

The Winter's Tale

by William Shakespeare

Study Guide

THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ENGLISH THEATRE
PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENT AUDIENCES
2002-2003 SEASON

Marti Maraden
Artistic Director, English Theatre



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A Welcome from Director Marti Maraden

“I am totally enamored of the work of William Shakespeare. His work has been a huge part of my life. His voice lives on and rings just as true today as it did in his own time. He captured humanity in all of its diverse shades and colours--men, women, children, old people, middle-aged people, rich people, poor people--everybody. He sees our folly and our courage and the good and bad in all of us. We continue to see ourselves reflected wonderfully in his mirror.

“The Winter's Tale is one of his greatest plays. It's beautifully structured and it's a story that has everything: tragedy, pathos, outrageous comedy, songs, dances--it even has courtroom drama in the trial scene! The play also has some of the most delicious characters in all of Shakespeare. Autolycus is one of his greatest comic roles. There are two gorgeous young lovers, a jealous king and a virtuous queen. And there's the magnificent Paulina, one of the greatest women in all of Shakespeare. And The Winter's Tale has a great plot. It gets you boiling mad at the beginning and then moves on to a very special and magical ending.

“I've been lucky enough to appear in The Winter's Tale twice in my life. At the Stratford Festival in 1978, I played Perdita, the baby who is abandoned to the bears and wolves. Two years later, in New York at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, I played Hermione in an off-Broadway production. I know the play very, very well and it is dear to my heart.

“I'm delighted to offer you the chance to see a full-scale production of this masterful work. I hope the materials in this guide will help you help your students get the most out of this production.”

Marti Maraden
Artistic Director, English Theatre
National Arts Centre

About This Guide

Portions of this study guide are formatted in easy-to-copy single pages. They may be used separately or in any combination that works for your classes. Here is an outline of the contents of each page with suggestions on how it may be used.

The Section Titled

May Be Used To

The Winter's Tale: Aspects to Consider --
comments on story, structure, character, gender/social history and theme

Give teachers a quick overview of the play

A Production Who's Who -- program information

Aid students writing reviews

What To Watch For in *The Winter's Tale* --
information on the bear and on design challenges

Guide student viewing
Focus post-show discussion

The Winter's Tale: Suggested Activities --
three classroom activities related to *The Winter's Tale*

Provide activity ideas

Post-Show Discussion -- questions to stimulate post-show reflection

Get students talking about *The Winter's Tale* and themselves

The Winter's Tale: Relevant Social History 1 --
brief summary of the status of women during Shakespeare's lifetime

Offer mini history lesson
Stimulate discussion
Give social context of play

The Winter's Tale: Relevant Social History 2 --
brief description of the cuckold and the scold

Define important terms
Give social context of play

The Winter's Tale: Plot Synopsis --
two-page summary of the action in the play

Outline the story for class

Resources -- a list of recommended print, web, and program resources

Extend learning possibilities

The Winter's Tale: Aspects to Consider

1. Story

Take a few minutes to acquaint your students with the plot and main characters of *The Winter's Tale*. **A plot synopsis suitable for photocopying is included in this guide.**

Tales From Shakespeare, written by the brother and sister team of Charles and Mary Lamb in 1807, also offers a beautiful retelling of the story of the play in language suitable for a young audience. The main action of the entire play is covered in this version that takes about fifteen minutes to read aloud. There are several copies in the holdings of the Ottawa Public Library. Look for it in the Children's Non-Fiction Section under call number 822.33. It is also available on-line at <http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/lambtales/LTWT.HTM>.

An excellent two-page synopsis of *The Winter's Tale* can be found in Charles Boyce's *Shakespeare A to Z: An Essential Reference to His Plays, His Poems, His Life and Times, and More*, pp. 709-11. The Ottawa Public Library has both circulating and non-circulating reference editions of this text at several branches.

One **caveat** about both the version provided in this guide and the Lamb version--no mention is made of Shakespeare's crowd-pleasing comic character Autolycus, and you may want to let your students know a little bit about him before they see the show. We first meet this vagabond and petty thief in Act 4 scene iii, where he cunningly dupes a clown and picks his pocket. He turns up again later disguised as a peddler at the sheep-shearing festival. Autolycus' songs and roughish antics enhance the mood of this festive scene. He has a significant connection to the plot, too, as it his attempt to profit by turning the Old Shepherd and his son in to his former master Prince Florizel that ultimately brings about the revelation of Perdita's true identity.

The Winter's Tale: Aspects to Consider (continued)

2. Structure

You may want to let your students know something about the unique **dramatic structure** of *The Winter's Tale*. Technically, *The Winter's Tale*, falls into the genre called **romance**. Identifying elements of Shakespeare's romances include: conflicts within family units and between generations; natural disasters; improbable adventures, magic, and coincidences; and a completely unpredictable ending that stresses reconciliation and forgiveness.

But *The Winter's Tale* expresses these elements in a brilliant two-part structure. The play's first half, set in Sicilia, is a **tragedy**: King Leontes, seized with the madness of jealousy, sets into action a series of events that result in death. The second half, set in Bohemia, is a **comedy**: young lovers Florizel and Perdita find a solution to parental opposition and are allowed to marry. Shakespeare further extends the range of genres in *The Winter's Tale* by drawing on elements of the **pastoral** tradition in his depiction of Bohemia. The pastoral is an ancient literary form that praises the simple joys of lives lived close to nature. The sheep-sheering festival in 4.4 clearly displays several elements of this form. The play's unique structure presents interesting challenges for a director, as Marti Maraden points out: *"To create the two very different worlds of Sicilia and Bohemia, and yet to have them seem necessary to each other, is one of the challenges of The Winter's Tale. I think the contrast in the play makes perfect sense. We begin in Sicilia, we sojourn in Bohemia, and we return to a renewed Sicilia where reconciliation is possible. And the resolution in Sicilia could not be found without having gone through the sojourn in Bohemia. A director needs to make sure these two worlds are presented as parts of a greater whole so it becomes clear to an audience that they both absolutely belong in the play.*

"The variety in The Winter's Tale is another challenge. Not only do you have the actors telling the story, but there are dances and songs as well. The middle of the play almost takes on the feel of a musical. The ending of the play, with the statue of Hermione coming to life before our eyes, is very special. It's a uniquely interesting scene to stage.

"There's also a gap of sixteen years between the play's first and second halves, and getting everybody to age is a challenge because of it. There are several characters in the first part who are in the second part, and when the second part opens the kings, who were about 30 years old at the beginning, have to be 46 years old -- and one of them has been quite broken by life and has aged quite incredibly.

"But the major challenge is to allow all the varied elements in The Winter's Tale to exist in, and belong to, the same world; to allow that in moments of comedy there is tragedy and in moments of tragedy there is comedy; to allow the play to be funny and sad, adventurous, exciting, heartbreaking, thrilling, to be about young love and about naughty thieves, to be about everything, that's the challenge. The play just has so much in it."

The Winter's Tale: Aspects to Consider (continued)

3. Character

A useful approach to character in *The Winter's Tale* is to get students thinking about how Shakespeare completely reinvents the stereotypes he draws on by creating characters of striking psychological depth and complexity. Leontes and Hermione, for example, are like the wicked kings and the virtuous queens we might expect to see in fairytales. And in a fairytale, all we would ask is that the wicked king be wicked enough to embody pure evil and the virtuous queen virtuous enough to embody pure goodness. The reassuring triumph of good over evil at the end of the fairytale is what satisfies; psychological depth really isn't required.

But in *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare has something to say about the process by which good can eventually triumph over evil that requires wickedness and virtue to be embodied in recognizably human characters. Even if a character's situation in this play seems far-fetched in a fairytale way, Shakespeare's handling of the character's response is always psychologically accurate. As director Marti Maraden observes,

"Shakespeare's psychologically observed characters anticipate a modern understanding of human motivation. Long before Freud existed, Shakespeare understood human nature. If you look at plays before Shakespeare, there are great characters and great stories, but they always feel very theatrical or flat -- two dimensional. Shakespeare's characters, especially when he is writing at the height of his maturity, as he is here in The Winter's Tale, genuinely reflects the complexity of the human heart. His plays are full of human beings.

"Leontes is wonderfully mad and human. He is insanely jealous and people die--even his own little son dies--because of his jealousy. He becomes literally mad with jealousy. And he is a king, with absolute power. Leontes is a tyrant, in a way--the gods say he is a "jealous tyrant" -- but he's not the same kind of tyrant one might encounter in other plays. He's not like Macbeth, for example, who ultimately becomes entirely committed to the path of evil. Leontes says of Paulina, 'Were I a tyrant, where would be her life.' He stops short of utter tyranny, but he comes very dangerously close to it.

"And yet, once he realizes his error, he is capable of understanding the evil he has done and he repents it. He then lives sixteen years confronting his own evil. In the end the gods in the play who speak through the Delphic oracle allow that, if his baby daughter is found again, he can be forgiven and redeemed; his life can be renewed."

Hermione, too, moves well beyond the stock figure of the chaste and long-suffering wife. The profound integrity and courage she displays during the trial scene are not merely emblematic of goodness personified: Shakespeare makes us recognize that they are virtues possessed by a truly remarkable individual.

The Winter's Tale: Aspects to Consider (continued)

4. Social History/Gender

Two documents briefly outlining the **status of women** and the Elizabethan/Jacobean figures of the **cuckold** and the **scold** are provided in this guide. You may want to use these to give your students quick background on aspects of the social history of Shakespeare's time that are particularly relevant to *The Winter's Tale*. A general discussion around these readings before viewing the show would help students better understand some key issues in the play, such as

- Leontes' terror at the thought he may be a cuckold
- Hermione's quiet acceptance of her treatment at her husband's hands
- Paulina's connection to the comic figure of the scold
- society's expectation that fathers and husbands, like kings, were authority figures to be obeyed

Have your students watch for how Shakespeare uses the stock figures of the cuckold and the scold in creating Leontes and Paulina, respectively. This is one way Shakespeare creates a comic effect even in tragic situations.

Note, too, how Shakespeare's characters in *The Winter's Tale* challenge the gender stereotypes of his time. The psychological realism of Leontes' jealous passion transforms him from a comic "cuckold" to a tragically self-deceived husband who can't see the evil of his own actions until it's too late. Paulina's angry outspokenness and nagging criticisms of her king are completely inappropriate given the social expectations of female behaviour at this time; but Shakespeare reinvents the "scold" in this play and shows Paulina's comments to be totally necessary and even heroic. As director Marti Maraden says, "*Paulina is one of the greatest women in all of Shakespeare. She is the good friend of Hermione, and if he only realized it, of the King himself. She is the one who will not play politics, who will not give in to a tyrant, and who has the strength and courage to speak up for the infant daughter and to fight the good fight. She's the one who brings about the magical ending -- or is it magic? It's up to the audience to decide. Paulina is a powerful figure of goodness -- but not a prissy-wissy, boring type of goodness. She's tough, strong and gives Leontes what for. And it's amazing to say that a heart-rending and powerful scene like the one where Paulina brings the baby Perdita for the King to see, is at the same time sometimes very, very funny.*"

The Winter's Tale: Aspects to Consider (continued)

5. Themes

Major themes to watch for in *The Winter's Tale* are 1) time as a force both of destruction and healing in human lives, and 2) the Art versus Nature debate.

Time--Shakespeare makes Time a character in *The Winter's Tale*. Marti Maraden plans the following staging: *"We will be dividing the play into two acts. The second act begins with Time as a chorus. Antigonus, who has died, will come back in the role of Father Time. Then he will become one of the shepherds. I thought that would be fun."*

Critics are divided over Shakespeare's ultimate view of time in this play. Some argue that the sixteen years between the first and second halves of the play represent the destructive movement of time as it inexorably marches forward, bringing human beings ever closer to the hour of their own deaths. Despite the happiness of the final reunion, the sixteen years of separation and suffering Leontes and Hermione have lived through will never be given back. The happiness they could have enjoyed during those years is, like their little son, lost to them absolutely.

Other critics stress the play's focus on regeneration and redemption to argue that Shakespeare exalts time in *The Winter's Tale* as the necessary medium for human growth and healing. They point out that what seems to be a purely destructive movement of time is countered in the eventual triumph of the Perdita and Florizel generation. Shakespeare's main source for this play, *Pandosto*, was subtitled *The Triumph of Time*, and some see in *The Winter's Tale* the possibility that time is to be understood as an evolutionary force, patiently working from one generation to the next to perfect mankind.

Art versus Nature -- *The Winter's Tale* dramatizes ideas about the relationship between art (illusion and artifice) and nature (reality and simplicity). Perdita, herself emblematic of nature's purity, has an instinctive mistrust of those who would seek to improve on nature. As Marti Maraden observes, *"One of the most interesting themes in the play is about nature and what is truly natural. Polixenes and Perdita have a little argument. He thinks she should grow carnations but she rejects them. They don't meet her definition of real flowers because they are man-made. To Perdita they represent man tampering with nature. We see that she has real integrity; she won't agree just to be polite. She stands up for nature -- for natural flowers and things that come from the earth."*

"It's interesting to watch Polixenes in this scene. We've felt sorry for him up to now because of the way his best friend treated him. In this scene he says it's a great thing to take a plant of a higher nature and put it together with an inferior or wild plant because you can get something stronger and better that way. But at the same time as he says we should take the upper-class plants and marry them together with the lower-class ones, when he finds out his son the prince wants to marry Perdita, who he thinks is just a little shepherd girl, he becomes almost as bad a tyrant as Leontes."

Shakespeare returns to the art versus nature debate in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale* when the amazingly life-like statue of Hermione (art) is revealed to be Hermione herself (nature). Shakespeare seems to be suggesting that the opposition here is a false one, for as Polixenes points out, while art is a creation of man, man himself is a product of great creating nature.

A Production Who's Who

A production of a play in the professional theatre represents the collaborative efforts of many, many people, each with a specific job to do. The combined talents of the following people made this production of *The Winter's Tale* possible:

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director:	Marti Maraden
Set/Costume Design:	John Pennoyer
Lighting Design:	Louise Guinand
Composer/Sound:	Marc Desormeaux
Movement Direction:	Jo Leslie
Assistant Director:	Alex MacDonald
Voice Coach:	Louis Spritzer

CAST (role assignments subject to change)

<i>Emilia / Dorcas</i>	Liza Balkan
<i>Rogero (2nd Gentleman / 2nd Lord) / Shepherd</i>	Julian Doucet
<i>Rinaldo (Gaoler / Officer / 3rd Gentleman) / Shepherd Servant</i>	Todd Duckworth
<i>Florizel / Leontes' Servant</i>	Matthew Edison
<i>Autolycus / Mariner</i>	Victor Ertmanis
<i>Hermione</i>	Kelli Fox
<i>Archidamus / Old Shepherd</i>	Peter Froehlich
<i>Perdita</i>	Jennifer Gould
<i>Dion / Shepherd / Bear</i>	Charles Herriott
<i>Paulina</i>	Kate Hurman
<i>Egistus (1st Lord / 1st Gentleman) / Shepherd</i>	David Kirby
<i>Polixenes</i>	John Koensgen
<i>Young Shepherd (Clown) / Gentleman</i>	Patrick McManus
<i>Cleomenes / Shepherd</i>	David McMullen
<i>Mamillius</i>	Luca Mera
<i>Camillo</i>	Paul Rainville
<i>Leontes</i>	Tom Rooney
<i>Mopsa / Ursula</i>	Alix Sideris
<i>Antigonus / Time / Shepherd</i>	John Wright

STAGE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Stage Manager	Laurie Champagne
Assistant Stage Manager	Tobi Hunt
Apprentice Stage Manager	Stéphanie Séguin

NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ENGLISH THEATRE (www.nac-cna.ca)

Artistic Director, English Theatre - **Marti Maraden**
Managing Director, English Theatre - **Victoria Steele**
Production Director - **Alex Gazalé**
Publicist & Media Relations Coordinator - **Laura Denker**

What to Watch For in this Production

1. “Exit, (Antigonus) pursued by a bear.”

This is probably the most famous stage direction in English theatre history. It appears in *The Winter’s Tale* near the beginning of Act III., sc. iii., just after Antigonus has carried out Leontes’ horrific command to abandon the infant Perdita to the wild beasts and the elements. Its intention is clear enough -- it tells us that, at this point in the play, Shakespeare wanted the actor playing Antigonus to be chased off stage by a “bear”.

Its claim to fame lies in the sticky problem faced by every production of the play since 1610 -- exactly how is this “bear” to be staged? Should the director try to make the bear seem as ferociously realistic as possible, even to the point of using a live bear? Or should it be immediately obvious to the audience that the bear is a fake, that Antigonus is really being chased around the stage by two guys in a bear suit? Would Shakespeare have wanted the audience to laugh at the bear or be shocked and frightened by it? The scene marks a transition in the play from the tragic violence of Sicilia to the pastoral comedy of Bohemia -- but which world does the bear belong to?

Critical opinion is divided on the issue of how the bear would have been staged in the original production of *The Winter’s Tale* in 1611. Live bears would certainly have been available in London because of the popularity of bear-baiting, a blood sport in which tethered bears were attacked by dogs. Some experts say that Shakespeare would have used a live bear rented or borrowed from one of the many bear-pits operating in the immediate vicinity of the Globe Theatre. Others seem equally certain that the “bear” was an actor, perhaps tricked out in a bear skin that may have belonged to the Globe’s collection of props and costumes. Either way, the element of surprise in the bear’s entrance and the blackly comic reporting of how he eats poor Antigonus make for sensational theatre. How do you think the director will stage the bear in this production?

2. As Kenneth McLeish and Stephen Unwin have suggested, “(The Winter’s Tale) is constructed like two facing pages from an open book, so that the second half contrasts with and completes the first.”* Making the worlds of Sicilia and Bohemia distinctively different yet clearly inter-dependent is a challenge for both director and designers. How do the design elements--set, costumes, props, lighting and sound/music -- work together to create a strong sense of the differences between Sicilia and Bohemia? How do they work to suggest that the two kingdoms are inter-related parts of a greater whole?

*A Pocket Guide To Shakespeare’s Plays (Faber and Faber: London, 1998)

Post-Show Discussion

1. What did you think of the way the scene with Antigonus and the bear was staged in this production? What kind of mood did the presence of the bear create? Do you think the scene would still have worked if the bear had been given a more comic staging?

Here's what the director was thinking when she decided on the staging of the bear:
"In every production I've been in or seen the bear has been performed by an actor dressed in a bear suit. I've always found it unsatisfactory at a moment in the play that is meant to be horrific -- or at least good and scary like something out of Grimm's Fairytales. What we have in the scene is a man abandoning a baby -- and even though he is a good man, he's had to do an evil deed. He and all the sailors who sailed with him are ultimately punished by the gods for contributing to the evil. We should know that something awful is going to happen here and it does - - Antigonus is eaten by a bear!"

"I've opted for a very different kind of bear. Our bear is much more along the lines of a shadow puppet. It will be a combination of lighting and a very special kind of puppetry. It will be a stylized and symbolic treatment of the bear. I hope the evil it represents will be apparent. We are working very hard on making this a scary bear."

2. A recent production of *The Winter's Tale* in California brought back the ghost of Mamillius at the end of the play. The child actor dressed all in white approached the characters on stage in the play's final moments, but they remained oblivious to his presence. How would this ending affect your understanding of the play's overall message? Why do you think that director choose to end the play this way?

These questions address Ontario Arts Curriculum Expectations for Grade 11 Open in the category of Analysis and Evaluation: analyse and evaluate the artistic choices made by the director and designer in a dramatic presentation and for Grade 12 Open in the category of Theory -- Role/Character: describe how dramatic elements (props, lighting, sound/music) are used to develop character and/or theme

3. What moment in the play did you find the most exciting? What moment was the saddest? What moment was the most surprising? Who was your favourite character?

The Winter's Tale: Suggested Activities

1. Assign each student a character or an aspect of the production to focus on as they watch *The Winter's Tale*. Before the play, have each student briefly note any expectations they have about how that character or design aspect will be handled in the production. After the show, have each student report back to the class on how the actual production conformed to or deviated from his or her original expectations.

Possible characters/areas to assign:

- any of the characters (refer to **A Production Who's Who** for cast list)
- any of the design elements (lighting, sound/music, costumes, set, props, special effects, use of the thrust stage)
- the songs
- the dances

*This activity addresses the Ontario Arts Curriculum Expectation for **Grade 12** University/College Preparation Courses in the category of Analysis and Evaluation: evaluate the development and presentation of dramatic works, using student-produced criteria.*

2. Several discussion topics of relevance to today's youth can be drawn from *The Winter's Tale* -- the dynamics of male/female relationships; the emotion of jealousy and how best to cope with it; the issue of power, control and authority in marriages and between parents and children. Use the pages on Shakespearean social history and/or excerpted scenes/monologues from the play to initiate classroom discussion of these topics. Possible questions to address include:-

-How are expectations of male and female behavior in today's society like and unlike the Elizabethan/Jacobean ideal?

-Is jealousy still an issue? Is either sex more prone to jealousy? Can jealousy ever be healthy in a relationship? What's the best way to handle feelings of jealousy?

-What does the phrase "the head of the household" mean in relation to the structure of your family? What process does your family go through when an important decision needs to be made? Should parents exert strong authority? Are there circumstances where it makes sense for children to disobey their parents?

*This activity addresses the Ontario Arts Curriculum Expectation for **Grade 10** in the category of Reflection: explain connections between their own lives and the metaphor or themes in a drama.*

3. If you are reading this guide you already know about NAC English Theatre's Student Matinée Series. The Resources page in this guide lists other programs offered by the NAC that help forge connections between schools and the professional theatre community.

*These activities address the Ontario Arts Curriculum Expectation for **Grade 10**: identify and make connections with individual artists or groups involved in drama.*

The Winter's Tale: Relevant Social History 1

The Status of Women

Women in Shakespeare's time lived in a male-dominated society. The right of fathers and husbands to rule over women and children at home was believed to reflect the same God-given order in human relations that gave the monarch the right to rule over the country. Women in this period had virtually no legal power and lost all right to own personal property when they married. Men were expected to be the heads of their households. Once a boy had turned 8 and was no longer considered a minor, he was no longer legally required to obey his mother. A popular rhyme summed up a wife's situation thus:

NOW WHEN THOU ART BECOME A WIFE,
AND HAST AN HUSBAND TO THY MIND,
SEE THOU PROVOKE HIM NOT TO STRIFE,
LEST HAPLY HE DO PROVE UNKIND.
ACKNOWLEDGE THAT HE IS THINE HEAD,
AND HATH OF THEE THE GOVERNANCE,
AND THAT THOU MUST OF HIM BE LED,
ACCORDING TO GOD'S ORDINANCE.*

Much literature in this period focused on the idea that women were naturally inferior to men, justifying the need for men to govern women's behaviour. Early Christian scholars connected all women to the Biblical figure of Eve. Like her, they claimed, all women could be easily seduced into evil-doing. The Adam and Eve story also proved to them that God had intended women to be dependent on and to serve men. God had created the male first, as the perfection of humanity, and only later created the female out of the male to be his helper. A related argument saw the female as an imperfect or unfinished version of the male, inherently his inferior in the masculine virtues of intelligence, strength, courage and self-control.

At the time Shakespeare was writing, the ideal woman was believed to be chaste (a virgin or a sexually modest and faithful wife), patient, humble, forgiving and obedient. The virginity of daughters born into wealthy and noble families was of vital importance to their marriage prospects. Property passed from father to first-born son; the virginity of brides and sexual fidelity of wives was insisted on to guarantee the legitimacy of the children. In this society, the mere suggestion that a woman had had sexual experience with anyone other than her husband did serious injury to her reputation. Female honour and social respectability were tied so closely to sexuality that death was often presented as preferable to the loss of a woman's chastity, even in cases of rape.

*Verse taken from *The Voyce of the Laste Trumpet* (1549) by Robert Crowley

The Winter's Tale: Relevant Social History 2

When Marriage Goes Wrong: The Cuckold and The Scold

Appropriate behaviour for men and women in Shakespeare's day was determined by a rigid set of cultural expectations. This male-dominated society believed the balance of power in a marriage naturally rested with the husband. It was both his right and his duty to keep his wife under his control. It was the wife's duty to submit to her husband's authority without argument. Husbands and wives who deviated widely from this norm could quickly become the object of gossip and ridicule.

The cuckolded husband and the scolding wife are stereotypes of the period that express the culture's fears about marriages where the traditional power structure gets turned upside down. For a husband, a wife's sexual infidelity was the most shameful and emasculating loss of control imaginable. The husband of an adulteress was called a cuckold. This weak and ludicrous creature was often symbolized as a man with horns growing out of his forehead. A man whose wife was thought to be unfaithful to him was said to "wear the horns", i.e., to have become a cuckold.

A wife who refused to quietly submit to her husband's authority ran the risk of being called a scold or a shrew. Women who nagged or argued with men -- or just spoke out in public too much or too often -- threatened to disrupt the traditional social order based on male dominance. A husband who failed to control his wife's scolding tongue was usually assumed to have failed at controlling her sexuality as well; the husband of a scold was presumed to be a cuckold. Here's a list of some of the many ballads popular in Shakespeare's day that focused on sexual infidelity and the balance of power in marriages:-

-*The Patient Wife Betrayed; Or, The Lady Elizabeth's Tragedy* -- a wicked woman seduces another woman's husband.

-*The Catalogue of Contented Cuckolds* -- ten men get together in a tavern to swap stories about their adulterous wives.

-*The Scolding Wives Vindication: Or, An Answer to the Cuckold's Complaint* -- a wife explains how she was driven to adultery by her husband's inability to perform sexually.

-*All Such As Lead a Jealous Life* -- a jealous husband murders the young wife and servant who he mistakenly thinks have cuckolded him.

-*My Wife Will Be My Master* -- a husband does all the housework to keep his scolding wife quiet.

-*A Caution for Scolds: Or, A True Way of Taming a Shrew* -- a husband suffers his wife's constant scolding until he finds a doctor who cures her by extracting a gallon of blood from her offending tongue.

(Ballad titles and synopses are taken from Elizabeth Foyster's article *A Laughing Matter? Marital Discord and Gender Control in Seventeenth-Century England*. *Rural History* 4 (1993): 5-21.)

The Winter's Tale: Plot Synopsis

King Leontes of Sicilia has greatly enjoyed a nine-month visit from his childhood buddy, King Polixenes of Bohemia. Leontes' entreaties to Polixenes to extend his stay are politely refused, but Polixenes' resolve buckles when the beautiful (and pregnant) Queen Hermione persuades him otherwise. Interpreting his wife's gentility as excessive flirtation, Leontes is suddenly consumed by jealousy and suspects an affair between Polixenes and Hermione. Leontes confides his suspicions to Lord Camillo and seemingly convinces Camillo to murder Polixenes. But Camillo, not believing the Queen to be disloyal, warns Polixenes of his king's plot, helps him escape, and defects to Polixenes' court.

King Leontes then publicly humiliates his wife, and though she denies any wrongdoing, he imprisons her. Their young son Mamillius, missing his mother terribly, falls into a deep depression. Leontes sends Lords Cleomenes and Dion to the oracles of Delphos and Apollo to expose the truth, but before the Lords return, Hermione gives birth to a daughter in prison. Hermione's friend Paulina brings the baby girl to her father in the hopes of bringing him to his senses, but Leontes flies into another rage and declares the child the bastard of Polixenes. He then orders Paulina's husband Antigonus to take the baby to sea and abandon her on some desert shore.

The Lords return with a scroll from the oracles. A trial is arranged for Hermione, in which Leontes appoints himself judge and juror. When finally read aloud, the scroll declares Hermione and Polixenes innocent, the baby properly conceived, Camillo a true subject, and Leontes himself a tyrant "who shall live without an heir if that which is lost be not found." Leontes refuses to believe the oracles' words, but when he learns that little Mamillius has died because of his depression, he realizes the error of his ways and vows to make up for his unjust accusations. Paulina then informs him that the Queen, unable to withstand any more grief, is also dead. Leontes, all too late, repents and vows to cry for his wife and son every day.

Meanwhile, Antigonus arrives with the baby girl on the shores of Bohemia. He obeys a dream in which he is instructed by Hermione to name the child Perdita and to leave her in Bohemia. With a storm brewing, Antigonus places her on the shore with some jewels and a note and then makes a hasty retreat – chased by a bear! A shepherd finds the baby (and the jewels) and takes pity on her. The shepherd's son informs his father that he has just seen a ship sink in the storm and Antigonus mauled to death by the bear. The shepherd, believing the child to be orphaned, vows to raise it as his own.

Sixteen years pass. Perdita, now a beautiful, refined young woman, but only a shepherd's daughter, is being secretly courted by none other than Polixenes' son, Florizel. Calling himself Doricles, Florizel hides his princely identity from Perdita's family and friends. King Polixenes, suspicious of the amount of time his son is reportedly spending at the shepherd's home, goes there in disguise along with Camillo. They arrive during the sheep-sheering feast.

There, Polixenes witnesses his son propose marriage to Perdita. The festivities are swiftly curtailed when Polixenes angrily reveals himself, declares there will be no such marriage for his son and the "low-born lass," and threatens to kill her and her father if she is ever again found in Florizel's company. Understanding that Florizel is determined to marry Perdita in spite of his father's wrath, Camillo suggests Florizel sail with Perdita to King Leontes' court in Sicilia while he tries to appease King Polixenes. He also arranges for the shepherd to escape with them. Camillo, who has long been missing his home kingdom, plans to immediately tell Polixenes of their escape, then to use the inevitable pursuit as a means to get back to Sicilia while spending the time at sea trying to calm King Polixenes.

Back in Sicilia, Leontes is urged by Lord Cleomenes to forget his dreadful past and to remarry, but Paulina reminds Leontes of the oracle's words – that he should never get an heir unless his daughter is found. If he waits, Paulina promises she will find him a wife that looks just like Queen Hermione.

Florizel, Perdita and the shepherd arrive in Sicilia. Florizel introduces Perdita as his princess from Libya. The resemblance of Perdita to his dead Queen causes the sad king to recall his dreadful orders and he voices his desire to regain the friendship of Polixenes. When Polixenes' arrival is announced along with his demands that Florizel be arrested, Leontes promises to help ease their tensions.

When he hears the king's story of the time he ordered his own daughter to be abandoned, the shepherd recalls the time he found the baby girl. He concludes they are one and the same. He is able to prove that Perdita is in fact Leontes' lost daughter, a real princess. The kings now happily agree to the marriage of their children though Leontes is again consumed by guilt over what he has done to his wife.

Paulina then tells Leontes that she has a statue in her home that looks just like Hermione. If asked a question, this magical statue will speak. Everyone goes to Paulina's home to see this statue. It exactly like Hermione, though a somewhat older version. Leontes despairs once again at the sight of her. Perdita wishes she could stay looking at her mother forever. Paulina then calls for music and the statue comes to life and embraces Leontes. It is the real Hermione. She speaks, revealing how she has been hidden away in Paulina's house. She then prays for blessings on her husband and her new-found child. In great happiness, Leontes declares that Camillo and Paulina should also be wed.

Resources

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The Complete Works of William Shakespeare

<http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html>

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet

<http://www.edu/Library/shake.htm>

Shakespeare's Life and Times

<http://web.uvic.ca/shakespeare/Library/SLTnoframes/intro/introsubj.html>

The NAC offers several programs of interest to teachers and students:-

-The Skills Shop — puts theatre professionals and students together for hands-on, in-school, group workshops.

-Workshops Plus! — offers pre-student matinee workshops that allow for a full-day visit to the NAC.

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The Playwrights in Schools program offered by the Playwrights Union of Canada (www.puc.ca) makes it possible, for a nominal fee, for playwrights to visit your class to do a reading, a workshop, or a chat about their background. A brochure on the program is available from PUC, 2nd Floor—54 Wolseley Street, Toronto ON, M5A 1A5 (416) 703-0201