



# The Winter's Tale

## STUDY GUIDE



HARTFORD  
STAGE

# GUIDELINES FOR ATTENDING THE THEATER

Attending live theatre is a unique experience with many valuable educational and social benefits. To ensure that all audience members are able to enjoy the performance, please take a few minutes to discuss the following audience etiquette topics with your students before you come to Hartford Stage.

- How is attending the theatre similar to and different from going to the movies? What behaviors are and are not appropriate when seeing a play? Why?
- Remind students that because the performance is live, the audience affects the performance. No two audiences are exactly the same and no two performances are exactly the same—this is part of what makes theatre so special!



Jotham Burrello, Jamie Ann Romero and Nathan Darrow in *The Winter's Tale*. Photo by T. Charles Erickson.



Omar Robinson and Carman Lacivita in *The Winter's Tale*. Photo by T. Charles Erickson.

- Theatre should be an enjoyable experience for the audience. Audience members are more than welcome to applaud when appropriate and laugh at the funny moments. Talking is distracting to other audience members and the actors on stage. Theatres are constructed to carry sound efficiently!
- Any noise or light can be a distraction, so please remind students to make sure their cell phones are turned off. Students should not text, or take photos or video during the performance.
- Students should sit with their group as seated by the Front of House staff and should not leave their seats once the performance has begun. Students will have the chance to get a drink or snack, eat lunch, or use the restroom at intermission.

# NEW TO SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE?

Shakespeare's language can seem very difficult to understand at first glance. Many of the words and phrases that were popular in usage in Shakespeare's day have disappeared from our dictionaries and slang vocabularies. On top of that, Shakespeare's writing is full of imagery—metaphors and similes that are not meant to be taken literally. Add to that the intricacies of verse and rhythm; consider, for instance, that Shakespeare often used unconventional sentence structures and contractions in order to fit the meter of a line. It's no wonder that understanding Shakespeare can be challenging.

The good news is that you don't have to know what every word means in order to watch, understand, and enjoy a Shakespearean play. In production, it is the actor's job to know what every single word means—so that they can then translate it for you, the audience member, using their voice, actions, body language, and facial expressions.

If you are reading Shakespeare and you encounter unfamiliar language, it can be helpful to ask yourself the following questions: Does this word sound like another word I know? Can I look this word up in a dictionary? Is this sentence turned around? Can I rearrange it so that it sounds more familiar? Is this meant to be literal, or is Shakespeare using imagery? Is it a metaphor or simile? Personification? What literal thing or phenomenon does this image describe?

Here are some common literary devices found in Shakespeare's language:

**IAMBIC PENTAMETER** a poetic structure for writing in which each line of text contains alternately stressed and unstressed syllables. There are five iambs in each line.

**PROSE** text written in common language that resembles everyday speech; has irregular rhythm and lacks metrical structure.

**VERSE** text (song, poetry, or dramatic text) written in metrical lines; it may rhyme.

**BLANK VERSE** text (song, poetry, or dramatic text) written in iambic pentameter that does not rhyme.

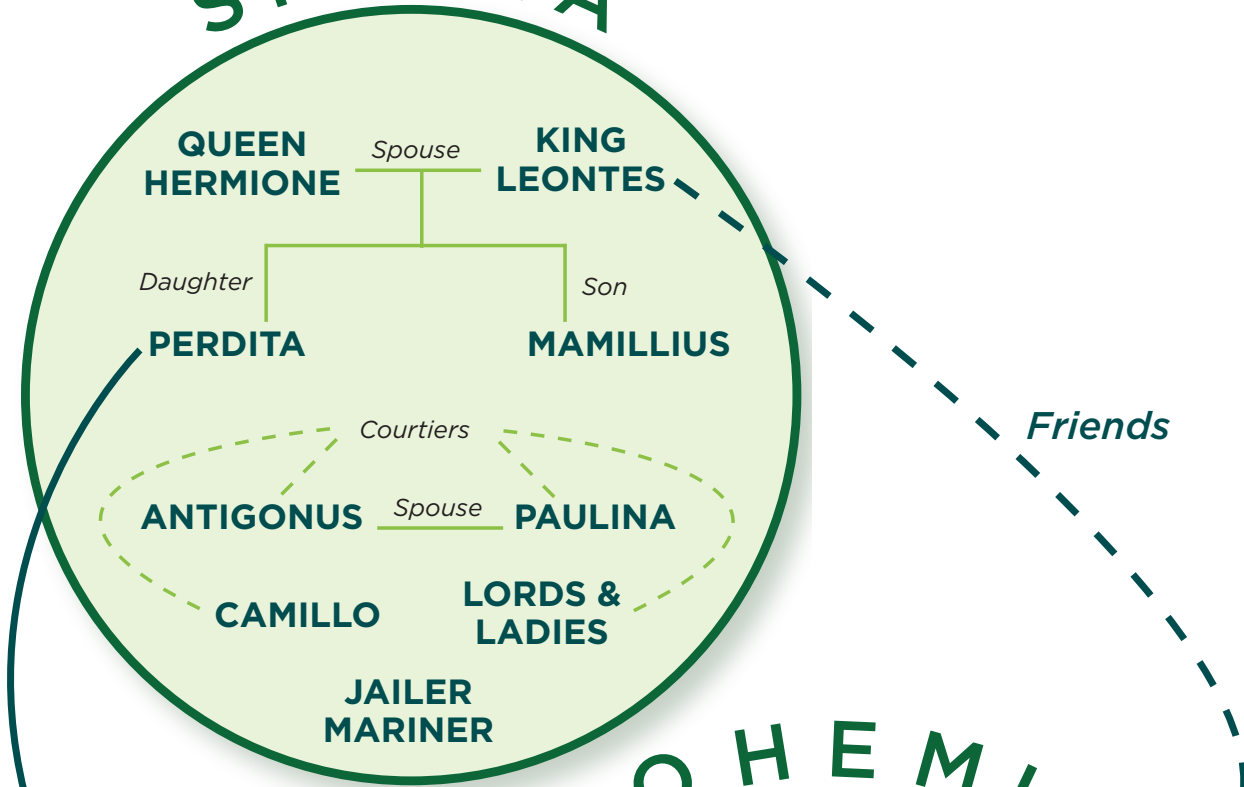
**ALLUSION** an expression that calls something to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference, often to the Bible, mythology, or historical literature.

**SIMILE** a comparison between two objects or ideas using "like" or "as," usually to show that they share similar characteristics.

**ALLITERATION** the repetition of consonant sounds (as in "bouncing baby boy").

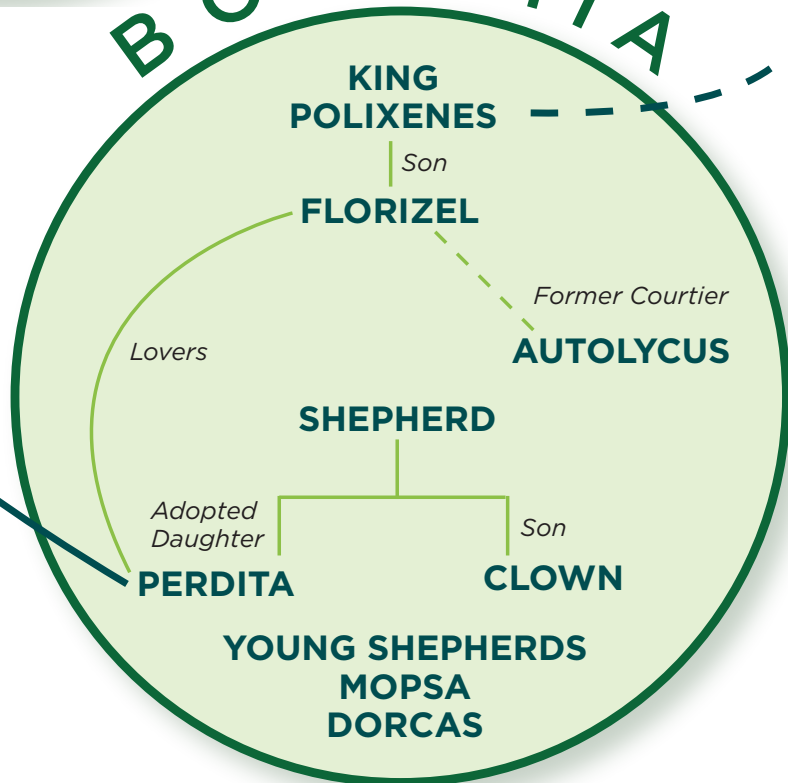
# THE WORLDS OF THE WINTER'S TALE

## SICILIA



*Exiled as a Baby*

## BOHEMIA



# THE WINTER'S TALE

## SYNOPSIS

### Once upon a time in Sicilia...

Polixenes, King of Bohemia, has been visiting the kingdom of his boyhood friend Leontes for many months. While there, he has become friendly with Leontes' wife Hermione, who is pregnant, and their son Mamillius. Leontes observes his wife's friendship with Polixenes and becomes consumingly jealous, wrongly convinced that the two are having an affair. Leontes asks Camillo, his loyal courtier, to kill Polixenes — but Camillo, seeing that Hermione is innocent, instead warns Polixenes to leave Sicilia immediately and flees with him back to Bohemia.

When Hermione gives birth to her daughter, Perdita, Leontes rejects the child because he wrongly believes she is Polixenes' baby. Leontes sends Perdita away with Antigonus, another courtier, to be taken to sea and left to die on foreign soil. Antigonus is the husband of Paulina, Hermione's best friend and strongest advocate. Leontes puts Hermione on trial for treason, even ignoring persuasive messages from Apollo's oracle insisting on her innocence. Mamillius, the broken-hearted son of the angry king, then dies. With the news of her son's death and her husband's unwavering rejection, Hermione, it is said, also dies.

### Later in Bohemia...

When Antigonus arrives on the neighboring shore of Bohemia where he intends to leave the baby Perdita, he is chased and eventually killed by a wild bear. The baby is found by a local shepherd and his son, who bring her up as their own.

Fast forward sixteen years: Perdita is now a beautiful young woman who has fallen in love with a young man calling himself Doricles. Doricles is actually Polixenes' son Florizel in disguise.

Meanwhile, we meet the trickster Autolycus, who sneakily cons Perdita's brother out of all his money and plots further heists for the shepherds' sheep sheering festival.

At the festival, Florizel proposes to Perdita but Polixenes and Camillo crash the party in disguise. Polixenes forbids his princely son from marrying this lowly born shepherdess. After his father's rejection Florizel tells Perdita he is willing to give up his whole kingdom to run away with her. Camillo convinces the young couple to seek asylum in his home country of Sicilia by asking the protection of Polixenes' old friend/enemy King Leontes.

### Back in Sicilia, again...

Leontes, now a changed man, is happy to help the young couple and soon recognizes Perdita as his long lost daughter. The Shepherd and his son have also followed Perdita to Sicilia, and have brought with them items found with her when she was a baby to further prove her true identity.

Once Leontes has recognized his child, he further repents for having falsely accused her mother. Paulina, Hermione's most loyal friend, tells the king that she has created a fine statue of the dead queen and bids the whole party come to view it. When the deeply repentant king beholds the beautiful and very realistic statue, it miraculously comes to life. Hermione and Leontes are reunited and reconcile their love, Perdita and Florizel are engaged, and, Camillo and the widow Paulina (whose husband Antigonus was killed by the bear) also unite to all live happily ever after.

# INSIDE THE WINTER'S TALE with Director Melia Bensussen

**SHAKESPEARE SCHOLARS SOMETIMES CALL *THE WINTER'S TALE* A “PROBLEM PLAY.” WHAT IS THAT — AND WHY IS THAT?**

**MB:** The “problem plays” are Shakespeare’s works that blur and bend genre. They veer from wildly comic to deeply tragic. They’re tough to categorize and contain. I will admit these are my favorite plays, for our lives, to me, are full of these contradictions. For *The Winter’s Tale*, scholars note how different Shakespeare’s Acts 1-3 are from Acts 4-5 (but primarily Act 4 in Bohemia). These worlds are separated by the tragic (former) and the comic (latter). But doesn’t the comic interrupt the tragic, and vice-versa, in our lives? These two parts make up, what I see as, a “grand yarn.”

**THERE’S SO MUCH MUSIC IN THIS PRODUCTION. WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO INCORPORATE LIVE MUSIC?**

**MB:** Shakespeare’s theater abounded in music and dance. Theater as complete entertainment. I love this idea, and love how alive a stage feels when music is being performed. Live music is something I add to productions whenever I can. In casting and building this world with our team, I was very specific in my approach in order to have as much live music as possible. I’m grateful to this extraordinarily gifted cast that has embraced the musical elements of the production — and ran with them.

**“EXIT PURSUED BY A BEAR.” AN ICONIC PART OF THE PLAY. SO, WHAT ABOUT THE BEAR?**

**MB:** Ah, yes, the bear. The most famous stage direction ever. Something I found in my research for this production — which I loved — was the idea that for the Elizabethans, who were this play’s first audience, the moment with the bear would have been the first part of the bridge to the “comic” that was to come. So, we have played with that notion, as well as with embracing the power of sound and lights and design in the theater.



The cast of *The Winter’s Tale*. Photo by T. Charles Erickson.

# WHO WAS WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE?

Biography by Aurelia Clunie



William Shakespeare was baptized on April 26, 1564, about three days after his birth. Born to John Shakespeare, a glovemaker, and Mary Arden Shakespeare, the daughter of a wealthy farmer, Shakespeare was the third of eight children. He was born and raised in Stratford-upon-Avon, a small town 100 miles northwest of London. Shakespeare's family was neither noble nor wealthy, so Shakespeare did not go to university, but many believe he received a foundation of Latin, some Greek, Greek mythology, history, and rhetoric at King's New School, the local grammar school. In 1582, at 18 years old, he married 26-year-old Anne Hathaway, who was pregnant with his child. They had their first child, Susanna, in 1583. In 1585, the couple had twins, Hamnet and Judith. In 1596, Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, died at age 11.

Much of Shakespeare's life following his marriage and the birth of his children is unknown. Some call the next seven years the "lost years" (*Shakespeare in American Communities*). It was not until seven years later that evidence appears of Shakespeare's life in London. In a pamphlet entitled the "Groatsworth of Wit," university-educated poet Robert Greene attacked Shakespeare, calling him an "upstart crow" for his audacious writing style.

By 1592, Shakespeare was acting on and writing for London stages. His earliest plays, including *The Comedy of Errors* and *Henry VI*, had been produced. In 1593, he wrote two narrative poems: *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. It was likely during this period that he also began writing his 154 sonnets that survive to this day.

In 1594, Shakespeare joined and became a part owner of the acting company The Lord Chamberlain's Men, with whom he would act throughout his career. The Lord Chamberlain's Men was a popular company in London and would often play privately for Queen Elizabeth I's court, as well as for the masses in the public theatres. The Lord Chamberlain's Men performed at



Jamie Ann Romero and Nathan Darrow in *The Winter's Tale*. Photo by T. Charles Erickson.

to his daughters, Susanna and Judith. Some money and items were also left for his sister, friends, theatre partners, and “the poor of Stratford” (*Shakespeare in American Communities*). However, his will states that he only left his “second best bed” to Anne, his wife. Shakespeare died on his birthday, April 23, in 1616. Although many of his plays had been published in small books called quartos during his lifetime, it was not until 1623 that two of Shakespeare’s friends from the theatre, John Heminges and Henry Condell, gathered what remained of his plays and published the first book of his complete works, now called the *First Folio*. Shakespeare’s contemporary, Ben Johnson, said of him in a poem of homage, “He was not of an age, but for all time!”

**REFERENCE**

Shakespeare in American Communities. “The Life of William Shakespeare (1564-1616).” Teacher’s Guide. August 2009: 9-10. Document.

The Theatre, originally built in 1576 by James Burbage. When the lease was lost on the site, Shakespeare became part owner in the Globe, which was completed in 1599.

Between 1594 and 1595, Shakespeare wrote some of his most famous plays, including *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. By 1599, he had written *Julius Caesar*, *Henry V*, and *As You Like It*. In 1603, when King James succeeded Queen Elizabeth I, he gave the Lord Chamberlain’s Men a “royal license” and they became the King’s Men. Following this appointment, Shakespeare wrote *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Pericles*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*. He also wrote *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *King Henry VIII* with John Fletcher, who would later become resident playwright for The King’s Men after Shakespeare’s death.

By 1616, Shakespeare’s health was failing and he had revised his will. He left most of his estate



Ana Laura Santana, John Maddaloni, Hannah Moore and Pearl Rhein in *The Winter’s Tale*. Photo by T. Charles Erickson.



# SHAKESPEARE'S TIMELINE

**1558** — Elizabeth, daughter of Henry VIII, assumes the throne and rules for the next 45 years over England.

**1564** — April 23, William Shakespeare is born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire to John Shakespeare, an established glove maker and Mary Arden, a leather dresser.

**1582** — William, at 18 years old, marries 26 year-old Anne Hathaway in Warwickshire.

**1583** — William and Anne's first child, Susanna is born.

**1585** — Twins, Hamnet and Judith, are born to William and Anne Shakespeare.

**1588** — London is swept by the plague, there are thousands of deaths and all theatres are closed.

**1588** — Famous playwright, Christopher Marlowe, publishes *Doctor Faustus*.

**1589-1594** — Shakespeare writes many of his early plays, including *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Henry VI Parts I and 3*, *King John*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Titus Andronicus*.

**1593** — Shakespeare writes the play *Richard III*.

**1594** — Shakespeare establishes himself as both an actor and playwright for the newly created acting company, The Lord Chamberlain's Men.

**1594** — Shakespeare writes *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love's Labour's Lost*.

**1595** — Shakespeare writes *Richard II* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

**1596** — William and Anne's son, Hamnet, dies, presumably from the plague; Shakespeare writes *The Merchant of Venice* and *Henry IV, Part I*.

**1597-1598** — London builds The Globe Theatre, which provides access to theatre for people of all different socio-economic status.

**1597** — Shakespeare purchases New Place in Stratford as a home for his wife and children; he also completes *Henry IV, Part 2*.

**1598** — Shakespeare completes the play *Much Ado about Nothing*.

**1599** — The Globe grants Shakespeare a financial share in the theatre; he writes *As You Like It*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Henry V*.



Jamie Ann Romero and Nathan Darrow in *The Winter's Tale*. Photo by T. Charles Erickson.

**1600-1603** — In three years, Shakespeare completes the following plays: *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Othello*.

**1603** — On March 24, Queen Elizabeth I dies; her cousin, James VI of Scotland, becomes king of England and unites the two countries. He reigns as King James I of England until 1625.

**1603** — The theatre company The Lord's Chamberlain's Men is renamed The King's Men and commissioned to perform at the court for James I. Shakespeare also completes the play *Measure for Measure*.

**1604-1606** — Shakespeare writes *Timon of Athens* and *King Lear*.

**1605** — August 7, is presumed to be the first performance of *Macbeth* given before James I, the new Scottish-born King of England.

**1606-1608** — Throughout two years, Shakespeare creates *Pericles*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*.

**1609** — Shakespeare writes *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* in one year.

**1610-1611** — William completes *The Tempest*.

**1611** — Shakespeare writes *The Two Noble Kinsmen* with John Fletcher, who would later become resident playwright for The King's Men after Shakespeare's death.

**1611** — James I dissolves the English parliament; The King James Bible is published in England, promoting Protestantism.

**1613** — William Shakespeare and John Fletcher (allegedly) write *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry VIII*.

**1613** — On June 29, The Globe Theatre is destroyed by a fire when a special effect involving a cannon goes wrong during a performance of *King Henry VIII*.

**1614** — The Globe Theatre is rebuilt after its destruction a year prior.

**1616** — William Shakespeare dies due to old age and illness.

**1623** — The First Folio of Shakespeare's work is published by his fellow actors John Heminges and Henry Condell.



John Maddaloni and Pearl Rhein in *The Winter's Tale*. Photo by T. Charles Erickson.

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