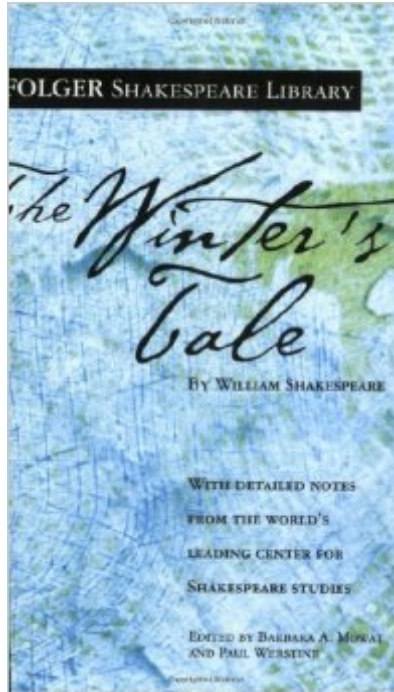


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The Winter's Tale (Folger Shakespeare Library)



Synopsis

The Winter's Tale, one of Shakespeare's very late plays, is filled with improbabilities. Before the conclusion, one character comments that what we are about to see, "Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale." It includes murderous passions, man-eating bears, princes and princesses in disguise, death by drowning and by grief, oracles, betrayal, and unexpected joy. Yet the play, which draws much of its power from Greek myth, is grounded in the everyday. A winter's tale is one told or read on a long winter's night. Paradoxically, this winter's tale is ideally seen rather than read "though the imagination can transform words into vivid action. Its shift from tragedy to comedy, disguises, and startling exits and transformations seem addressed to theater audiences. The authoritative edition of The Winter's Tale from The Folger Shakespeare Library, the trusted and widely used Shakespeare series for students and general readers, includes: -Freshly edited text based on the best early printed version of the play -Full explanatory notes conveniently placed on pages facing the text of the play -Scene-by-scene plot summaries -A key to the play's famous lines and phrases -An introduction to reading Shakespeare's language -An essay by a leading Shakespeare scholar providing a modern perspective on the play -Fresh images from the Folger Shakespeare Library's vast holdings of rare books -An annotated guide to further reading Essay by Stephen Orgel The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, is home to the world's largest collection of Shakespeare's printed works, and a magnet for Shakespeare scholars from around the globe. In addition to exhibitions open to the public throughout the year, the Folger offers a full calendar of performances and programs. For more information, visit Folger.edu.

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Customer Reviews

The Winter's Tale contains some of the most technically difficult solutions to telling a story that have ever appeared in a play. If you think you know all about how a play must be constructed, read The Winter's Tale. It will greatly expand your mind. The play opens near the end of a long visit by Polixenes, the king of Bohemia, to the court of his childhood friend, Leontes, the king of Sicily. Leontes wants his friend to stay one more day. His friend declines. Leontes prevails upon his wife, Hermione, to persuade Polixenes. Hermione does her husband's bidding, having been silent before then. Rather than be pleased that she has succeeded, Leontes goes into a jealous rage in which he doubts her faithfulness. As his jealousy grows, he takes actions to defend his misconceptions of his "abused" honor that in fact abuse all those who have loved him. Unable to control himself, Leontes continues to pursue his folly even when evidence grows that he is wrong. To his great regret, these impulsive acts cost him dearly. Three particular aspects of the play deserve special mention. The first is the way that Shakespeare ties together actions set 16 years apart in time. Although that sounds like crossing the Grand Canyon in a motorcycle jump, Shakespeare pulls off the jump rather well so that it is not so big a leap. The second is that Shakespeare captures entirely different moods from hilarious good humor to deep depression and remorse closely adjacent to one another. As a result, the audience is able to experience many more emotions than normally are evoked in a single play. Third, the play's final scene is as remarkable a bit of writing as you can imagine. Read it, and marvel! After you finish reading this play, think about where your own loss of temper has had bad consequences.

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