

The Winter's Tale: (f) The plays structure

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 refers to links on www.crossref-it.info

- ❖ **Lesson focus:** To explore the structure of *The Winter's Tale*, and to consider how it affects our view of the play.
- ❖ **Opening exercise:** Duplicate cards with one of the following numbers on them: 2, 3, 5, so that each student has a card
 - Give them a few moments thought, and then ask them to explain how *The Winter's Tale* can be seen as having that number of parts
 - Refer to **teachers' prompt sheet (f)** to help. (See  The structure of *The Winter's Tale* > Timescale > A play of two halves) (See  The structure of *The Winter's Tale* > Contrasts and divisions > Winter and summer)
- ❖ **Discussion ideas:** As a group, decide together on the key events or moments of the play
 - List these on the board
 - Try to be comprehensive rather than restrictive so that you have a sizeable list
 - Colour-code these as:
 - Events which are tragic or seem likely to lead to tragedy
 - Events which seem to belong to a comedy
 - Draw arrows to show any events which lead on to another
 - If possible, all this could be set out like a timeline.
- Discuss the results, especially in terms of the structure the pattern suggests. (See  The structure of *The Winter's Tale* > Contrasts and divisions > Tragedy and comedy)
- ❖ **Textual examination:** The overall development of the play is concerned with Leontes' jealousy and recovery from it. There is plenty of focus on personal choice (eg: Autolycus' songs in IV,iv).
 - Draw Leontes' timeline alongside the one from the previous exercise
 - What do you notice? (See  Characterisation > Leontes)
- ❖ **Recreative task:** Retell the story as a 50 word mini-saga
 - Compare different people's versions
 - It is interesting to discuss what can be left out and what is seen as essential.
- ❖ **Critical task:** Some critics have said that Shakespeare failed to create an artistic unity out of the various parts of the structure of this play.
 - Would you agree with them?
- ❖ What are the challenges created by the structure for staging this play?
 - How would you overcome them?
- ❖ **Extension task:** Compare the elements of tragedy and comedy in this play with any other Shakespeare plays you know
 - (Other, modern, tragedies can be examined, too.)
 - How would the ending of *The Winter's Tale* have to be changed in order to make it completely a tragedy?
 - How could the opening be changed to allow the whole play to be a comedy?