The Winter's Tale: (e) The significance of the title (Teachers’ prompt sheet)

**Time / Narrator**
- The switch between tragedy and comedy, and the balance provided, is obvious.
  - Shakespeare makes no effort to cover up the deliberate storytelling that is going on here.
- A narrator appears - the personified figure of Time.
- This is not necessary; Shakespeare is quite capable of indicating the passage of time without introducing such an artificial character
  - Time actually tells us nothing we don’t hear elsewhere anyway.
- He crosses over the gap between stage and audience with his asides which reveal his tricks to us.

**Pastoral**
- Pastoral stories which concerned shepherds, shepherdesses and (idealised) country life in general.
- IV,iv contains many pastoral elements.
- Perdita says, ‘Methinks I play as I have seen them do / In Whitsun pastorals’ (IV,iv,134-5). She later talks about the need to ‘play a part’ (651).

**The Bear**
- ‘Exit, pursued by bear’: if this were a real bear, it must have been a very tame and unfrightening one; if a man dressed up, then it would be more comical than scary.
  - Even nowadays, with modern technology, it is not easy to produce a convincingly frightening bear.
- Surely, we have a fictional bear of some kind which, in any case, is reduced to comedy in the Clown’s description of its eating of Antigonus.

**Autolycus**
- He deals in storytelling, sometimes in order to trick people (‘I am robbed, sir, and beaten...’), and sometimes as a seller of ballads (‘The ballad is very pitiful, and as true.’).
- His speech and action encourage the audience to consider whether stories can be believed, and perhaps whether it matters if they are ‘true’ or not.
- He also appears in various different disguises as various different ‘characters’.

- He crosses over the gap between stage and audience with his asides which reveal his tricks to us.

**The Theatre**
- There is plenty of deliberate dressing up and characters playing a part (often specifically commented on).
  - ‘not appearing what we are’ (Polixenes: IV,ii);
  - ‘your unusual weeds’ (Florizel to Perdita: IV,iv);
  - ‘dislikn /The truth of your own seeming’ (Camillo to Florizel: IV,iv), etc.
- Masques (lavish court entertainments) included music, dance, fools, satyrs, beasts, rustics and moving statues
  - Did Shakespeare have masques in mind when he wrote The Winter's Tale?
- In I,ii,185-7, Leontes says ‘I / Play too, but so disgraced a part, whose issue / Will hiss me to my grave.’