

## *Play Synopses—Table of Contents*

All's Well That Ends Well.....	2
Antony and Cleopatra .....	3
As You Like It.....	4
The Comedy of Errors .....	5
Coriolanus.....	6
Cymbeline.....	7
Hamlet, Prince of Denmark .....	8
Henry IV, Part I.....	9
Henry IV, Part II.....	10
Henry V.....	11
Henry VI, Part I.....	12
Henry VI, Part II.....	13
Henry VI, Part III.....	14
Henry VIII.....	15
Julius Caesar .....	16
King John.....	17
King Lear .....	18
Love's Labour's Lost.....	19
Macbeth.....	20
Macbeth (cont'd).....	21
Measure for Measure .....	22
The Merchant of Venice.....	23
The Merry Wives of Windsor .....	24
A Midsummer Night's Dream.....	25
Much Ado About Nothing.....	26
Othello.....	27
Pericles.....	28
Richard II .....	29
Richard III.....	30
Romeo and Juliet.....	31
The Taming of the Shrew .....	32
The Tempest.....	33
Timon of Athens.....	34
Titus Andronicus.....	35
Troilus and Cressida.....	36
Twelfth Night; Or, What You Will .....	37
The Two Gentlemen of Verona .....	38
The Two Noble Kinsmen .....	39
The Winter's Tale.....	40

## *All's Well That Ends Well*

The play begins with young Bertram assuming the title of Count of Rossillion upon the death of his father. Helena is the orphaned daughter of a great doctor, and for years lived in the Rossillion household under the care of Bertram's mother, the Countess. Over the years, Helena has developed a secret love for Bertram, although she dares not tell him. The Countess, however, is well aware of Helena's feelings (and indeed approves of them).

Against this backdrop, the King of France has taken deathly ill. Bertram has left to attend the King's court. Helena soon follows him to Paris, bearing a prescription of her father's that she feels might hold a cure for the ailing king. The cure earns her the gratitude of the King, who keeps a bargain between them that she can have her pick of the bachelors at his court. Helena, of course, picks Bertram, who is quite put off by the prospect. To Bertram, Helena is beneath him and unworthy of his notice. Nevertheless, the King will keep his word—Bertram is ordered to marry her. Bertram assents to the marriage under protest, then slips off to a war in Tuscany with his cowardly companion, Parolles.

Helena returns to Rossillion and the Countess, at first assuming that Bertram will be along directly. As it becomes apparent that he will not, Bertram sends word that she may not call him husband until she gets from him a ring (which he always wears) and can bear him a child—not a simple task, especially given that Bertram is in Italy with no intention of ever consummating their marriage. Helena once again takes matters into her own hands and sets out to follow him. She arrives in Florence in the guise of a pilgrim and lodges with a widow whose daughter, Diana, is ironically the newest object of Bertram's affections. With Diana's help, Helena aims to trap Bertram, and thus is born one of the more infamous ploys in Shakespeare's repertoire: the bed trick.

Helena gets Diana to accept Bertram's advances. Bertram, however, must agree to give Diana his ring before they share a bed. At the crucial moment, Helena takes Diana's place in the dark. She also exchanges a ring that the King had given her for Bertram's, accomplishing both terms of Bertram's challenge. When a rumor is spread of Helena's death, Bertram figures that he is clear of any responsibility for a wife he never wanted, and he returns to France. However, the King easily recognizes the ring he bears as Helena's; when Bertram is caught in a series of lies, the King has him arrested on suspicion of murdering Helena. Adding to Bertram's misery, Diana and her widow mother arrive demanding justice, which exposes even more lies. Helena finally appears—bearing

Bertram's ring and carrying his child—and reveals the truth to all. With that, Bertram seems to repent of his wrongdoings and avows his dear love for Helena.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*King of France*

*Duke of Florence*

*Bertram*, Count of Rossillion

*Lafew*, an old lord

*Parolles*, a follower of Bertram

*Steward to the Countess of Rossillion*

*A Clown*

*A Page*

*Countess of Rossillion*, mother of Bertram

*Helena*, a gentlewoman under protection of the Countess

*A Widow of Florence*

*Diana*, daughter of the widow

*Violenta*, friend of the widow

*Mariana*, friend of the widow

*Lords, Officers, Soldiers*

## Antony and Cleopatra

Mark Antony is supposed to be ruling the eastern Roman Empire. Cleopatra, however, has all of his attention as the two carry on a torrid affair in Egypt. The death of his wife, Fulvia, and the threat of a war by Pompey bring him back to Rome. There is tension between Octavius and Antony; Octavius feels that Antony has left Rome vulnerable while dallying with Cleopatra. As a gesture of goodwill, Antony agrees to marry Octavia, the sister of Octavius, but this only postpones what is to be a growing rift.

As events transpire, Octavius (now Caesar) and Antony begin to clash with their armies. Octavia tries to repair the damage and get Octavius and Antony back together. To everyone's chagrin, however, Antony seizes the opportunity during Octavia's absence to flee back to Egypt—and Cleopatra. Octavius is now doubly enraged, vowing to punish Antony for dishonoring his sister as well as Caesar. In the battle to come, Cleopatra sways Antony's mind into accepting a challenge from Caesar to a battle at sea; his aides try to tell him that his army has a better chance on land, but Antony will not listen. He will rue the decision.

At the height of the naval battle, Cleopatra orders her personal ship to leave the scene. Unfortunately, a lovestruck Antony orders his ship to follow her, and the battle at Actium becomes a Roman victory. Caesar rejects Antony's suit for peace, and instead attempts to split Antony and Cleopatra; Cleopatra, he decrees, will remain Queen of Egypt unmolested if she but kills Antony. Cleopatra refuses, and Caesar's army meets Antony's on land—resulting in a victory for Antony. The two armies withdraw to resume the fight the next day.

When another Egyptian retreat decides the day for Caesar, Antony accuses Cleopatra of treachery and threatens her life. To save herself, she flees to her tomb and has her servants bring word that she has killed herself. This pushes Antony over the edge, and he falls on his own sword, mortally wounding himself. He lives long enough, however, for the servants to bring him to Cleopatra, and the two once again profess their love before Antony breathes his last. Caesar, upon hearing the news of Antony's death, grieves for the loss of his rival and onetime friend. To Cleopatra he promises mercy, although he intends on humiliating her as a war captive. Cleopatra, recognizing his aims, secures an asp hidden in a fruit basket and uses its venomous bite to kill herself. Caesar decrees that Antony and Cleopatra be buried together as a posthumous act of kindness.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Mark Antony*, Triumvir  
*Octavius Caesar*, Triumvir  
*M. Aemilius Lepidus*, Triumvir  
*Sextus Pompeius* - Pompey  
*Enobarbus*, friend of Antony  
*Ventidius*, friend of Antony  
*Eros*, friend of Antony  
*Scarus*, friend of Antony  
*Dercetas*, friend of Antony  
*Demetrius*, friend of Antony  
*Philo*, friend of Antony  
*Maecenas*, friend of Caesar  
*Agrippa*, friend of Caesar  
*Dolabella*, friend of Caesar  
*Proculeius*, friend of Caesar  
*Thyreus*, friend of Caesar  
*Gallus*, friend of Caesar  
*Menas*, friend of Pompey  
*Menecrates*, friend of Pompey  
*Varrius*, friend of Pompey  
*Taurus*, a lieutenant-general  
*Canidius*, a lieutenant-general  
*Silius*, an officer  
*Euphronius*, an ambassador  
*Alexas*, attendant to Cleopatra  
*Mardian*, attendant to Cleopatra  
*Seleucus*, attendant to Cleopatra  
*Diomedes*, attendant to Cleopatra  
*A Soothsayer*  
*A Clown*  
*Cleopatra*, Queen of Egypt  
*Octavia*, Antony's wife; sister of Caesar  
*Charmian*, attendant to Cleopatra  
*Iras*, attendant to Cleopatra  
*Officers, Soldiers, Messengers, and Attendants*

## *As You Like It*

Duke Frederick has usurped the title and throne of his elder brother, Duke Senior. Duke Senior has taken up residence in the Forest of Arden with his band of loyal followers, leaving his daughter, Rosalind, behind at the court. Into this situation, enter Orlando and Oliver de Boys, two brothers divided by enmity. Orlando has long been mistreated by his brother; when Orlando enters a wrestling match sponsored by Duke Frederick, Oliver tells his opponent, Charles—a champion wrestler—that he wouldn't care if Charles were to break Orlando's neck.

To the surprise of all, Orlando wins the match. In doing so, he attracts the romantic attention of Rosalind and the ire of Oliver. Orlando and his servant, Adam, flee Oliver's wrath into Arden. Duke Frederick decides to banish Rosalind to Arden as he did with her father. Celia, Frederick's daughter and Rosalind's best friend, declares that she will accompany her in exile. Rosalind disguises herself as a boy named Ganymede, while Celia assumes the part of "his" sister, Aliena. They are accompanied by the clown Touchstone.

Orlando eventually finds himself in the company of Duke Senior's men, pining for his lost Rosalind. Rosalind, meanwhile, purchases a flock of sheep and a pasture, and sets out to lead a pastoral life. Before long, however, Orlando's habit of carving Rosalind's name in the trees and leaving love poems scattered about the forest tip her off to his presence. Still disguised as Ganymede, Rosalind seeks out Orlando to get a better sense of his feelings for her. She promises to cure Orlando's heartache by letting him pour his feelings out to Ganymede as if "he" were Rosalind. Rosalind also attempts a match between Silvius and Phebe that goes awry when Phebe falls instead for Rosalind's Ganymede. Meanwhile, Touchstone courts a country girl named Audrey, adding to the multiple romance plots.

The resolution begins when Oliver enters the camp. Orlando has saved him from an attack by a lion, and the two brothers have reconciled. Upon meeting Celia, now Oliver falls in love; Duke Senior promises to join them in wedlock the next day. Rosalind makes Phebe promise to marry Silvius if she can't have Ganymede, then tells Orlando that Rosalind will marry him that day as well. When all have gathered for the wedding, Rosalind reveals herself as the erstwhile Ganymede. She and Orlando are happily reunited, and Phebe agrees to marry Silvius. Touchstone will also marry Audrey. As the pledges of love are exchanged, Orlando and Oliver's brother enters the scene. Jaques brings news that Duke

Frederick, upon meeting a holy man, has repented his ways and opted for a monastic life. Duke Senior is restored to his rightful position, and all live happily ever after.

### *Dramatis Personae*

#### *Duke Senior*

*Frederick*, his brother; a usurper

*Amiens*, lord attending Duke

*Jaques*, lord attending Duke

*Le Beau*, a courtier

*Charles*, a wrestler

*Oliver*, son of de Boys

*Jaques*, son of de Boys

*Orlando*, son of de Boys

*Adam*, servant to Oliver

*Dennis*, servant to Oliver

*Touchstone*, a clown

*Sir Oliver Martext*, a vicar

*Corin*, a shepherd

*Silvius*, a shepherd

*William*, in love with Audrey

*Rosalind*, daughter of the Duke

*Celia*, daughter of Frederick

*Phebe*, a shepherdess

*Audrey*, a country wench

*Person presenting Hymen*

*Lords, Pages, Foresters, and Attendants*

## *The Comedy of Errors*

The play opens with Aegeon, a merchant of Syracuse, being arrested in Ephesus because of enmity between Ephesus and Syracuse. Aegeon tells Solinus, the Duke of Ephesus, his tale: he was shipwrecked many years ago while sailing with his wife, Aemilia, and two pairs of identical twins—their twin sons, both named Antipholus, and twin servants, both named Dromio. In the course of the storm, his wife, one of their sons, and one their servants, were lost. At eighteen, Aegeon had allowed the remaining Antipholus and Dromio to leave Syracuse for Ephesus to search for their long-lost twins, at which point both of them had disappeared as well. After five years, Aegeon had come to Ephesus to find them.

Solinus, moved by the old man's tale, postpones Aegeon's sentence; Aegeon has until nightfall to produce a ransom, or he will be put to death. At this point in the action, Antipholus of Syracuse arrives in Ephesus, and the farce commences as everyone—including the twins themselves—confuses the identities of the twins. Antipholus of Syracuse ends up invited to dinner at the home of Antipholus of Ephesus and dines with his twin's wife, Adriana. Meanwhile, Angelo, a merchant, gives a gold chain commissioned by Antipholus of Ephesus to Antipholus of Syracuse by mistake, telling him he'll come back later for payment. When Antipholus of Ephesus refuses to pay later on, Angelo has him arrested. All this time, Adriana and her sister, Luciana, are convinced that Antipholus and Dromio (of Ephesus) have gone mad, which leads them to forcibly restrain them and take them to a doctor.

Of course, when Adriana later encounters Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse, she thinks they've escaped from the doctor. The pair from Syracuse are forced to flee into a nearby abbey for refuge. In the meantime, Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus do escape from the doctor, and arrive to petition the Duke as Aegeon is being led to his death. In the midst of everyone trying to tell their varying accounts of the day, Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse arrive with the abbess—who turns out to be Aemilia, Aegeon's long-lost wife. The twins all sort out their stories in the presence of the Duke. In the end, Aegeon is released from his death sentence and reunited with his wife and sons, Antipholus of Syracuse is set to marry Luciana, and all has been put to right.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Solinus*, Duke of Ephesus  
*Aegeon*, a merchant of Syracuse  
*Antipholus of Ephesus*, *Antipholus of Syracuse*, twin brothers  
*Dromio of Ephesus*, *Dromio of Syracuse*, twin brothers and servants  
*Balthasar*, a merchant  
*Angelo*, a goldsmith  
*Dr. Pinch*, schoolmaster  
*Aemilia*, Abbess of Ephesus and Aegeon's wife  
*Adriana*, wife of Antipholus of Ephesus  
*Luce*, her maid  
*Luciana*, sister of Adriana  
*Two merchants*  
*Courtesan*  
*Jailer*  
*Officers*  
*Headsmen*  
*Attendants*

## *Coriolanus*

The setting is ancient Italy in the years before the rise of the Roman Empire. The citizens of Rome are disgruntled and mistrustful of the patrician Senate. Marcius holds the rabble in contempt, for the most part, and draws the ire of the plebes by calling them cowards. However, Marcius is Rome's best general, and when the neighboring Volscians wage war upon Rome, Marcius takes their capital, Corioli, single-handedly. In honor of his accomplishment he is given the new name of Coriolanus; Tullus Aufidius, the Volscian general, vows to avenge the defeat.

Coriolanus is given a great welcome back in Rome for his victory, and the Senate wishes to make him a consul. However, he must have popular support to be elected to this position, and two tribunes, Brutus and Sicinius, conspire to reverse the plebes' opinion on him. In turn, Coriolanus denounces the tribunes, even saying that the office itself should be abolished. Volumnia, his mother, attempts to soothe him, but when confronted with the tribunes in front of the people, their insults and accusations are too much for the proud warrior. His temper earns him banishment. Coriolanus angrily travels to Antium.

There Coriolanus meets with Aufidius. He offers himself as a war leader, for Aufidius either to accept or to slay. Aufidius grants him the leadership of half the Volscian army. Though Aufidius chafes under Coriolanus's arrogance, the two generals invade Roman territory, advancing to the very gates of Rome itself. All of Coriolanus's previous friends and allies try to reason with him; however, it takes Volumnia to convince him to negotiate for peace. When Coriolanus returns to the Volscians, he explains that Rome will not be conquered—only to be dragged before the Volscian senators, accused of treason by Aufidius, and unceremoniously stabbed to death.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Caius Marcius*, afterward Caius Marcius Coriolanus

*Titus Lartius*

*Cominius*

*Menenius Agrippa*

*Sicinius Velutus*

*Junius Brutus*

*Young Marcius*

*A Roman Herald*

*Tullius Aufidius*

*Lieutenant to Aufidius*

*Conspirators*

*A Citizen of Antium*

*Two Volscian Guards*

*Volumnia*, mother of Coriolanus

*Virgilia*, wife of Coriolanus

*Valeria*, friend to Virgilia

*Gentlewoman attendant to Virgilia*

*Senators, Patricians, Aediles, Lictors, Citizens*

*Soldiers, Messengers*

*Servants to Aufidius and other Attendants*



## Cymbeline

Cymbeline is King of Britain; his first wife died, and he married a wicked queen. Imogen, Cymbeline's daughter is in love with Posthumus, but her stepmother wants Imogen to marry Cloten, the queen's son. When Imogen balks and secretly marries Posthumus, the king has him banished. Before his departure, Posthumus gives Imogen a bracelet, and she gives him a ring. Posthumus arrives in Rome, where he brags of his wife's beauty and fidelity. When Iachimo questions this, he and Posthumus propose a wager that Iachimo can't seduce Imogen. Iachimo hastens to Britain, where he is rebuffed several times by Imogen. Meanwhile, the malicious stepmother has arranged for her physician to create a poison for Pisanio, a servant and friend of Posthumus. The physician, distrustful of the wicked queen, prepares instead a type of sleeping potion. This is given to Pisanio.

Iachimo, still striving for Imogen, is nothing if not crafty. The rogue hides in a chest carried into Imogen's room, then steals her bracelet while she sleeps. He also takes note of a mole not easily seen. Armed with detail and her bracelet, Iachimo tells Posthumus that he has won the bet, whereupon Posthumus gives up the ring that Imogen gave him. Posthumus, considerably peeved at Imogen, sends a letter to Britain instructing Pisanio to kill her for him. Pisanio instead warns Imogen of the anger of Posthumus, and Imogen flees Cymbeline's court disguised as a page. He also gives the potion, which he believes is a "sovereign restorative," to Imogen. While this is happening, Cymbeline angers Lucius, a Roman ambassador to the point that Rome declares war on Britain over an unpaid tribute to Caesar.

Imogen, in the meantime, gets lost and encounters Belarius, a banished noble who kidnapped Cymbeline's two sons (Guiderius and Arviragus) as infants twenty years before. Imogen, still disguised as the page Fidele, is invited to stay with them. Cloten, however, soon appears on the scene; disguised in Posthumus's clothes, he is on the hunt for Imogen and Posthumus (who he believes to be in Milford Haven). There he encounters Guiderius, who slays Cloten after being insulted. He then cuts off Cloten's head and tosses it into the river. Meanwhile, Imogen has been feeling ill and has taken the Queen's potion, which has made her seem dead. Belarius and the sons lay her beside Cloten's dead body, which, being disguised, is mistaken by Imogen for Posthumus when she awakens, and promptly faints. When she recovers, the despairing Imogen (still disguised as Fidele) accepts service as a page with Lucius (who happens by as she comes to).

Meanwhile, the war continues, and at the court of Cymbeline, the Queen has begun to go mad from the disappearance of Cloten.

Posthumus has returned with the invading armies, but disguises himself as a Briton with the hope of dying in battle against the invaders. However, with the aid of Posthumus, Belarius, and the two brothers, the Britons win a glorious battle. Posthumus is later captured and thrown into prison, mistaken for a Roman. There he has a strange prophetic vision. Likewise, Iachimo, Lucius, and Imogen (Fidele) are captured and brought to Cymbeline. The Queen, her condition worsening, confesses her evil doings on her deathbed before expiring. In the ensuing confessions that follow, Iachimo confesses to stealing the bracelet and lying, Posthumus reveals his own identity, Pisanio admits his part in helping Imogen escape, Belarius admits to kidnapping the two boys, and Posthumus and Imogen are reunited and allowed to stay married. A soothsayer interprets Posthumus's vision as the rejoining of Cymbeline's family (which has happened). Finally, Cymbeline releases his prisoners and comes to peaceful terms with Rome.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Cymbeline*, King of Britain  
*Cloten*, son of the Queen  
*Posthumus Leonatus*, husband of Imogen  
*Belarius*, banished lord; disguised as Morgan  
*Guiderius*  
*Arviragus*  
*Philario*  
*Iachimo*  
*Caius Lucius*  
*Pisanio*  
*Cornelius*  
*A French Gentleman*, friend of Philario  
*A Roman Captain*  
*Two British Captains*  
*Two Lords*, two Gentlemen of Cymbeline's court  
*Two Jailers*  
*Queen*, wife of Cymbeline  
*Imogen*, daughter of Cymbeline by a former queen  
*Helen*, a lady attendant to Imogen  
*Lords, Ladies, Roman Senators, Tribunes*  
*A Soothsayer*  
*A Dutch Gentleman and a Spanish Gentleman*  
*Musicians, Officers, Captains, Soldiers*  
*Messengers and Attendants*  
*Apparitions*

## *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, has multiple woes. The ghost of his father haunts Elsinore; his uncle, Claudius, has married Queen Gertrude, his mother, and assumed the throne; and Fortinbras of Norway threatens Denmark with an invading army. When Hamlet meets the ghost, his dead father reveals that Claudius poisoned him—and the ghost demands that Hamlet exact revenge. In order to carry this out, Hamlet feigns madness; as part of his insanity, he scorns the affections of Ophelia, daughter of Polonius, to whom he had made romantic overtures. Polonius grows concerned over the apparent insanity that has beset Hamlet and reveals it to the King and Queen. Meanwhile, Hamlet struggles to convince himself that Claudius is the murderer of his father, and in an attempt to “catch the king’s conscience,” Hamlet convinces a traveling troupe of actors to perform a play in which the action closely resembles the events related to him by the ghost.

While Hamlet, judging the reaction of Claudius, is convinced of the new king’s guilt, he can’t bring himself to slay him outright. Instead, Hamlet rebukes Gertrude with the news that she is sleeping with the killer of her husband. Unfortunately, Polonius—who is hidden behind a tapestry in the Queen’s chamber, eavesdropping—panics and cries for help; Hamlet stabs him, thinking it is Claudius. Of course, when this news is given to Claudius, the King sends Hamlet to England with the ostensible purpose of securing Hamlet’s safety and the recovery of his senses. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two childhood friends of Hamlet’s who are now little more than spies for Claudius, are to accompany him. The trick is that Hamlet will bear a letter to the King of England in which Claudius asks England to sentence Hamlet to death.

In the midst of these events, Ophelia loses her own sanity; she is driven to madness by Hamlet’s condition and the death of Polonius. Laertes, her brother, returns to Elsinore from his studies and vows his vengeance upon Hamlet for what the prince has done to his family. News is brought that Hamlet has returned to Denmark, much to the surprise of Claudius, and that Ophelia has drowned herself in a river. Claudius now plots with Laertes to kill Hamlet upon his return to Elsinore. Meanwhile, Hamlet meets Horatio, his best friend, and tells how he altered the letter so that the execution order was for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern instead of him. At the end of Hamlet’s tale, Ophelia’s funeral procession enters, and Laertes and Hamlet confront one another. Laertes challenges Hamlet to a duel.

This is all part of Claudius’s plot; instead of dull blades, Laertes will select a sharp one. In addition, Laertes is to poison the tip of his blade so that a wound will kill the prince. And, just in case the

previous measures are not enough, Claudius will keep a poisoned chalice from which Hamlet will drink. The plan goes awry from the beginning; Laertes is unable to wound Hamlet during the first pass. Between rounds, Gertrude raises a toast to Hamlet with the poisoned chalice. Then, in the heat of the duel, Laertes manages to wound Hamlet but loses the poisoned rapier to him, and Laertes himself is poisoned as well. Gertrude swoons to her death; Laertes falls and reveals the plot against Hamlet, telling him he has “not a half-hour’s life” in him. Enraged, Hamlet stabs Claudius with the poisoned foil, then makes him drink from the chalice that slew Gertrude. This done, Hamlet collapses and dies in Horatio’s arms as Fortinbras enters the castle. Fortinbras is left to rule Denmark, as the entire royal family is dead, and he bids his men give Hamlet and the rest a proper funeral.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Claudius*, King of Denmark  
*Hamlet*, Prince of Denmark; nephew of Claudius  
*Fortinbras*, Prince of Norway  
*Horatio*, friend of Hamlet  
*Polonius*, Lord Chamberlain  
*Laertes*, his son  
*Voltemand*, a courtier  
*Cornelius*, a courtier  
*Rosencrantz*, a courtier  
*Guildenstern*, a courtier  
*Osrice*, a courtier  
*A Gentleman*  
*A Priest*  
*Marcellus*, an officer  
*Bernardo*, an officer  
*Francisco*, a soldier  
*Reynaldo*, servant to Polonius  
*A Captain*  
*English Ambassadors*  
*Players*  
*Two Clowns*, gravediggers  
*Gertrude*, Queen of Denmark and mother of Hamlet  
*Ophelia*, daughter of Polonius  
*Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sailors*  
*Messengers, and Attendants*  
*Ghost of Hamlet’s father*



## *Henry IV, Part I*

King Henry IV has two main problems as the opens. First, the Welsh leader Owen Glendower has beaten one of the King's armies and captured its leader, Edmund Mortimer. Second, his son, Hal, is a miscreant keeping company with rogues such as Falstaff. The Percy family is less than happy when Henry refuses to ransom Mortimer from Glendower, and the heads of the family—Worcester, Northumberland, and Henry Percy, who is nicknamed "Hotspur"—decide that they will in turn not yield prisoners from a Scottish campaign to King Henry. Then they set about stirring up a rebellion in collusion with York, Douglas, Mortimer, and even Glendower. In the midst of this, young Hal, the Prince of Wales, is content in running with Falstaff and his lot, drinking, playing pranks, and thieving.

The rebels led by the Percys immediately run into difficulties. Hotspur proves quarrelsome, arguing with Glendower over the division of England once King Henry is defeated—and this before the battle has even begun. Northumberland takes ill, and Glendower's force is seriously delayed. Added to these troubles, King Henry has finally struck a chord within his son, Hal; after a lengthy rebuke, Hal determines to make amends with his father with a valiant display against the rebels. King Henry has also raised a considerable army to stop Hotspur and the rest.

In a parley preceding the battle, Hal offers to settle matters in a one-on-one contest with Hotspur, winner take all; Henry will even offer pardons to everyone else on the rebel side if Hal and Hotspur meet. Worcester, Hotspur's representative, does not trust this offer, and instead lies to Hotspur that King Henry is spoiling for a fight. In the ensuing battle, the rebels are resoundingly defeated. Hal slays Hotspur, saving his father in the process, although Falstaff—who survives the battle by playing dead—attempts to steal the glory for Hotspur's death. Hal, unwilling at this point to press the issue, lets Falstaff have his moment. All seems well for the moment, but there are other rebels lurking in the background in Henry IV, Part II.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*King Henry the Fourth*

*Henry, Prince of Wales, called Prince Hal*

*Prince John of Lancaster*

*Earl of Westmoreland*

*Sir Walter Blunt*

*Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester*

*Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland*

*Henry Percy, called Hotspur*

*Edmund Mortimer*

*Richard Scroop*

*Archibald, Earl of Douglas*

*Owen Glendower*

*Sir Richard Vernon*

*Sir John Falstaff*

*Sir Michael*

*Poins*

*Gadshill*

*Peto*

*Bardolph*

*Lady Percy, wife of Hotspur*

*Lady Mortimer*

*Mistress Quickly*

*Lords, Officers, Sheriff, Vintner*

*Chamberlain, Drawers, Carriers, Travelers and Attendants*

## Henry IV, Part II

The play picks up the action three years after the death of Hotspur at Shrewsbury. Westmoreland and Lancaster are appointed by the king to lead an army against the last of the rebels. The Archbishop of York, Scroop, is backing the lords Hastings, Mowbray, and Bardolph, along with the tacit support of Northumberland. Northumberland, however, is later dissuaded from joining the rebellion by Lady Grey. Meanwhile, Falstaff is back at the Boar's Head Inn, driving Mistress Quickly out of business with his appetite. Prince Hal visits to have some sport with him, but both he and Falstaff are soon summoned to war by the king, who has come down with a grave illness. Falstaff is to recruit soldiers for the king's army.

This is not a duty one would normally entrust to Falstaff, and true to form, Falstaff finds himself lingering in Gloucestershire with the local justice, Shallow. His "recruits" are easily allowed to buy their way out of service to the army, and Falstaff wastes no opportunity to take advantage of Shallow's hospitality or wallet. In the meantime, the rebel army forces the king to send his younger son, Prince John of Lancaster, to parley with the insurrectionists. John agrees to address the issues raised by the rebels, but only if their army is dispersed. That done, John's army (which has conveniently not disbanded) seizes Scroop and the rest of the lords at the head of the conspiracy. The leaders are summarily executed.

King Henry IV, by this time, is near death with his illness. In a deathbed meeting with Hal, the king is at last reconciled with his son, convinced that his true nobility will prevail. With that accomplished, the king dies; Hal ascends to the throne as King Henry V. When Falstaff hears this news, he immediately sets out for London—after all, Falstaff is a freeloader, and the thought of his old friend's new station has him envisioning all kinds of rewards. To his shock, Henry bars him and any of his acquaintances from henceforth approaching within ten miles of him on pain of death.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Rumour*, the presenter  
*King Henry the Fourth*  
*Henry*, Prince of Wales; afterwards King Henry the Fifth  
*Thomas of Clarence*  
*Prince John of Lancaster*  
*Humphrey of Gloucester*  
*Earl of Warwick*  
*Earl of Westmoreland*  
*Earl of Surrey*  
*Gower*  
*Harcourt*  
*Blunt*  
*Lord Chief Justice*  
*A Servant to the Chief Justice*  
*Earl of Northumberland*  
*Scroop*, Archbishop of York  
*Lord Mowbray*  
*Lord Hastings*  
*Lord Bardolph*  
*Sir John Coleville*  
*Travers and Morton*  
*Falstaff, Bardolph, Pistol, and a Page*  
*Poins and Peto*  
*Shallow and Silence*, country justices  
*Davy*, Shallow's servant  
*Mouldy, Shadow, Wart, Feeble, and Bullcalf*, recruits  
*Fang and Snare*, sheriff's officers  
*Lady Northumberland*  
*Lady Percy*  
*Mistress Quickly*  
*Doll Tearsheet*  
*Lords and Attendants*  
*Officers, Messengers, Soldiers*  
*Porter, Drawer, Beadles, Grooms, etc.*  
*A Dancer* *Speaker of the Epilogue*

## Henry V

The Archbishop of Canterbury, worried over impending legislation that would effectively rob the Church in England of its power and wealth, convinces Henry V to forego this pursuit in favor of laying claim to France. Armed with a legal technicality, Henry means to take the throne of France by whatever means necessary. The Dauphin's insulting response—sending an ambassador with a gift of tennis balls—convinces Henry that the French will only respond to war; thus, he arranges for an army to invade France. However, rebellion has always seemed to follow when the king's away, and Henry makes certain that he leaves behind enough troops in England to quell any potential uprising. That leaves him with a relatively small invasion force.

In fact, Henry must deal with one plot before even crossing the Channel. Lords Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey are discovered to be conspiring to assassinate Henry (paid for by the French). Henry makes a very public example of all three, arresting them in person and seeing to their execution. The army then lays siege to Harfleur, capturing it after heavy losses in battle with the city's defenders. Henry attempts to take his army out of France before the onset of winter; however, now the French are certain that they can teach the young king a humiliating lesson on the field of battle. Henry is resolute, nonetheless. If the French want a decisive battle, they will have it.

While in camp, Henry disguises himself as a common soldier in order to mingle with his troops before the battle. There he talks candidly with his men, and they with him. The men may be leery of their king, but their willingness to battle the French army is undaunted. The next day at Agincourt, Henry makes the stirring St. Crispin's Day speech, knowing his army is outnumbered five to one. Aided mightily by the longbows of his archers, Henry makes the day a rout for the French. The French must now sue for peace, which Henry will grant—completely on his own terms, of course. According to the terms of the Treaty of Troyes, Henry will marry Princess Katherine of France and will be named as heir to the French throne. England and France will thus be united in peace.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*King Henry the Fifth*  
*Humphrey of Gloucester*  
*Duke of Bedford*  
*Duke of Exeter*  
*Duke of York*  
*Earls of Salisbury, Westmoreland, and Warwick*  
*Archbishop of Canterbury*  
*Bishop of Ely*  
*Earl of Cambridge*  
*Lord Scroop*  
*Sir Thomas Grey*  
*Sir Thomas Erpingham, Gower, Fluellen, Macmorris, Jamy*  
*Bates, Court, Williams*  
*Pistol, Nym, Bardolph*  
*Boy*  
*A Herald*  
*Charles the Sixth, King of France*  
*Lewis, the Dauphin*  
*Dukes of Burgundy, Orleans, and Bourbon*  
*The Constable of France*  
*Rambures and Grandpré*  
*Montjoy*  
*Governor of Harfleur*  
*Ambassadors to England*  
*Isabel, Queen of France*  
*Katherine, daughter of Charles and Isabel*  
*Alice*  
*Hostess of the tavern, wife of Pistol*  
*Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Citizens*  
*Chorus*

## Henry VI, Part I

Henry V of England has died, and a young Henry VI ascends to the throne. Charles, the Dauphin of France, is nurturing a rebellion across the Channel, and there are growing rifts among the nobles in England, notably between factions of York and Lancaster (which will fester and over time become the War of the Roses). Emboldened by the exploits of Joan la Pucelle (Joan of Arc), the French attack Talbot at Orleans and drive the English army toward the sea. Talbot, however, manages to retake Orleans by night in a surprise attack.

In England, Richard Plantagenet and the Duke of Somerset have a disagreement concerning the letter of a law. The two men ask others to show their support for their respective positions: those supporting Richard pick a white rose, and those supporting Somerset pick a red one. Richard seeks the counsel of his uncle, Edmund Mortimer, and comes away from the discussion convinced that the throne more rightfully belongs to the house of York than young King Henry. Winchester and Gloucester continue a feud of their own, in the meantime.

Back in France, Joan battles the English and drives them from Rouen, but an English counterattack gives it back. Talbot and Burgundy prepare for Henry VI's coronation in Paris. Joan asks Burgundy for a parley on the road to Paris, which the duke accepts; this leads to Joan convincing the Duke of Burgundy to switch over to the French side. Talbot, upon hearing of Burgundy's defection, marches his army against him, and Henry appoints Richard and the Duke of Somerset to reinforce Talbot in the battle. The bickering of Somerset and Richard, however, leads to delays in sending their troops. Talbot fights valiantly, but is slain in the combat when the additional soldiers never arrive.

Richard and Somerset set aside their differences long enough to capture Joan of Arc and burn her as a witch. In the meantime, Gloucester is trying to set up a match between Henry and the daughter of a French lord in order to force a peace between France and England. The Earl of Suffolk, however, introduces Margaret of Anjou to Henry in an attempt to get him to marry her. However, Suffolk has some designs of his own on Margaret, hoping to use her to control Henry. This leads to the action of Henry VI, Part II.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*King Henry the Sixth*  
*Humphrey of Gloucester*  
*Duke of Bedford*  
*Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter*  
*Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester*  
*John Beaufort, Earl of Somerset*  
*Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York*  
*Earl of Warwick*  
*Earl of Salisbury*  
*Earl of Suffolk*  
*Lord Talbot*  
*John Talbot*  
*Edmund Mortimer*  
*Sir John Fastolf, Sir William Lucy*  
*Sir William Glansdale, Sir Thomas Gargrave*  
*Mayor of London*  
*Woodvile*  
*Vernon*  
*Basset*  
*Mortimer's Keepers*  
*A Lawyer*  
*Charles Dauphin, afterwards King of France*  
*Reignier, Duke of Anjou*  
*Duke of Burgundy*  
*Duke of Alençon*  
*Bastard of Orleans*  
*Governor of Paris*  
*Master-Gunner of Orleans and his son*  
*General of French Forces in Bordeaux*  
*A French Sergeant*  
*A Porter*  
*An Old Shepherd, father to Joan*  
*Margaret*  
*Countess of Auvergne*  
*Joan la Pucelle (called Joan of Arc)*  
*Lords, Warders of the Tower, Heralds*  
*Officers, Soldiers, Messengers and Attendants*  
*Fiends, to appear before Joan*

## Henry VI, Part II

Picking up from the closing action of Part II, Suffolk introduces Margaret to Henry, who elevates Suffolk from an earl to a duke. Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester is unhappy with Margaret's lack of dowry, and much less with Henry giving up two fiefs to France in the process. Suffolk sets plots into motion against Gloucester, who is perhaps the only honest supporter of Henry at this point; he sets up Gloucester's wife to be arrested for witchcraft. Meanwhile, York lurks in the background, convinced of his legitimate claim to Henry's throne.

Gloucester is eventually arrested on charges invented by his enemies. These he manages to fend off, but the king still orders that he go to trial. During this process, York is sent to Ireland to quell a revolt; while in Ireland, York will leave it to a henchman, Jack Cade, to muster support among the populace for York to depose Henry. If Cade succeeds, York has an army at his back to use against Henry when he returns from Ireland. In the meantime, Gloucester is murdered at Suffolk's behest. Henry in turn banishes Suffolk under heavy pressure from the populace. Margaret, who has carried on an affair with Suffolk, pleads on his behalf to no avail. Suffolk is en route to France when he is captured by pirates and summarily put to death.

Cade's rebellion gathers support, and he marches on London; Henry stages a retreat before him. Buckingham, however, confronts his force with an army and pardons to all who abandon Cade. Cade must now flee, and after a five-day flight without food, is killed while foraging in a private garden. In the wake of this failed uprising, York returns from Ireland—and demands that the king arrest Somerset before his men lay down their arms. The king does so, but Margaret frees him just as quickly, leading York to declare war on King Henry; York will take the crown by force if necessary. At the Battle of St. Albans, Richard, son of York, slays Somerset. The Yorkists then set out in pursuit of the fleeing Henry and Margaret, leading into Henry VI, Part III.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*King Henry the Sixth*  
*Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester*  
*Cardinal Beaufort*  
*Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York*  
*Edward, Earl of March*  
*Richard, Duke of Gloucester*  
*Duke of Somerset*  
*Duke of Suffolk*  
*Duke of Buckingham*  
*Lord Clifford*  
*Young Clifford*  
*Earl of Salisbury*  
*Earl of Warwick*  
*Lord Scales*  
*Lord Say*  
*Sir Humphrey Stafford*  
*Sir John Stanley*  
*Sir William Vaux*  
*Matthew Goffe*  
*Walter Whitmore*  
*A Sea Captain, Master, and Master's Mate*  
*Two Gentlemen, prisoners with Suffolk*  
*John Hume and John Southwell*  
*Bolingbroke*  
*Thomas Horner*  
*Peter*  
*Clerk of Chatham*  
*Mayor of St. Alban's*  
*Simpcox*  
*Jack Cade*  
*George Bevis, John Holland*  
*Dick the Butcher, Smith the Weaver, Michael, etc.*  
*Alexander Iden*  
*Two Murderers*  
*Margaret, Queen of King Henry*  
*Margery Jourdain*  
*Wife of Simpcox*  
*Lords, Ladies, and Attendants*  
*Herald, Petitioner, Aldermen*  
*A Beadle, Sheriff, and Officers*  
*Citizens, Prentices, Falconers, Guards, Soldiers, Messengers, etc.*  
*A Spirit*



## Henry VI, Part III

In the wake of the Yorkist victory at St. Albans, York now has the crown of England. Henry arranges for a parley and presents an offer to York: Henry will rule England until his death, with ascension at that time passing to the house of York. York agrees, but this infuriates Queen Margaret; the Prince of Wales, her son, will be the next king. At Sandal Castle, Margaret leads an army that defeats the Yorkists, killing the Duke of York and his youngest boy, Rutland. A rally by the Yorkists, however, leads to Margaret and Henry fleeing to France and Scotland, respectively. Edward, eldest son of York, assumes the title of King of England.

Henry secretly returns to England, where he is captured by Edward and put in the Tower of London. Margaret, meanwhile, is petitioning the King of France to come to Henry's aid. However, Warwick enters the scene trying to broker a marriage between Edward and the King's sister-in-law, Bona, and the King temporarily lends his allegiance to Edward—only to revoke it when word comes that Edward has hastily wed a woman he fancies, Lady Grey. Warwick, also affronted by the betrayal of his mission, joins forces with Margaret as well.

Meanwhile, back in England, further dissension is sown between the York brothers. Richard seeks the throne for himself, and George, Duke of Clarence, is disgruntled with his own lot. Clarence ends up defecting to Margaret's side with Warwick and the French forces. Warwick, however, manages to capture Edward before the major combat begins, thus temporarily restoring Henry to the throne. But Richard rescues Edward and gathers a force to meet Warwick. Clarence rejoins his brothers as well, and at Barnet and Tewkesbury, Warwick is defeated and slain by Edward. Though the French troops attempt to rally, Margaret and the Prince of Wales are captured; the sons of York slay the Prince, but Edward grants mercy to Margaret.

Anticipating Edward's further mercy to Henry, Richard pays a visit to the Tower of London, where Henry is held as prisoner. When Henry foretells Richard's bloody future, Richard kills him. Edward now holds the throne as King Edward IV, but Richard yet plots his own means to usurp the crown for himself.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*King Henry the Sixth*  
*Edward*, Prince of Wales, his son  
*Lewis the Eleventh*, King of France  
*Duke of Somerset*  
*Duke of Exeter*  
*Earl of Oxford*  
*Earl of Northumberland*  
*Earl of Westmoreland*  
*Lord Clifford*  
*Richard Plantagenet*, Duke of York  
*Edward*, Earl of March, afterwards King Edward the Fourth  
*Edmund*, Earl of Rutland  
*George*, Duke of Clarence  
*Richard*, Duke of Gloucester  
*Duke of Norfolk*  
*Marquess of Montague*  
*Earl of Warwick*  
*Earl of Pembroke*  
*Lord Hastings*  
*Lord Stafford*  
*Sir John Mortimer*  
*Sir Hugh Mortimer*  
*Henry*, Earl of Richmond  
*Earl Rivers*  
*Sir William Stanley*  
*Sir John Montgomery*  
*Sir John Somerville*  
*Tutor to Rutland*  
*Mayor of York*  
*Lieutenant of the Tower*  
*A Nobleman*  
*Two Keepers*  
*A Huntsman*  
*A Son*, who has killed his father  
*A Father*, who has killed his son  
*Queen Margaret*  
*Lady Grey*, afterwards Queen to Edward the Fourth  
*Bona*  
*Soldiers and other Attendants, Messengers, Watchmen*

## Henry VIII

Cardinal Wolsey, a close advisor to King Henry VII, has arranged that the Duke of Buckingham is arrested on charges of treason. Henry's wife, Queen Katherine, pleads on Buckingham's behalf with no success; Buckingham is tried and executed. Katherine condemns Wolsey, who is despised for the taxes he levels on the populace in the King Henry's name. Later, at a party hosted by Wolsey, Henry meets and is smitten with Anne Bullen, a lady-in-waiting to Queen Katherine.

Henry seeks counsel from Wolsey. Henry's argument is that Katherine is the widow of his brother, which makes the marriage one step removed from incest—never mind that Henry and Katherine have been wed for almost twenty years. Wolsey, already hated by Henry's courtiers for his role in Buckingham's death, is now further despised because Henry wishes a divorce. Wolsey agrees to have the Pope send a representative to render a decision on the matter. Katherine, on the other hand, wants nothing to do with such proceedings, viewing her marriage as sacred, valid, and incapable of being dissolved. Nevertheless, hearings will be held.

Wolsey, however, endures a series of mishaps that expose him unflatteringly to King Henry. Most damning in Henry's eyes is Wolsey's meddling in his divorce proceedings: Wolsey, recognizing that Henry intends to marry Anne once Katherine is out of the way, has instructed the Pope to stay any decision on the matter. Wolsey is disgraced, and Henry proceeds to divorce Katherine and marry Anne in secret regardless of the Pope's opinion. Wolsey dies soon after, and Katherine (who is in poor health at this point) soon follows him to the grave.

Meanwhile, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Cranmer, is the subject of a plot by Gardiner, Wolsey's secretary. Though Gardiner is brought to trial in much the same manner as Buckingham previously, he is under the King's protection. Henry exonerates the Archbishop, and has him christen his new daughter by Anne Bullen, Elizabeth. At the christening, Cranmer foretells a noble reign for Elizabeth and glory for England in her time.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*King Henry the Eighth*

*Cardinal Wolsey*

*Cardinal Campeius*

*Capucius*

*Cranmer*

*Duke of Norfolk*

*Duke of Suffolk*

*Duke of Buckingham*

*Earl of Surrey*

*Lord Chamberlain*

*Lord Chancellor*

*Gardiner*

*Bishop of Lincoln*

*Lord Abergavenny*

*Lord Sandys*

*Sir Henry Guilford*

*Sir Thomas Lovell*

*Sir Anthony Denny*

*Sir Nicholas Vaux*

*Cromwell*

*Secretaries to Wolsey*

*Griffith*

*Three Gentlemen*

*Garter King-at-Arms*

*Doctor Butts*

*Surveyor to the Duke of Buckingham*

*Brandon*

*Door-keeper of the Council-chamber*

*Porter and his man*

*Page to Gardiner*

*A Crier*

*Queen Katherine*

*Anne Bullen*

*An Old Lady*

*Patience*

*Lords and Ladies in the Dumb-shows*

*Women attending the Queen*

*Scribes, Officers, Guards, other Attendants*

*Spirits*

## Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar enters Rome on the Feast of Lupercal as a hero beloved by the populace. He has triumphed first over the Gauls, then over the army of Pompey. When the senators see the reaction—including Mark Antony attempting three times to crown him as a king—some take this as a threat to Rome. Cassius in particular has serious misgivings about Caesar’s ambition. However, the popularity that Julius Caesar enjoys makes any plot against him particularly difficult. To offset Caesar’s support base, Cassius makes overtures to Marcus Brutus, a nobleman known for his integrity and idealism; if Brutus were to support it, a conspiracy would seem more palatable to the citizens of Rome. Brutus is also a close friend of Caesar, which adds to the moral dilemma presented in the play.

As a metaphor for the coming action, a great storm besets Rome. Brutus ponders his course of action, realizing that the conspiracy may well have to contemplate assassination. Eventually, with the prodding of Cassius and others, Brutus comes to rationalize such an act as necessary for a greater good. However, Brutus dissuades the conspirators from slaying Antony with him. Caesar, already warned by a soothsayer and Calphurnia, his wife, ignores all advice to the contrary and pays a visit to the Senate. There he is stabbed to death by Brutus, Cassius, and the rest.

Mark Antony strikes a truce with the conspirators, asking to accompany Caesar’s body and speak at his funeral. Brutus agrees, and at the funeral delivers a stirring oratory that explains the reasoning for the assassination. Antony follows with the well-known “Friends, Romans, and countrymen” soliloquy, and through his masterful use of irony stirs the crowd—which to this point had been solidly behind the conspirators—to call for the blood of Cassius, Brutus, and anyone else associated with Caesar’s death.

Antony then plots with Octavius (nephew to Julius Caesar) and Lepidus to wrest control of Rome by force of arms. Their ruthlessness exterminates many of the original conspirators, as well as other perceived enemies. Meanwhile, Brutus and Cassius raise armies against them. In a final battle, Brutus initially has success against the forces of Octavius; however, Cassius falls on his own sword when beset by Antony’s army. Faced with both Antony and Octavius, Brutus’s army is defeated, and Brutus takes his own life rather than be taken captive. Upon discovering the body, Antony laments the tragic fall of Brutus, calling him the noblest of them all.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Julius Caesar*  
*Octavius Caesar*, Triumvir  
*Mark Antony*, Triumvir  
*M. Aemilius Lepidus*, Triumvir  
*Cicero*, a senator  
*Publius*, a senator  
*Popilius Lena*, a senator  
*Marcus Brutus*, a conspirator  
*Cassius*, a conspirator  
*Casca*, a conspirator  
*Trebonius*, a conspirator  
*Ligarius*, a conspirator  
*Decius Brutus*, a conspirator  
*Metellus Cimber*, a conspirator  
*Cinna*, a conspirator  
*Flavius and Marullus*, tribunes  
*Artemedorus*, a Sophist of Cnidos  
*A Soothsayer*  
*Cinna*, a Poet  
*Another Poet*  
*Lucilius, Titinius, Messala, Young Cato, Volumnius*  
*Varro, Clitius, Claudius, Strato, Lucius, Dardanius*, servants to Brutus  
*Pindarus*, servant to Cassius  
*Calphurnia*, wife of Caesar  
*Portia*, wife of Brutus  
*Senators, Citizens, Guards, Attendants*

## *King John*

The king's nephew, Arthur, is backed by the King of France in a rebellion. Refusing the King of France's demand that he surrender his throne, John sends an army to France under the command of Philip Faulconbridge (also known as Philip the Bastard). The English army clashes with the French at Angiers, but neither one can claim a decisive victory. John proposes peace with the French king, ceding to him some English fiefs in France and arranging for the Dauphin to wed his niece, Blanch.

However, John is excommunicated by the Pope over a dispute concerning the appointment of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Pandulph, the Pope's legate, orders the French to resume their warfare upon King John. In the conflict that follows, John's army beats back the French and captures Arthur. John wishes him executed; his chamberlain, Hubert, disobeys the order, but Arthur later plunges to his death while trying to escape. John's nobles ironically suspect John of murder—which was his original intent—and desert him for the French. Meanwhile, John arranges a peace of sorts with Pandulph, to whom he turns over the crown of England; he will receive it back, therefore becoming a vassal of the Church.

Pandulph attempts to stop the warfare, John now being back in the folds of the Church. The French will have none of it, and the forces clash at St. Edmundsbury. During the battle, a fallen French noble named Melun warns the turncoat English noblemen that the King of France will have them executed just as soon as John has been conquered. The nobles, seeing the winds of fortune shift, return their allegiance to King John. Without his allies, the French king comes to terms with Pandulph and John. John, however, will not be in a position to appreciate the victory—he is poisoned by one of the monks while staying at Swinstead Abbey. His son will ascend to the throne as King Henry III.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*King John*

*Prince Henry*, son to the king

*Arthur*, Duke of Britain; nephew to the king

*Earl of Pembroke*

*Earl of Essex*

*Earl of Salisbury*

*The Lord Bigot*

*Hubert de Burgh*

*Robert Faulconbridge*

*Philip the Bastard*, his half-brother

*James Gurney*

*Peter of Pomfreet*, a prophet

*Philip*, King of France

*Lewis*, the Dauphin

*Lymoges*, Duke of Austria

*Cardinal Pandulph*, Papal legate

*Melun*, a French lord

*Chatillon*, ambassador of France

*Queen Elinor*, mother of King John

*Constance*, mother to Arthur

*Blanch of Spain*, niece of King John

*Lady Falconbridge*

*Lords, Ladies, Citizens of Angiers*

*Sheriff, Heralds, Officers, Soldiers*

*Messengers and other Attendants*

## King Lear

King Lear, the aging King of Britain, determines to split his domain evenly between his three daughters: Goneril, Regan, and the young Cordelia. Goneril, when asked, gushes her protestations of love for her father; Regan follows with even more flattery. Cordelia, however, is sincere in her love of Lear, and she declines to pander to him—she simply says she loves him the way a daughter should love her father. Lear is put off by this lack of pomp and disinherits her, although the King of France says that he would be proud to marry her. When one of his lords, Kent, tries to reason with him, Lear banishes him from the kingdom. Also introduced are Gloucester's two sons, Edgar and Edmund. Edmund is Gloucester's bastard, and intends to gain his father's inheritance by tricking him into thinking that Edgar is plotting to murder him. Edgar disguises himself as a madman and goes into hiding.

Lear is soon to find out how much love Goneril and Regan actually have for him. Both daughters treat him miserably when he stays with them, and Lear is transformed from a powerful king to an impotent old man with only Kent (who has disguised himself and disobeyed Lear's decree of banishment) and a Fool to accompany him. In the middle of the play, Lear is driven mad by his grief at seeing the true nature of his daughters. On a lonely heath, he rages at a storm. There they encounter Edgar, in his disguise as Tom o' Bedlam. Gloucester helps them, providing shelter and sending them to Dover to meet Cordelia and the French king, who has landed an army in England to come to Lear's aid. For his succor to Lear, Gloucester is betrayed by Edmund and has his eyes put out by Cornwall. However, a servant comes to his aid and manages to deliver a fatal wound to Cornwall before being slain by Regan.

In his poor, blind state, Gloucester encounters Edgar (still disguised). Edgar does not yet reveal himself but leads his father toward Dover. In the meantime, Albany, husband of Goneril, has voiced his displeasure at the treatment of Lear and Gloucester. With Regan becoming a widow, and Goneril seeing her husband as a coward, both women turn their attentions to Edmund as a prospective love interest. While this intrigue is going on, the English and French armies meet on the battlefield; the English win the day. When Lear and Cordelia are taken captive, Edmund gives an order that they be hanged, unbeknownst to Albany. Edgar encounters Edmund, and the two duel, with Edgar giving Edmund a mortal wound. Word also comes that Regan and Goneril are dead; Goneril poisoned Regan to win Edmund from her, then killed herself upon Edmund's defeat. Knowing he is about to die, Edmund repents and reveals his plots—including the impending deaths of Lear and Cordelia.

His repentance will go for naught. Lear enters, bearing Cordelia's body. Overcome by his sorrow, Lear collapses and dies beside his lone loving daughter. Gloucester is dead as well, having been reconciled at the last with Edgar. Kent and Edgar depart, leaving Albany to rule Britain.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*King Lear of Britain*  
*King of France*  
*Duke of Burgundy*  
*Duke of Cornwall*  
*Duke of Albany*  
*Earl of Kent*  
*Earl of Gloucester*  
*Edgar, son of Gloucester*  
*Edmund, bastard son of Gloucester*  
*Curan, a courtier*  
*Oswald, steward to Goneril*  
*Goneril, daughter of Lear*  
*Regan, daughter of Lear*  
*Cordelia, daughter of Lear*  
*Old Man, Gloucester's tenant*  
*Doctor*  
*Fool*  
*An Officer*  
*A Herald*  
*A Gentleman*  
*Servants to Cornwall*  
*Knights, Officers, Soldiers*  
*Messengers and Attendants*



## *Love's Labour's Lost*

Ferdinand, King of Navarre, opens the play by declaring that his court will be devoted to ascetic study for three years—and, to keep the distractions to a minimum, no women will be allowed within a mile of the court. Berowne, Longaville, and Dumaine agree to devote themselves with the King (although Berowne expresses reservations about the venture and its chances for success). Berowne also points out that the king has forgotten an embassy that very day with the Princess of France. As they set out to meet the princess, the king's fool, Costard, is sent to Don Armado to receive punishment for breaking the king's commands with the country wench, Jacquenetta.

Needless to say, the Princess and her entourage are put off when Ferdinand and his lords deny them entrance into the court. In protest, the embassy camps in front of the court. Boyet makes note of the king's "affection" toward the Princess, and the ladies retreat to their tents to plan how they can get back at Ferdinand and his court. In the meantime, Armado—who is himself in love with Jacquenetta—strikes a deal with Costard to let him off if Costard will deliver a letter to the wench. Before Costard can do so, however, Berowne finds him and asks him to take a letter to Rosaline. This sets up a highly comic series of errors as Costard manages to deliver Jacquenetta's letter to the Princess of France and Rosaline's letter to Jacquenetta.

At this point, King Ferdinand and his lords overhear one another professing their love for their respective ladies and to a man decide that their oaths are better off left for dead while the women are around. When the lords pay a visit to the ladies in disguise, however, the ladies turn the tables on them with disguises of their own. When the men return as themselves, the women continue to bait them with their own words, delighting in the men's confusion. Just when they begin to sort things out and sit down for a pageant, a messenger arrives to inform the Princess that her father has died, and she must leave immediately. The Princess tells Ferdinand that if he spends one year's time cloistered in a remote hermitage—his penance for being an oath-breaker—while she is in mourning, then she will consider his suit of marriage. Each lady-in-waiting exacts a similar promise from the king's lords. Although there will be no weddings forthcoming, the ladies vow to return to Navarre the following year to determine if their love is true.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Ferdinand*, King of Navarre  
*Lords of Navarre*: *Berowne, Longaville, Dumaine*  
*Princess of France*  
*Ladies of France*: *Rosaline, Maria, Katherine*  
*Lords of France*: *Boyet and Marcade*  
*Don Armado*, a Spaniard  
*Moth*, page to Armado  
*Costard*, a clown  
*Jacquenetta*, a country wench  
*Sir Nathaniel*, a curate  
*Holofernes*, a schoolmaster  
*Dull*, a constable  
*Forester*  
*Lords, attendants, etc.*

## *Macbeth*

Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, is one of King Duncan's greatest war captains. Upon returning from a battle, Macbeth and Banquo encounter three witches. A prophecy is given to them: Macbeth is hailed as Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and King; Banquo is hailed as the father of kings to come. With that, the witches evaporate into the mists. Both men nervously laugh off the prophecies until Duncan informs Macbeth that he is to assume the traitor Cawdor's title as a reward for his service to the king. When Lady Macbeth is informed of the events, she determines to push her husband's resolve in the matter—she wants him to take his fate into his own hands and make himself king. If Duncan happens to be inconveniently in the way....

Macbeth at first is reluctant to do harm to Duncan. However, when Duncan makes arrangements to visit the castle, the opportunity presents itself too boldly to ignore. Pressed on by his wife, they plot Duncan's death. Lady Macbeth gets Duncan's attendants drunk; Macbeth will slip in with his dagger, kill the king, and plant the dagger on the drunken guards. Macbeth, in a quiet moment alone, imagines he sees a bloody dagger appear in the air; upon hearing the tolling bells, he sets to work. Immediately Macbeth feels the guilt and shame of his act, as does Lady Macbeth, who nonetheless finds the inner strength to return to Duncan's chamber to plant the dagger on the attendants when Macbeth refuses to go back in there. When the body is discovered, Macbeth immediately slays the attendants—he says out of rage and grief—in order to silence them. Malcolm and Donalbain, Duncan's sons, both flee Scotland (fearful for their own lives). To everyone else, it appears that the sons have been the chief conspirators, and Macbeth is crowned King of Scotland, thus fulfilling the witches' prophecy. Banquo, however, has suspicions of his own based on their encounter with the witches.

Macbeth knows of Banquo's suspicions and the reasons for them; he is also wary of the second prophecy concerning Banquo's offspring. As he prepares for a celebratory banquet on his coronation, Macbeth hires assassins to get rid of Banquo and Fleance, his son. Banquo is murdered that night, but Fleance escapes into the darkness. As Macbeth sits down to the feast, the bloody ghost of Banquo silently torments him, which causes him great despair. Meanwhile, Macduff has fled to England because he too suspects Macbeth of foul play. Macbeth, once a man of greatness, transforms into a man whose conscience has fled him. Upon learning of Macduff's flight, Macbeth exacts revenge by having Macduff's entire household butchered. Macduff grieves, but joins up with Malcolm in England to raise an army against Macbeth.

Macbeth is given another prophecy by the witches as he prepares for Malcolm's assault. His throne is safe until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane, and he will not die by the hand of any man born of a woman. Macbeth feels confident in his chances for victory at this pronouncement. Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, has been slowly driven mad by her dreams in the wake of killing Duncan. She sleepwalks, wringing her hands together, and inadvertently reveals her part in the murder. As the English armies approach, Macbeth learns that many of his lords are deserting him, and that Lady Macbeth has died. On top of this, a messenger brings news that Malcolm's army is approaching under the cover of boughs, which they have cut from the trees of Birnam Wood. Resigned now to his fate, Macbeth grimly sets to battle.

None, however, can bring Macbeth down. Finally, Macduff meets him on the field of battle. Macbeth laughs hollowly, telling him of the witches' prophecy: no man born of a woman may slay him. As Macduff retorts, he was "from my mother's womb untimely ripp'd," meaning he was delivered by a Caesarian section (and hence, not technically born of a woman). Grimly, Macbeth presses on. The play ends with the death of Macbeth; Macduff greets the others bearing Macbeth's head. Malcolm is crowned King of Scotland, restoring his father's bloodline to the throne.

## *Macbeth (cont'd)*

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Duncan*, King of Scotland  
*Malcom*, Duncan's son  
*Donalbain*, Duncan's son  
*Macbeth*, a general  
*Banquo*, a general  
*Macduff*, a noble  
*Lennox*, a noble  
*Ross*, a noble  
*Menteith*, a noble  
*Angus*, a noble  
*Caithness*, a noble  
*Fleance*, son of Banquo  
*Siward*, Earl of Northumberland  
*Young Siward*, his son  
*Seyton*, officer to Macbeth  
*Lady Macbeth*  
*Lady Macduff*  
*Hecate and Three Witches*  
*Boy*, son to Macduff  
*English Doctor*  
*Scottish Doctor*  
*A Sergeant*  
*A Porter*  
*An Old Man*  
*Gentlewoman to Lady Macbeth*  
*Lords, Gentlemen*  
*Officers, Soldiers, Messengers and Attendants*  
*Murderers*  
*Banquo's Ghost, Apparitions*

## *Measure for Measure*

Vincenzio, Duke of Vienna, decides to take a sabbatical, appointing his deputy, Angelo, to rule as his proxy while the Duke is gone. The Duke, it seems, has grown lax in the enforcement of laws regarding wanton or unchaste behavior, and Angelo is given his powers for two specific reasons: a) the Duke doesn't want to seem a bad man, and b) someone has to accept the unpleasant and unpopular task of being more strict. Angelo is a zealous man, and the Duke feels he is perfect for the task. In the meantime, the Duke secretly remains in town disguised as a friar in order to keep an eye on things from the people's point of view.

Angelo's enthusiasm and harshness in carrying out his duties take everyone aback. When Claudio is arrested for getting his fiancée, Juliet, pregnant before they are married, Angelo condemns him with a death sentence. Claudio's sister, Isabella, hastens to Angelo to plead for her brother's life. Isabella is a novice preparing to enter a nunnery. Angelo is at first unwilling to budge, but Isabella's pleading (and beauty) eventually moves him in an unexpected way—he will grant a pardon to Claudio if she will yield her virginity to him. Isabella scorns his proposition; her chastity and honor are her life. She relates her tale to Claudio, who understandably is more willing to trade his sister's virtue for his life. While in the jail, the Duke (in disguise) eavesdrops upon the conversation and sets into motion a plot to save both Claudio and Isabella from their predicament.

The Duke knows of one Mariana, formerly engaged to Angelo, who still loves him. He persuades Isabella to feign acceptance of Angelo's offer; when the moment comes, Mariana will switch places in the dark with Isabella (the bed trick of *All's Well That Ends Well* being used again). Mariana agrees readily to the plot, and the events transpire as planned. Angelo, however, decides to execute Claudio anyway. When the Duke gets this news, he persuades the jailer to substitute another condemned man for Claudio and to carry out the execution "as planned." All he tells Isabella is that she has been betrayed by Angelo, and she should seek justice from the Duke (who is soon expected to return). With that, the Duke abandons his disguise as a friar to make his entrance into Vienna.

When Isabel and Mariana make their accusations, Angelo is cornered. At first he charges Isabella with lying and lays blame with the secret friar (the Duke's disguised alter-ego). When the Duke is revealed as the friar, Angelo can do nothing but throw himself on the mercy of the Duke and Isabella. Claudio is revealed to be alive,

Mariana pleads for Angelo's life, and the Duke orders that Angelo should marry Mariana and Claudio should marry Juliet. The Duke makes his own arrangements to be married with Isabella.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Vincenzio*, Duke of Vienna  
*Angelo*, his deputy  
*Escalus*, an ancient lord  
*Claudio*, a young gentleman  
*Lucio*, a fantastic  
*Two Gentlemen*  
*Provost*  
*Thomas*, a friar  
*Peter*, a friar  
*A Justice*  
*Varrius*  
*Elbow*, a simple constable  
*Froth*, a foolish gentleman  
*Pompey*, servant to Mistress Overdone  
*Abhorson*, an executioner  
*Barnadine*, a dissolute prisoner  
*Isabella*, sister of Claudio  
*Mariana*, betrothed to Angelo  
*Juliet*, beloved of Claudio  
*Francisca*, a nun  
*Mistress Overdone*, a bawd  
*Lords, Officers, Citizens, Boy, and Attendants*

## *The Merchant of Venice*

In Venice, young Bassanio needs a loan of 3,000 ducats so that he can properly woo a wealthy heiress of Venice named Portia. To get the necessary funds, Bassanio entreats his friend Antonio, a merchant. Antonio's money, unfortunately, is invested in merchant ships that are presently at sea; however, to help Bassanio, Antonio arranges for a short-term loan of the money from Shylock, a Jewish usurer. Shylock has a deep-seated hatred for Antonio because of the insulting treatment that Antonio has shown him in the past. When pressed, Shylock strikes a terrible bargain: the 3,000 ducats must be repaid in three months, or Shylock will exact a pound of flesh from Antonio. The merchant agrees to this, confident in the return of his ships before the appointed date of repayment.

At this stage of the play, Portia is introduced: due to her father's will, all suitors must choose from among three coffers—one of which contains a portrait of her. If a man chooses the right one, he may marry Portia; however, if he chooses wrong, he must vow never to marry or even court another woman. Princes of Morocco and Arragon fail this test and are turned away. As Bassanio prepares to travel to Belmont for the test, his friend Lorenzo elopes with Jessica, Shylock's daughter (who escapes with a fair amount of Shylock's wealth in the process). Bassanio chooses the lead casket, which is the correct one, and happily agrees to marry Portia that very night.

In contrast to this happiness, Antonio finds himself in a pinch. Two of his ships have already wrecked in transit, and Antonio's creditors—including the vengeance-minded Shylock—are grumbling about repayment. Word comes to Bassanio about Antonio's predicament, and he hastens back to Venice, leaving Portia behind. Portia, however, travels after him with her maid, Nerissa; they disguise themselves as a lawyer and clerk, respectively. When Bassanio arrives, the loan is in default and Shylock is demanding his pound of flesh. Even when Bassanio (backed now by Portia's inheritance) offers many times the amount in repayment, Shylock is intent on revenge. The duke, who sits in judgment, will not intervene. Portia enters in her guise as a lawyer to defend Antonio. Through a technicality, Portia declares that Shylock may have his pound of flesh so long as he draws no blood (since there was no mention of this in the original agreement). And, since it is obvious that to draw a pound of flesh would take Antonio's life, Shylock has conspired to murder a Venetian citizen; he has forfeited his wealth as well as his loan. Half is to go to the city, and half is to go to Antonio.

In the end, Antonio gives back his half of the penalty on the condition that Shylock bequeath it to his disinherited daughter, Jessica.

Shylock also must convert to Christianity. A broken and defeated Shylock accepts in a piteously moving scene. As the play ends, news arrives that Antonio's remaining ships are returned to port; with the exception of the humiliated Shylock, all will share in a happy ending.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Duke of Venice*

*Prince of Morocco*

*Prince of Arragon*

*Antonio, the merchant of Venice*

*Bassanio, his friend*

*Gratiano*

*Solanio*

*Solerio*

*Lorenzo, in love with Jessica*

*Shylock, a wealthy Jew*

*Tubal, a Jew, his friend*

*Launcelot Gobbo, a clown, servant to Shylock*

*Old Gobbo, father of Launcelot*

*Leonardo, Bassanio's servant*

*Balthasar, Portia's servant*

*Stephano, Portia's servant*

*Portia, a wealthy heiress*

*Nerissa, a waiting-maid*

*Jessica, daughter of Shylock*

*Magnificoes of Venice, Officers of the Court of Justice*

*Jailer*

*Servants to Portia*

*Attendants*



## *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

Sir John Falstaff, a knight down on both luck and cash, hatches a scheme to raise funds. He will seduce Mistress Ford and Mistress Page in an attempt to get at their husbands' money. Falstaff, however, has overestimated his ingenuity; the two women compare their letters, and—finding them identical—hatch a plan of their own to make a buffoon of the knight. They send him letters in return to encourage his advances. In the meantime, Pistol and Nym, whom Falstaff has sacked, go to Ford and Page's husbands with the news. Ford, who is jealous and paranoid, disguises himself and meets Falstaff. He pretends to be an illicit lover who wishes to hire Falstaff to woo Mistress Ford on his behalf, to which Falstaff agrees.

As Mistresses Ford and Page pursue their sport, Falstaff is first hidden in a basket of dirty laundry and cast into the Thames, then later dressed as a woman and beaten. Finally, the women tell their husbands about their secret revenge, and all plot one last humiliation for the feckless Falstaff. As this is going on, Page's daughter, Anne, is being courted by three suitors, only one of which she actually cares for: Fenton. Anne is included in the plans for Falstaff; she is to lead the children of the town—all dressed as fairies—in an attack on the knight as he waits in the woods for Mistress Ford and Mistress Page. As they prepare for the final prank, the husband Page pulls Slender (one of Anne's suitors) aside and tells him to elope with her that evening; Mistress Page pulls her favorite suitor, Doctor Caius, aside and says she wants him to elope with Anne. The two men are to recognize Anne (she'll be wearing a mask, after all) by the color of dress she wears. To add to this, Anne makes plans of her own to elope with her beloved Fenton.

Falstaff, dressed as Herne (complete with antlers), is mercilessly tormented by the children dressed as fairies. The wives and husbands eventually reveal themselves to the much chagrined Falstaff, who is forgiven by all. In the midst of this resolution, Slender and Doctor Caius reappear. It seems that Slender thought Anne was to wear a white dress; Caius believed her to be wearing green. Both men, having erred on the color of her dress, mistakenly ran off with boys instead of Anne. Fenton arrives with Anne in their wake; the two have married, and Anne's parents begrudgingly accept the fact.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Sir John Falstaff*

*Fenton*, a gentleman

*Shallow*, a country justice

*Slender*, cousin to Shallow

*Ford*

*Page*

*William Page*, son of Page

*Sir Hugh Evans*, a Welsh parson

*Doctor Caius*, a French physician

*Host of the Garter Inn*

*Bardolph*, follower of Falstaff

*Pistol*, follower of Falstaff

*Nym*, follower of Falstaff

*Robin*, page to Falstaff

*Simple*, servant to Slender

*Rugby*, servant to Doctor Caius

*Mistress Ford*

*Mistress Page*

*Anne Page*, her daughter

*Mistress Quickly*, servant to Doctor Caius

*Servants to Page and Ford*

## *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Lysander loves Hermia, and Hermia loves Lysander. Helena loves Demetrius; Demetrius used to love Helena but now loves Hermia. Egeus, Hermia's father, prefers Demetrius as a suitor, and enlists the aid of Theseus, the Duke of Athens, to enforce his wishes upon his daughter. According to Athenian law, Hermia is given four days to choose between Demetrius, life in a nunnery, or a death sentence. Hermia, ever defiant, chooses to escape with Lysander into the surrounding forest.

Complications arise in the forest. Oberon and Titania, King and Queen of Fairies, are locked in a dispute over a boy whom Titania has adopted. Oberon instructs his servant Puck to bring him magic love drops, which Oberon will sprinkle on the Queen's eyelids as she sleeps, whereupon Titania will fall in love with the first creature she sees upon awakening. Meanwhile, Helena and Demetrius have also fled into the woods after Lysander and Hermia. Oberon, overhearing Demetrius's denouncement of Helena, takes pity upon her and tells Puck to place the magic drops upon the eyelids of Demetrius as well, so that Demetrius may fall in love with Helena. Puck, however, makes the mistake of putting the drops on the eyelids of Lysander instead. Helena stumbles over Lysander in the forest, and the spell is cast; Lysander now desires Helena and renounces a stunned Hermia.

In the midst of this chaos, a group of craftsmen are rehearsing for a production of "Pyramus and Thisbe," to be played for the Duke at his wedding. Puck impishly casts a spell on Bottom to give him the head of a donkey. Bottom, as luck would have it, is the first thing Titania sees when she awakens; hence, Bottom ends up being lavishly kept by the Queen. Oberon enjoys this sport, but is less amused when it becomes apparent that Puck has botched up the attempt to unite Demetrius and Helena. Oberon himself anoints Demetrius with the love potion and ensures that Helena is the first person he sees; however, Helena understandably feels that she is now being mocked by both Demetrius and Lysander (who is still magically enamored of her).

Finally, Oberon decides that all good sports must come to an end. He puts the four lovers to sleep and gives Lysander the antidote for the love potion so that he will love Hermia again when they all wake up. Next, Oberon gives Titania the antidote, and the King and Queen reconcile. Theseus and Hippolyta then discover Lysander, Hermia, Helena, and Demetrius asleep in the forest. All return to Athens to make sense of what they think is a strange dream. Likewise, Bottom returns to his players, and they perform "Pyramus

and Thisbe" at the wedding feast (which has since become a wedding of three couples). As everyone retires, fairies perform their blessings and Puck delivers a tender epilogue soliloquy.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Theseus*, Duke of Athens  
*Egeus*, father of Hermia  
*Lysander*, in love with Hermia  
*Demetrius*, in love with Hermia  
*Philosrate*, Master of the Revels  
*Quince*, a carpenter  
*Snug*, a joiner  
*Bottom*, a weaver  
*Flute*, a bellows-mender  
*Snout*, a tinker  
*Starveling*, a tailor  
*Hippolyta*, Queen of the Amazons; betrothed of Theseus  
*Hermia*, in love with Lysander  
*Helena*, in love with Demetrius  
*Oberon*, King of Fairies  
*Titania*, Queen of Fairies  
*Puck*, or Robin Goodfellow  
*Peaseblossom*, a fairy  
*Cobweb*, a fairy  
*Moth*, a fairy  
*Mustardseed*, a fairy  
*Other Fairies*, attendants to Oberon and Titania  
*Attendants to Theseus and Hippolyta*

## *Much Ado About Nothing*

Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon, pays a visit to Leonata, the governor of Messina, while returning from a victorious campaign against his rebellious brother, Don John. Accompanying him are two of his officers, Benedick and Claudio. While in Messina, Claudio falls for Leonato's daughter, Hero; Benedick verbally spars with Beatrice, the governor's niece. The budding love between Claudio and Hero prompts Don Pedro to arrange with Leonato for the marriage.

Meanwhile, the trickery begins as Don Pedro (with the help of Leonato and Claudio) attempts to sport with Benedick and Beatrice in an effort to make the two of them fall in love. Likewise, Hero and her waiting woman help to set up Beatrice. Both Benedick and Beatrice will think that the other has professed a great love for them.

The marriage of Claudio to Hero is set to go. Don John—ostensibly reconciled with his brother—despises Claudio, however, and plots against him. First, he tells Claudio that Pedro wants Hero for himself; next, he enlists the aid of his henchman Borachio and one of Hero's gentlewomen disguised as Hero to stage an encounter that will bring Hero's virtue into question. Claudio falls for the ruse and denounces Hero at the altar. Friar Francis helps her, hiding her away and enlisting the aid of Leonata, who announces that his daughter has died of grief from the proceeding.

Fortunately for Hero, Borachio is arrested while drunkenly boasting of his part in the plan (and the 1,000 ducats paid him). With Borachio's confession, Hero is to be exonerated. Leonato demands a public apology from Claudio, then tells him that he will allow Claudio to marry one of his nieces in Hero's place—a niece that turns out to be none other than Hero herself. Claudio and Hero are reunited, Benedick and Beatrice will wed alongside them, and they receive the news that the bastard Don John has been apprehended.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Don Pedro*, Prince of Arragon  
*Don John*, his bastard brother  
*Claudio*, young lord of Florence  
*Benedick*, young lord of Padua  
*Leonato*, Governor of Messina  
*Antonio*, brother of Leonato  
*Balthasar*, servant to Don Pedro  
*Borachio*, follower of Don John  
*Conrade*, follower of Don John  
*Dogberry*, a constable  
*Verges*, a headborough  
*Friar Francis*  
*A Sexton*  
*A Boy*  
*Hero*, daughter of Leonato  
*Beatrice*, niece of Leonato  
*Margaret*, gentlewoman to Hero  
*Ursula*, gentlewoman to Hero  
*Messengers, Watch, and Attendants*

## Othello

Othello, a Moorish general of Venice, has promoted Cassio as his lieutenant; Iago, who was hoping for the promotion himself, makes plots against both Cassio and Othello to exact revenge. Othello has secretly married Desdemona, the beautiful daughter of Venetian senator Brabantio, and Iago determines to use Desdemona as the means of his revenge. When Othello is posted to Cyprus by the Duke of Venice, Iago escorts Desdemona there to meet him, taking along his own wife, Emilia. When they've arrived in Cyprus, Iago sets his machinations to motion. He tricks Cassio into getting drunk, then has Roderigo—a former suitor of Desdemona whom Iago has convinced to aid him with the hope of winning Desdemona back—pick a fight with Cassio that ends in Cassio's arrest. Because of this, Cassio is demoted. Then Iago has Cassio visit Desdemona, saying that an appeal to her might do well to convince Othello to reinstate him.

This accomplished, Iago goes straightaway to Othello so that he can lead him to where Desdemona and Cassio are talking. As Iago and Othello view the scene, Iago plants seeds of doubt and jealousy in Othello's mind concerning Desdemona's fidelity. The scenario Iago suggests is that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair. Later, fortune literally drops Desdemona's handkerchief into Iago's hand; he gets the handkerchief from Emilia, who discovered it, plants the handkerchief in Cassio's room, and then tells Othello that he saw Cassio with it. When Othello asks Desdemona about the handkerchief, she tells him that it was lost (which is the truth as she knows it). Cassio, meanwhile, has given the handkerchief to a courtesan with whom he is intimate. Iago manipulates a conversation with Cassio about his courtesan to make it appear to Othello—who is eavesdropping at the behest of Iago—that Cassio is talking about Desdemona.

His smoldering rage now beginning to bubble over, Othello tells Iago to kill Cassio and then angrily confronts Desdemona. In spite of Desdemona's protests of innocence (backed up by Iago's wife, Emilia), Othello is now convinced of her infidelity with Cassio. Iago, meanwhile, has Roderigo attempt to murder Cassio; when Roderigo fails to do more than wound the soldier, Iago slays him so that Roderigo can't implicate him in the affair. Othello strangles Desdemona in her bed. When Emilia discovers the crime, she decries the Moor as a villain and at first refuses to believe that Iago has so evilly manipulated Othello. However, Iago's appearance and subsequent answers lead Emilia to confront the fact that her husband is responsible for this tragedy. When Iago cannot keep Emilia from telling the truth about the handkerchief, he stabs her and attempts to escape; not only is he captured, but letters found on Roderigo's body thoroughly implicate Iago as the treacherous

villain that he is. Faced with the shame of having murdered an innocent Desdemona, Othello stabs himself in front of Cassio and dies on Desdemona's bed, beside her.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Duke of Venice*

*Brabantio*, a senator

*Other Senators*

*Gratiano*, brother of Brabantio

*Lodovico*, kinsman of Brabantio

*Othello*, a noble Moor

*Cassio*, Othello's lieutenant

*Iago*, Othello's ancient

*Roderigo*

*Montano*, governor of Cypress

*Clown*, Othello's servant

*Desdemona*, wife of Othello

*Emilia*, wife of Iago

*Bianca*, Cassio's mistress

*A Sailor*

*Messengers, Herald, Officers, Gentlemen*

*Musicians and Attendants*

## Pericles

Pericles correctly guesses that the daughter of Antiochus is involved in an incestuous affair with her father. Antiochus knows that Pericles knows, and Pericles knows it. His life in peril, Pericles prudently flees Antioch for Tyre. Antiochus won't let mere distance stand in the way of killing him, however; Pericles appoints his counselor Helicanus to rule as regent and then sails from Tyre for Tarsus, then Pentapolis. On the way, the vessel is shipwrecked, and Pericles is the sole survivor.

At Pentapolis, Pericles participates in a tournament for the hand of Thaisa, daughter of Simonides. He wins the tournament, the two fall in love, and Pericles marries Thaisa. In the meantime, news arrives that Antiochus is dead and that the people of Tyre want their prince back. Pericles makes arrangements to sail for Tyre with Thaisa, who is now pregnant with their child. A storm along the way brings about the birth of Marina, their daughter; Thaisa, tragically, is believed to die in childbirth. Sealing her in a watertight coffin, Pericles gives her a burial at sea. The coffin washes up on the shores of Ephesus, where Cerimon manages to revive Thaisa. Unsurprisingly, Thaisa assumes that Pericles is lost at sea and promptly becomes a votaress in the Temple of Diana.

On the way back to Tyre, Pericles leaves Marina at Tarsus for Cleon and his wife to raise. Pericles sails on for Tyre. Fast forward sixteen years, and a beautiful Marina has inspired the jealousy of Dionyza, who resolves to have her murdered. Dionyza's servant, who is entrusted with the job, cannot carry it out when Marina is captured by pirates; the servant reports back that Marina is dead, and Cleon mournfully raises a monument to her memory. Pericles encounters the tomb on a visit to Tarsus and falls into a deep despair. The pirates, meanwhile, sell Marina into a brothel in Mitylene, but she is soon freed by the governor.

Pericles sails into Mitylene still deeply depressed about the supposed loss of his daughter. While there, he encounters Marina, and after some talking, Pericles eventually recognizes her for his daughter; the two are happily reunited. Lysismachus, the governor, asks for Marina's hand, which Marina accepts. Then, Pericles is visited by a dream that instructs him to visit Ephesus. There he is reunited as well with Thaisa (who is now the head priestess of Diana), and the whole family is together again.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Antiochus*, King of Antioch  
*Pericles*, Prince of Tyre  
*Helicanus*, a lord of Tyre  
*Escanes*, a lord of Tyre  
*Simonides*, King of Pentapolis  
*Cleon*, Governor of Tarsus  
*Lysismachus*, Governor of Mytilene  
*Cerimon*, a lord of Ephesus  
*Thaliard*, a lord of Antioch  
*Philemon*, Cerimon's servant  
*Leonine*, Dionyza's servant  
*A Pander*  
*Boult*, the Pander's servant  
*Marshal*  
*Daughter of Antiochus*  
*Dionyza*, wife of Cleon  
*Thaisa*, daughter of Simonides  
*Marina*, daughter of Pericles  
*Lychorida*, Marina's nurse  
*A Bawd*  
*Lords, Ladies, Knights, and Gentlemen*  
*Sailors, Pirates, Fishermen*  
*Messengers*  
*Diana*  
*Gower*, as Chorus



## *Richard II*

The play opens with the accusation of Henry Bolingbroke that Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, is responsible for the murder of Richard's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester. Richard decrees that the two shall settle the matter in trial by combat, but revokes this option as Norfolk and Bolingbroke are readying to attack each other. His new decision is that both men are to be banished. Within a short time, Bolingbroke's father, the Duke of Lancaster dies; Richard seizes the late duke's estates in order to raise capital for a campaign against Ireland.

In the meantime, Bolingbroke has returned to find grumbling amidst Richard's nobles—most notably the Earl of Northumberland, who joins with other disaffected nobles against the Duke of York, Richard's regent while the King is in Ireland. Upon Richard's return, he learns that Bolingbroke has not only returned to reclaim the lands he should have inherited upon his father's death, but that he has dispersed Richard's army and executed a pair of Richard's favorites. Richard flees to Flint Castle for his own protection.

Bolingbroke meets him there and takes him back to London as a prisoner. There, in a session of Parliament, Richard is made to confess crimes against the state, the end result of which he must forfeit his crown to Bolingbroke (who becomes King Henry IV). Intrigue develops as the Duke of York's son, Aumerle, conspires against the new King Henry in response to Richard's loss of the throne. Aumerle is granted clemency, but Richard is imprisoned in Pomfreet Castle. While there, Sir Pierce of Exton murders him (believing this to be the wish of the king). Henry disavows the deed when he hears of it, however, and promises a Crusade to atone for Richard's death.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*King Richard the Second*  
*John of Gaunt*  
*Edmund of Langley, Duke of York*  
*Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford; later Henry IV*  
*Duke of Aumerle*  
*Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk*  
*Duke of Surrey*  
*Earl of Salisbury*  
*Lord Berkeley*  
*Bushy*  
*Bagot*  
*Green*  
*Earl of Northumberland*  
*Henry Percy, called Hotspur*  
*Lord Ross*  
*Lord Willoughby*  
*Lord Fitzwater*  
*Bishop of Carlisle*  
*Abbot of Westminster*  
*Lord Marshal*  
*Sir Stephen Scoop*  
*Sir Pierce of Exton*  
*Welsh Captain*  
*Queen to King Richard*  
*Duchess of Gloucester*  
*Duchess of York*  
*Lady attending the Queen*  
*Lords, Heralds, Officers, Soldiers*  
*Gardeners, Keepers, Messengers*  
*Groom and other Attendants*

## Richard III

Richard, the Yorkist Duke of Gloucester, has not stopped plotting since the defeat of Henry VI. He conspires to play his brothers, Edward (now King Edward IV) and George, Duke of Clarence, against each other in an attempt to gain the crown for himself. By insinuating charges of treason against George, Richard has him arrested. He also brazenly woos Anne, widow of the murdered Prince of Wales, in the midst of her husband's funeral procession. In the course of events, Edward IV, who is deathly ill at the beginning of the play, dies; Richard has already arranged for George to be murdered while imprisoned, and so it stands that Richard will serve as regent while Edward's son (also named Edward) can come of age.

In order to "protect" the Prince of Wales and his younger brother, Richard has them stay in the Tower of London. He then moves against Edward's loyalist lords; Vaughan, Rivers, Hastings, and Grey are first imprisoned, then executed. Then, with the aid of Buckingham, Richard declares that Edward IV's offspring are technically illegitimate. In an arranged public display, Buckingham offers the throne of England to Richard, who is presumably reluctant to accept. By this time, Richard has alienated even his own mother, who curses him as a bloody tyrant.

By now, Richard needs to bolster his claims to the crown; the young princes locked away in the Tower of London must be disposed of. Buckingham, until now Richard's staunchest ally, balks at this deed. Richard gets a murderer to do the deed, but turns on Buckingham for his insubordination. Now Richard—conveniently a widower after the suspicious demise of Anne—makes a ploy to marry the late King Edward's daughter, his niece. Elizabeth, Edward's widow, makes Richard believe that she agrees to the match; however, Elizabeth has arranged for a match with the Earl of Richmond.

Richmond, at this point in the action, is bringing over an army from France to war against Richard. Buckingham, finding himself out of favor with the king, gives his allegiance to Richmond. However, Buckingham is captured when his army is thrown into disarray by floods, and Richard has him executed immediately. Richmond, who has undergone his own troubles crossing the English Channel, finally lands his army and marches for London. The armies of Richard and Richmond encamp near Bosworth Field; the night before the battle, Richard is visited by the sundry ghosts of the people he has slain, all of whom foretell his doom.

At Bosworth, Richard is unhorsed in the combat. Richmond finds him, and the two of them clash with swords. Richmond prevails

and slays Richard, to be crowned as King Henry VII there on the field of battle. This is the founding of the Tudor line of kings and the end of the War of the Roses.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*King Edward the Fourth*

*Edward*, Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward the Fifth

*Richard*, Duke of York

*George*, Duke of Clarence

*Richard*, Duke of Gloucester, afterwards King Richard the Third

*A Young Son of Clarence*

*Henry*, Earl of Richmond, afterwards King Henry the Seventh

*Cardinal Bouchier*

*Thomas Rotherham*, Archbishop of York

*John Morton*

*Duke of Buckingham*

*Duke of Norfolk*

*Earl of Surrey*

*Earl Rivers*

*Marquess of Dorset*

*Lord Grey*

*Earl of Oxford*

*Lord Hastings*

*Lord Stanley*, Earl of Derby

*Lord Lovel*

*Sir Thomas Vaughan*

*Sir Richard Ratcliff*

*Sir William Catesby*

*Sir James Tyrell*

*Sir James Blunt*

*Sir Walther Herbert*

*Sir Robert Brakenbury*

*Christopher Urswick*, a priest

*Another Priest*

*Tressel and Berkeley*

*Lord Mayor of London*

*Sheriff of Wiltshire*

*Elizabeth*, Queen of King Edward the Fourth

*Margaret*, widow of King Henry the Sixth

*Duchess of York*

*Lady Anne*

*Margaret Plantagenet*

*Lords and other Attendants*

*A Pursuivant, Scrivener, Citizens*

*Murderers, Messengers, Soldiers*

*Ghosts of Richard III's victims*

## *Romeo and Juliet*

Verona is home to two feuding noble houses, the Montagues and the Capulets. In response to the constant brawling between members of these families, the Prince of Verona has issued an edict that will impose a death sentence on anyone caught dueling. Against this backdrop, young Romeo of the house of Montague has recently been infatuated with Rosaline, a niece of Capulet. Rosaline is quickly forgotten, however, when Romeo and his friends disguise themselves and slip into a masque ball at Capulet's house. During the festivities, Romeo catches his first glimpse of Juliet, Capulet's daughter. In one of Shakespeare's most memorable scenes, Romeo steals into the garden and professes his love to Juliet, who stands above on her balcony. The two young lovers, with the aid of Friar Laurence, make plans to be married in secret.

Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, later discovers that Romeo has attended the ball, and he sets out to teach the young Montague a lesson at the point of his sword. Romeo is challenged by Tybalt, but tries to avoid a duel between them since he is now married to Juliet (making Tybalt a kinsman). Mercutio, Romeo's best friend, takes up Tybalt's challenge and is killed in the ensuing fight. Enraged, Romeo slays Tybalt in turn. As a result of this bloodshed, the Prince proclaims that Romeo is to be banished from Verona for his actions. Romeo has time to consummate the marriage and bid farewell to Juliet, though he hopes to be reunited with her once the Capulets learn that they are man and wife.

The Capulets, meanwhile, press for Juliet to marry Paris, a cousin to the Prince. Juliet, relying again on Friar Laurence, devises a desperate plan to avoid her parent's wishes. She obtains a drug that will make her seem dead for forty-two hours; while she is in this state, Friar Laurence will send word to Romeo of the situation so that he can rescue her from her tomb. Unfortunately, fate will not be so kind; the letter from Friar Laurence is delayed. Romeo instead hears second-hand news that Juliet has died. Grief-stricken, Romeo purchases poison and hastens to Juliet's tomb to die at her side. Meanwhile, Friar Laurence has discovered to his horror that his letter did not arrive, and he means to take Juliet away until he can set things aright.

At the tomb, Romeo encounters Paris, who mourns for Juliet. Romeo slays Paris, then enters the tomb and downs his poison. As Friar Laurence comes upon the scene, Juliet awakens only to find the lifeless body of her beloved Romeo laying beside her. Juliet takes the dagger from Romeo's belt and plunges it into her heart. Upon this scene, the Prince arrives—along with the Montague and Capulet parents—demanding to know what has happened. Friar Laurence relates to all the tragic tale of Romeo and Juliet's secret

marriage and their senseless suicides. The Montagues and Capulets, when faced with the terrible price that their feud has exacted, vow to put an end to the enmity between their two houses.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Escalus*, Prince of Verona  
*Paris*, kinsman to Escalus  
*Montague*  
*Capulet*  
*Uncle to Capulet*  
*Romeo*, son of Montague  
*Mercutio*, friend of Romeo  
*Benvolio*, friend of Romeo  
*Tybalt*, nephew of Lady Capulet  
*Friar Laurence*  
*Friar John*  
*Balthasar*, servant to Romeo  
*Sampson*, servant to Capulet  
*Gregory*, servant to Capulet  
*Peter*, servant to Juliet's nurse  
*Abram*, servant to Montague  
*Lady Montague*  
*Lady Capulet*  
*Juliet*, daughter of Capulet  
*Nurse to Juliet*  
*An Apothecary*  
*Three Musicians*  
*An Officer*  
*Pages to Paris and Officer*  
*Citizens of Verona, Kinsfolk of both houses, Masquers*  
*Guards, Watchmen, and Attendants*  
*Chorus*

## *The Taming of the Shrew*

The opening scenes present an unresolved framework to the play: Christopher Sly, a drunken tinker is taken in by a lord who wishes to make sport of him. Sly is dressed and placed in the lord's bedroom, then told that he is a nobleman who had been struck by insanity for some 15 years (from which he has just recovered). For his entertainment, a group of players will present a play entitled "The Taming of the Shrew." (**Note:** these scenes are commonly omitted from stage productions, as Sly and the rest of the bunch from the Inductions never return to complete the "framework.")

Baptista, a wealthy merchant of Padua, has two daughters: Katherina and Bianca. Because of Katherina's shrewish disposition, her father has declared that no one shall wed Bianca until such time as Katherina has been married. Lucentio of Pisa, one of many suitors to the younger and kinder Bianca, devises a scheme in which he and Tranio (his servant) will switch clothes, and thus disguised, Lucentio will offer his services as a tutor for Bianca in order to get closer to her. At his point, enter Petruchio of Verona, in Padua to visit his friend Hortensio (another suitor to Bianca). Attracted by Katherina's large dowry, Petruchio resolves to woo her.

To the surprise of everyone, Petruchio claims that he finds Katherina charming and pleasant. A marriage is arranged, and Petruchio immediately sets out to tame Katherina through a series of increasingly worse tricks. This involves everything from showing up late to his own wedding to constant contradictions to whatever she says, even to the point of claiming that the sun is in fact the moon. After many trying days and nights, an exhausted Katherina is indeed "tamed" into docility.

By the end of the play, Lucentio has won Bianca's heart and Hortensio settles for a rich widow in Padua. During an evening feast for Bianca and Lucentio, Petruchio makes and wins a wager in which he proposes that he has the most obedient wife of all the men there, at which point Katherina gives Bianca a lecture on how to be a good and loving wife herself.

### *Dramatis Personae*

#### *A Lord*

*Hostess, Page, Players, Huntsmen, and Servants*

*Christopher Sly*, a tinker

*Baptista Minola*, of Padua

*Vincentio*, old gentleman of Pisa

*Hortensio*, suitor to Bianca

*Tranio*, servant to Lucentio

*Biondello*, servant to Lucentio

*Grumio*, servant to Petruchio

*Curtis*, servant to Petruchio

#### *A Pedant*

*Lucentio*, son of Vincentio, in love with Bianca

*Petruchio*, gentleman of Verona, suitor to Katherina

*Gremio*, suitor to Bianca

*Katherina*, the shrew, daughter of Baptista

*Bianca*, daughter of Baptista

*Widow*

*Tailor, Haberdasher, and Servants*

## *The Tempest*

Prospero, a sorcerer and the rightful Duke of Milan, dwells on an enchanted isle with his daughter, Miranda. Twelve years earlier, the duke's brother, Antonio, and Alonso, the King of Naples, conspired to usurp his throne. They set Prospero and Miranda adrift in a boat, and they eventually found themselves marooned on the island. Prospero is served on his island by Ariel, a spirit who he freed from a tree with magic, and Caliban, son of the witch Sycorax. When magic reveals that a ship bearing his old enemies is sailing near the island, Prospero summons a storm to wreck their ship. The survivors make it to shore in scattered groups. Among these is Ferdinand, the son of Alonso. He is lulled to Prospero's abode by the singing of Ariel; there he meets Miranda, who is enthralled with the young prince.

Meanwhile, Antonio, Alonso, Sebastian, and Gonzalo wander the island in search of Ferdinand. Antonio now plots with Sebastian to murder Alonso, but this plot is thwarted by Ariel. Elsewhere on the island, Stephano and Trinculo encounter Caliban. After sharing a few drinks, Caliban tries to enlist the two in a plot to kill Prospero and rule the island himself. He even promises Miranda to Stephano. Ariel, however, reports all these goings-on to Prospero. In the meantime, Miranda and Ferdinand pledge their troth to each other.

Prospero isn't finished with his sport of Antonio and Alonso, either. He creates a magical banquet for the two men that vanishes whenever they try to eat. He also sends Ariel in the guise of a harpy to hound them for their crimes against Prospero. Later, at a masque to celebrate the upcoming marriage of Miranda and Ferdinand, Prospero remembers Caliban's plot and abruptly calls the revels to a halt. He sends Ariel to punish them as well; the spirit does so by first luring them with some fancy clothes, then setting other island spirits upon them in the shape of hunting dogs that chase them around the island.

Finally, Prospero confronts his brother and Alonso, revealing his true identity as the rightful Duke of Milan. He demands that Antonio restore his throne; he also rebukes Sebastian for plotting against his own brother. To Alonso, he reveals Ferdinand alive and well, playing chess with Miranda. As a final act, Prospero abandons his magic and releases Ariel and Caliban from their servitude. From Ariel, Prospero asks for one last boon: calm seas and favorable winds for their trip back to Naples.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Alonso*, King of Naples  
*Sebastian*, his brother  
*Prospero*, the rightful Duke of Milan  
*Antonio*, his brother; the usurping Duke of Milan  
*Ferdinand*, son of the King  
*Gonzalo*, an old and honest counselor  
*Adrian*, a lord  
*Francisco*, a lord  
*Caliban*, Prospero's slave  
*Trinculo*, a jester  
*Stephano*, a drunken butler  
*Master of a ship*  
*Boatswain*  
*Mariners*  
*Miranda*, Prospero's daughter  
*Ariel*, an airy spirit  
*Iris*, a spirit  
*Ceres*, a spirit  
*Juno*, a spirit  
*Nymphs*  
*Reapers*  
*Other Spirits*; attendants to Prospero



## *Timon of Athens*

Timon is a kind and generous aristocrat in Athens with one major fault—he is a spendthrift. Everyone loves him because of his generosity as a host. When Timon finds himself confronted with creditors, however, his steward, Flavius, can do little more than tell him that he is bankrupt. Timon then sends his servants to his “friends,” only to receive excuses in return; no one will lend him money to repay his debts. Angered by this, Timon invites them all to one last feast. The only dish, to everyone’s surprise, is warm water. Timon then denounces not only his former comrades but mankind as a whole.

In the meantime, Alcibiades, a captain of Athens, has been pleading against a death sentence given to one of his men by the Senate. For his persistence, Alcibiades is banished; Alcibiades, on the other hand, despises the Senate and decides to turn his army against Athens in revenge. He hears about Timon, who has fled Athens to live a hermit’s life. Timon, it seems, was digging for roots to eat and stumbled upon a buried trove of gold. Alcibiades tries to befriend Timon, even offering him money. Timon, however, counters with offers of gold to Alcibiades if he will sack Athens. Alcibiades accepts a portion of the treasure to pay his men, then marches on Athens. More visitors, these in the form of bandits, pay a visit. Timon pays them gold on the condition that they too wreak lawless havoc on Athens. The bandits accept the gold, but Timon’s rant stirs them instead, ironically, to give up thieving. Timon even sends away his former steward, Flavius, although with gold in his pockets and more kindness than he has shown to anyone else.

Alcibiades enters Athens with little resistance; the Athenians beg Timon for help, but the only help Timon offers is a tree outside his cave—upon which he says they can hang themselves, each according to his or her will. The senators ingratiate themselves with Alcibiades by giving up his enemies and those that refused to help Timon when he was in debt. Alcibiades agrees, vowing peace in Athens. However, a soldier enters with the sad news that Timon has died in his cave, alone at the end.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Timon*, a noble Athenian  
*Lucius*, a flattering lord  
*Lucullus*, a flattering lord  
*Sempronius*, a flattering lord  
*Ventidius*, a false friend of Timon  
*Alcibiades*, an Athenian captain  
*Apemantus*, a churlish philosopher  
*Flavius*, steward to Timon  
*Flaminius*, Timon’s servant  
*Lucilius*, Timon’s servant  
*Servilius*, Timon’s servant  
*Caphis, Philotus, Titus, Lucius, and Hortensius*, servants of Timon’s creditors  
*Poet, Painter, Jeweler, Merchant*  
*An Old Athenian*  
*Servants to Varro and Isidore*  
*Three Strangers*  
*A Page*  
*A Fool*  
*Phrynia*, mistress of Alcibiades  
*Timandra*, mistress of Alcibiades  
*Lords, Senators, Officers, Soldiers, Thieves, and Attendants*  
*Cupid and Masque Amazons*

## *Titus Andronicus*

Without a doubt, *Titus Andronicus* is Shakespeare's bloodiest play. Titus, a Roman general, returns to Rome after a victorious campaign against the Goths. In tow as captives are Tamora and her sons—one of whom, Alarbus, is sacrificed at the hands of the sons of Titus. Saturnius, the newly declared emperor, is feuding with his younger brother, Bassianus; at one point Saturnius attempts to wrest Lavinia (who is Titus's daughter) from Bassianus, although he ends up failing in that and instead being seduced by the captive Queen Tamora. Tamora, all the while, plots with her Moorish lover, Aaron, against Titus.

Demetrius and Chiron, Tamora's other sons, begin the bloodletting in earnest. They encounter and kill the hapless Bassianus in the woods, then rape and mutilate Lavinia, leaving her without a tongue to speak or hands to write. Aaron furthers the revenge against Titus by framing his sons (Quintus and Martius) for the murder of Bassianus. Lucius, Titus's remaining son, attempts a failed rescue for which he is banished from Rome. They also discover Lavinia. At this low point, Aaron tells Titus that the emperor will spare Quintus and Martius if Titus cuts off a hand and sends it to him. This Titus does; however, the hand is soon returned along with the heads of his two sons. Titus is now on the brink of insanity. Lucius, meanwhile, raises an army of Goths to sack Rome.

As Lucius makes his preparations, Titus ensnares Demetrius and Chiron (who Lavinia has identified as her attackers), slays them, and sets to making a pie from their remains. When Tamora and Saturnius arrive to try to convince Titus to call off Lucius and his Goths, Titus offers them a dinner, featuring pie as the main course. In the midst of the feasting, Titus slays Lavinia to relieve her misery, reveals the secret ingredient of his pie, then turns his sword on Tamora, slaying her. Saturnius slays Titus; in turn, Lucius slays Saturnius. Lucius is elected emperor of Rome. He orders Aaron buried up to his chest and left to starve, and orders the body of Tamora be left unburied for the scavengers.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Saturnius*, Emperor of Rome  
*Bassianus*, brother of Saturnius  
*Titus Andronicus*, Roman general  
*Marcus Andronicus*, a tribune  
*Lucius*, son of Titus  
*Quintus*, son of Titus  
*Martius*, son of Titus  
*Mutius*, son of Titus  
*Young Lucius*, son of Lucius  
*Publius*, son of Marcus  
*Sempronius*, kinsman of Titus  
*Caius*, kinsman of Titus  
*Valentine*, kinsman of Titus  
*Aemilius*, a noble Roman  
*Alarbus*, son of Tamora  
*Demetrius*, son of Tamora  
*Chiron*, son of Tamora  
*Aaron*, a moor; Tamora's lover  
*Tamora*, Queen of the Goths  
*Lavinia*, daughter of Titus  
*Captain, Tribune, Messenger, and Clown*  
*Goths and Romans*  
*A Nurse and Black Child*  
*Senators, Tribunes, Officers, Soldiers, and Attendants*

## *Troilus and Cressida*

*Troilus and Cressida* begins with the Trojan War going on its seventh year. Troilus is King Priam's youngest son; Cressida is the daughter of Calchas, a priest of Troy. Cressida's uncle, Pandarus, encourages a romance that blossoms between the two. Meanwhile, the Greeks besieging Troy are bickering amongst themselves. The apathy in particular of Achilles toward the war is seen as damaging to the army's overall morale. When Hector issues a challenge to duel any Greek in one-on-one combat, Ulysses puts the fix in on a lottery so that Ajax is chosen; Ulysses hopes to spur the pride of Achilles by slighting him in the matter.

In the midst of this, Calchas deserts Troy for the Greek encampment. He proposes a simple barter; in exchange for telling what he knows of the Trojan forces, the Greeks will exchange a Trojan prisoner for his daughter, Cressida. Agamemnon, commander of the Greek army, agrees to this, and Cressida is soon parted from Troilus. However, Cressida seems less concerned about their separation when she meets—and flirts—with all the Greek generals. Trumpets blare, and Hector arrives to duel with Ajax. The two men battle each other to a standstill and eventually call a truce. The Trojan and Greek generals will dine together that evening at a feast.

Diomedes has been courting Cressida since her arrival in the Greek camp. While escorted by Ulysses, a heartbroken Troilus sees Cressida give Diomedes the sleeve that Troilus had given to her when she left Troy. He vows to kill Diomedes in battle, though their personal fight during the battle seems anticlimactic. During the battle, Hector slays Patroclus, which arouses the wrath of Achilles at last. Achilles encounters Hector, and—in all contempt of honor—has his men slay the warrior as he is unarmed and resting. Troy has suffered a grave defeat by the end of the day, and an enraged Troilus hurls curses at Achilles and Pandarus alike.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Priam*, King of Troy  
*Hector*, son of Priam  
*Troilus*, son of Priam  
*Paris*, son of Priam  
*Deiphobus*, son of Priam  
*Helenus*, son of Priam  
*Margarelon*, bastard son of Priam  
*Aeneas*, Trojan commander  
*Antenor*, Trojan commander  
*Calchas*, Trojan priest  
*Pandarus*, uncle of Cressida  
*Agamemnon*, Greek general  
*Menelaus*, brother of Agamemnon  
*Achilles*, Greek commander  
*Ajax*, Greek commander  
*Ulysses*, Greek commander  
*Nestor*, Greek commander  
*Diomedes*, Greek commander  
*Patroclus*, Greek commander  
*Thersites*  
*Alexander*, servant to Cressida  
*Helen*, wife of Menelaus  
*Andromache*, wife of Hector  
*Cassandra*, daughter of Priam  
*Cressida*, daughter of Calchas  
*Servants to Troilus, Paris, and Diomedes*  
*Trojan and Greek Soldiers*

## *Twelfth Night; Or, What You Will*

Viola has been shipwrecked in a violent storm off the coast of Illyria; in the process she has lost her twin brother, Sebastian. She disguises herself as a boy and assumes the name Cesario for protection. Thus disguised, Viola becomes a page in the service of Orsino, the Duke. It seems that Orsino is having little luck courting Olivia, who is in mourning for the deaths of her father and brother. As Orsino's proxy, Viola is sent to Olivia with love letters. Viola refuses to budge until she is let in to see Olivia; Olivia, intrigued by the impudent young "boy," contrives to get "Cesario" to return by sending her steward, Malvolio, after her with one of Olivia's rings. Viola realizes to her dismay that Olivia has fallen for her Cesario rather than Duke Orsino—further complicated by the fact that Viola has had stirrings herself for Orsino.

In the two major subplots of the play, Sebastian (Viola's twin, presumed dead) comes ashore in Illyria thinking that Viola has drowned in the shipwreck. A man named Antonio rescued him from the surf, and continues to aid him—at some risk to himself, as Antonio fought against the Duke at one time. Meanwhile, in Olivia's house, Sir Toby Belch (her uncle) has hoodwinked a foppish Sir Andrew Aguecheek into supporting him by convincing him that he could be a suitor to Olivia. There is a running feud between Malvolio and Belch; with the help of Maria, Olivia's maid, and Feste, a clown, Belch plots to make a buffoon of the steward. Maria writes a love letter to Malvolio that will make him think Olivia has fallen for him.

Malvolio falls entirely for the sport, which eventually leads to his confinement as a madman. All the while, Belch is egging Sir Andrew into a duel with Viola's "Cesario" character as she departs from Olivia; Olivia is now entirely smitten with Cesario, even though Viola continues to press Orsino's cause. As Viola and Sir Andrew prepare for a duel that neither one wants, Antonio happens upon the scene. Believing Viola to be Sebastian, he intervenes and is arrested. Viola, of course, does not recognize Antonio. Later, Belch and Sir Andrew encounter Sebastian, who doesn't back down from Aguecheek when challenged and resoundingly beats him. Olivia intervenes in the matter, and—mistaking Sebastian for Viola/Cesario—presses her suit for him. A bemused Sebastian agrees to marry her.

Antonio is brought before the Duke for questioning, and Viola relates the events of the duel. Antonio tells everyone how he dragged "this man" from the surf, saving his life. Then Olivia enters, searching for her new husband—which she thinks is Viola (as Cesario). Adding to this confusion, Belch and Aguecheek enter claiming that Viola/Cesario has violently assaulted them. In the midst of Viola's

denials, Sebastian appears. The brother and sister recognize one another and are reunited; Sebastian helps to clear the confusion as to who fought and married who. At the end, Orsino and Viola pledge their love, Olivia and Sebastian will remain satisfactorily wed, and Olivia rebukes Belch and Maria for their abuse of Malvolio, who vows his revenge upon the whole lot. Belch agrees to wed Maria to make up for getting her in trouble, and all—except the disgruntled Malvolio—will apparently live happily ever after.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Orsino*, Duke of Illyria

*Sebastian*, brother of Viola

*Antonio*, a sea captain

*Valentine*

*Curio*

*Sir Toby Belch*, uncle of Olivia

*Sir Andrew Aguecheek*

*Malvolio*, steward to Olivia

*Feste*, a clown; Olivia's servant

*Olivia*, a rich countess

*Viola*, in love with the Duke

*Maria*, Olivia's maid

*A Sea Captain*

*Lords, Priests, Sailors, Officers, Musicians, and Attendants*

## *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

Two youths, Valentine and Proteus, make their way from Verona to Milan. Valentine's father is sending him to take a position in the Duke of Milan's court, and Proteus accompanies him reluctantly, not wanting to leave his beloved Julia. While in Milan, Valentine falls for the Duke's daughter, Silvia. From here, things get considerably more complicated. Silvia is betrothed to Thurio, a wealthy courtier, although Silvia prefers Valentine. The two decide to elope, and Valentine confides in Proteus; Proteus, however, is smitten himself by the sight of Silvia. In order to get Valentine out of the way, Proteus betrays the plan to the Duke. Valentine is banished, Silvia is confined to a jail, and Proteus becomes a confidant of the Duke in matters concerning Thurio and Silvia.

Valentine joins a band of outlaws and is elected their leader. As the play progresses, Julia—disguised as a boy page—enters Milan in search of Proteus, who is trying unsuccessfully to woo Silvia on the sly. Silvia, on the other hand, still longs for Valentine, and cares nothing for Proteus or Thurio. Julia, ironically now in service as a page to Proteus, becomes an intermediary between Proteus and Silvia. Silvia finally tires of the situation and escapes Milan in search of Valentine. As fate would have it, Silvia is captured by Valentine's band of outlaws.

Unfortunately, the Duke has soon learned of Silvia's escape, and he, Proteus, and Thurio all set off to rescue her. Proteus recovers Silvia before the outlaws can bring her to Valentine. Valentine encounters them as Proteus makes the case for his love to Silvia; the two confront and eventually make peace with each other. In a gesture of reconciliation, Valentine even offers Silvia to Proteus, which causes Julia (who is still disguised as the page) to faint, whereupon Proteus recognizes her, much to his shame. The Duke and Thurio arrive upon the scene, but Thurio backs off his claim to Silvia when challenged by Valentine. As the play ends, Valentine gets Silvia with the Duke's approval, Proteus and Julia are reconciled, and the Duke grants a pardon to the band of outlaws.

### *Dramatis Personae*

#### *Duke of Milan*

*Valentine*, a gentleman of Verona

*Proteus*, a gentleman of Verona

*Antonio*, father of Proteus

*Thurio*, Valentine's rival

*Eglamour*, a knight

*Speed*, Valentine's servant

*Launce*, Proteus's servant

*Panthino*, Antonio's servant

*Host*, where Julia lodges

*Outlaws*, with Valentine

*Julia*, beloved of Proteus

*Silvia*, beloved of Valentine

*Lucetta*, Julia's woman

*Servants, Musicians*



## *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

*The Two Noble Kinsmen* is essentially an adaptation of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. In this story, the two kinsmen are Palamon and Arcite; they are captured while fighting for Thebes against Athens. While imprisoned, the two cousins find themselves attracted to Emilia, who is the sister of Hippolyta, wife of Theseus. Their professed "eternal friendship" takes a beating as the two vow to woo her. Theseus exiles Arcite from Athens and leaves Palamon in jail.

Arcite has other ideas once he is freed; he disguises himself as a peasant in order to keep an eye on Emilia. Meanwhile, the jailer's daughter has fallen in love with Palamon. She helps him to escape and aids him once he's hiding in the nearby forest. There Arcite encounters him. The two men resume their argument over Emilia and finally decide to duel for her that night. However, as they prepare for the duel, the two are discovered by Theseus. At first he condemns both to death; at the behest of Emilia and Hippolyta, however, the duke attempts to banish them both. Both Palamon and Arcite refuse, so Theseus asks Emilia to choose between them, with the loser being put to death. Emilia, however, can't decide, so Theseus declares that the matter will be settled by combat after all—in one month, Palamon and Arcite will fight for Emilia's hand, with the loser to be executed.

In the meantime, the jailer's daughter has gone mad as a result of her unrequited love for Palamon. Theseus absolves the jailer, who had no part in Palamon's escape, and gives a pardon to his deranged daughter. A doctor attempts to help her by getting the man to whom she's engaged pretend to be Palamon in order to restore her sanity. The time for the contest comes about, and Arcite defeats Palamon. However, fate twists dramatically as Palamon awaits execution; a messenger arrives bringing news of Arcite's mortal wounding suffered in a horse riding accident. Arcite gives Emilia's hand to Palamon before he dies.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Theseus*, Duke of Athens  
*Palamon*, nephew of the King of Thebes  
*Arcite*, nephew of the King of Thebes  
*Pirithous*, an Athenian general  
*Artesius*, an Athenian captain  
*Valerius*, a noble of Thebes  
*Six Knights*  
*A Herald*  
*A Jailer*  
*Wooer of the jailer's daughter*  
*A Doctor*  
*Brother of the jailer*  
*Friends of the jailer*  
*A Gentleman*  
*Gerrold*, a schoolmaster  
*Hippolyta*, wife of Theseus  
*Emilia*, her sister  
*Three Queens*  
*Jailer's Daughter*  
*Emilia's Servant*  
*Country Wenches and Women personating Hymen, Boy*  
*A Laborer*  
*Countrymen, Messengers*  
*A Man personating Hymen, Boy*  
*Executioners, Guards, Soldiers, Attendants*

## *The Winter's Tale*

When Leontes' old friend Polixenes wishes to leave after a court visit, Leontes asks his wife, Hermione, to try persuading him to stay longer. Hermione succeeds, but Leontes then suspects her of having an affair with Polixenes. His jealousy getting the better of him, Leontes plots to poison Polixenes. Camillo, however, warns Polixenes of Leontes' wrath, and the two escape to Bohemia. Meanwhile, Hermione is thrown in jail and brought to trial for adultery despite the words of the Delphic oracle (who has proclaimed Hermione innocent). While imprisoned, Hermione gives birth to a daughter, which Leontes promptly disowns. He also commands Antigonus, the husband of Paulina, to abandon the baby in the desert. Antigonus does so, but is devoured soon after by a bear.

Tragedy soon besets Leontes as the trial progresses. His only son, Mamilius, dies from grief over his mother's predicament. Hermione too is reported dead by her waiting woman, Paulina. This is enough to make even Leontes realize what his jealousy has cost him; in mourning, he goes into seclusion. In Bohemia, a shepherd discovers the abandoned baby, Perdita, and raises her as his own daughter. Sixteen years later, the son of Polixenes, Florizel, has fallen in love with Perdita; Polixenes, however, is less than pleased that his son, a prince, is in love with a shepherdess. Florizel and Perdita make plans to escape to Sicilia, aided by old Camillo.

In Sicilia, Florizel and Perdita are welcomed at the court of Leontes. Polixenes soon follows (accompanied by the old shepherd), and he and Leontes eventually reconcile. Perdita's identity as the king's daughter is revealed, and Leontes and Polixenes are delighted that their children will be wed. Leontes' new joy, however, is tempered by the bitter memory of Hermione's death. Paulina then takes Leontes and the rest to see a statue of the queen that is actually Hermione herself—the queen has lived in hiding for the past sixteen years. Thus Leontes is reunited with his wife and daughter, his best friend, and his close advisor, Camillo. Even Paulina regains a husband when Leontes promises her hand to Camillo in gratitude for helping Hermione. Hence, everything is set back aright in Sicilia by the end of the play.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Leontes*, King of Sicilia  
*Mamilius*, Prince of Sicilia  
*Camillo*, a lord of Sicilia  
*Antigonus*, a lord of Sicilia  
*Cleomenes*, a lord of Sicilia  
*Dion*, a lord of Sicilia  
*Polixenes*, King of Bohemia  
*Florizel*, Prince of Bohemia  
*Archidamus*, a lord of Bohemia  
*An Old Shepherd*; reputed father of Perdita  
*Clown*, his son  
*Autolycus*, a rogue  
*A Mariner*  
*A Jailer*  
*Hermione*, Queen to Leontes  
*Perdita*, daughter of Leontes and Hermione  
*Paulina*, wife of Antigonus  
*Emilia*, a lady to Hermione  
*Mopsa*, a shepherdess  
*Dorcas*, a shepherdess  
*Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen*  
*Officers and Servants*  
*Shepherds and Shepherdesses*  
*Guards*  
*Time*, as Chorus