for her daughter, she has preserved herself.

### TASKS

- Consider the representation of women in this play:
  - Hermione, Paulina, Perdita, Emilia, Mopsa, Dorcas.

### Essay questions

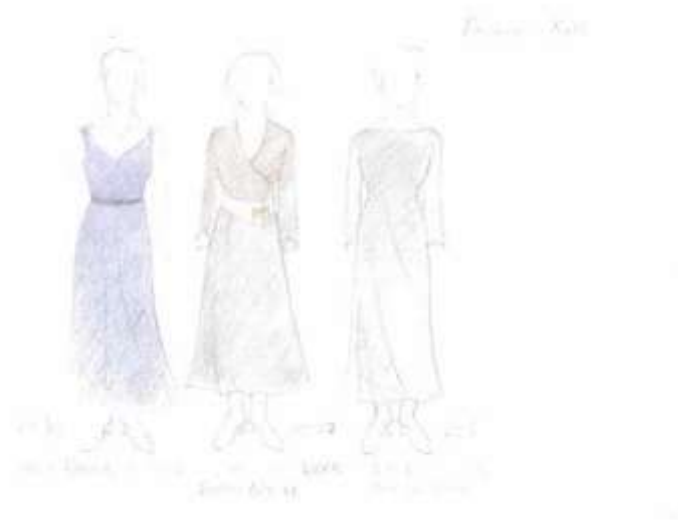
Compare and contrast the different characters of the women and their dramatic functions within *The Winter's Tale*.

To what extent are the women in *The Winter's Tale* defined socially by their relationship to men? Do they try to assert themselves in their own right, and if so how? If not, why not?

Perdita is the main character in *The Winter's Tale* – discuss.

### Creative Writing

Choose one of the principle female characters from *The Winter's Tale* (Hermione, Paulina, Perdita) and write the story from their point of view. Try not to just retell the story, but really get inside the head of your character. How does she feel at each point in the story? What particular personal challenges face her as the plot unfolds? Is the outcome completely satisfying for her, or are there still issues remaining at the end of the play?





## DRAMA (FOR WRITING)

### Devising

Many theatre companies create performances that don't start with a conventional pre-written script. They work as an ensemble to devise characters, situations and story through improvisation – all of which is written down as part of a process and then fixed for rehearsal and performance. Full-length plays can be created in this way, but it is also useful for shorter pieces and even just extended scenes.

In any play there is always off stage action. It could be something that the writer doesn't think is important enough to waste stage time on, or a secret that the audience must not see until the right moment. Sometimes very important action happens off stage.

In *The Winter's Tale* a number of key things happen off stage.

- The birth of Perdita in prison, as reported by Emilia.
- The death of Mamillius.
- The hiding of Hermione for 16 years – visited every day by Paulina.
- The meeting and courtship of Perdita and Florizel – when his falcon flew over her father's land.
- The discovery of Perdita's identity and the big reunion with Leontes – reported by the gentlemen to Autolycus.

### TASK

In groups improvise around one of the off stage scenes from *The Winter's Tale*. You may appoint a 'scribe' to note the best lines as they emerge.

When you have done your improvisation once, discuss what happened and how it might be improved, then do it again. Keep repeating the exercise until a consistent script begins to emerge.

Some points to consider:

- At the start of the scene what does each character know about the situation?
- Why are they there?
- What does each character want?
- How is each character changed by the end of the scene, if at all?
- Is a key character emerging?
- Is there a character that isn't speaking enough?

Write out your finished script, polish and perform.

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## **Credits and links**

Production and rehearsal photos: Nobby Clark

Additional photographs by Liz Nelson

Design drawings and model: Dawn Allsopp

Other Images sourced at:

<http://office.microsoft.com/>

Other sources:

<http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/elizabethan-bear-bull-baiting.htm>

<http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/winterstale/>

<http://www.shakespearesengland.co.uk/2010/04/01/the-faces-of-shakespeare/>

<http://theshakespeareblog.com/2013/01/bears/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Winters\\_Tale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Winters_Tale)

Recommended reading –

***The North Face of Shakespeare: Activities for Teaching the Plays***

James Stredder (with a foreword by Cicely Berry)

***Shakespeare on Toast: Getting a Taste for the Bard***

Ben Crystal

Information and education pack written and compiled by

Deborah McAndrew for Northern Broadsides © 2015

