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)i to help.

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 Characterisation > Leontes)

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?