

Shakespeare via Zoom – *The Winter's Tale*



Online Study Weekend led by Clare Smout

Saturday 20th – Sunday 21st March

A bear, a baby, and a living statue; a rural sheep-shearing feast and a queen standing trial for adultery; a riddling oracle that finally comes true. These are just some of the ingredients of Shakespeare's spectacular late romance, *The Winter's Tale*. Join us to explore Shakespeare's craftsmanship in this moving story of apparent tragedy that ends in forgiveness, rebirth and second chances, a story of loss and irrational destructive jealousy but also of wonder and joy. Winter gives place to spring, old foes reconcile, and young love offers hope for the future.

5 sessions (8 hours), plus optional streamed viewing. Cost: £70.

Saturday: 9.00-10.30; 11.00-12.30; 4.15-6.00
[plus 7.30-9.30: streaming of Cheek by Jowl production]
Sunday 9.00-10.30; 11.00-12.45

For further queries and to book, contact Clare Smout at Shakespeare.Courses@smout.org



Advance Preparation

Please **read the play in advance**, and ideally also the **introduction to a good academic edition**.

I strongly recommend either the 2010 Arden Three edition edited by John Pitcher or the Oxford World's Classics edition by Stephen Orgel (1996, repr. 2008). Both have very thorough and interesting introductions. However, if you already have a different edition you want to use, that's completely fine. I can email you Orgel's introduction if you wish.

Some people also like listening to an audio version while first reading the play or to watch a video version before the classes. I have listed some options below in case you find that useful, but there is absolutely no need to listen or watch in advance of the weekend.



Things you might want to think about as you read

- What are the play's themes, the issues it is exploring? Making a list of ideas as you read might be helpful.
- Genre – *The Winter's Tale* is often grouped with *Pericles*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest* as one of Shakespeare's 'last plays' or 'romances'. Does reading or watching it in combination with these other plays add anything to your appreciation or enjoyment? How far do you feel it echoes them in themes, character dynamics, style or tone? Does it have more in common with *Cymbeline* or with *The Tempest*?
- Structure – unlike *The Tempest*, in which everything happened within one day and on a single island, *The Winter's Tale* takes in both Sicily and Bohemia, is set in two time periods 16 years apart, and moves from tragedy to comedy. Many have seen this as a 'broken-backed' play. How successful is this structure? How successful is the character of Time?
- Can any of the characters or situations be seen as echoing or mirroring each other?
- How does Shakespeare's treatment of forgiveness and repentance compare with his explorations of these themes in other plays? How does one earn second chances?
- How does Shakespeare's treatment of sexual jealousy compare with his explorations of these themes in other plays?
- In *Winter's Tale* there is no villain nudging Leontes to jealousy, as there are in *Cymbeline*, *Much Ado* and *Othello*. What difference does this make?
- How far is this a play similar to *King Lear* in its treatment of a madly misjudging king?
- Where might you expect to feel moved when watching a production of this play? What are the moments of wonder and awe?
- Who gets a happy ending? Who doesn't?
- Where is the spectacle in this play?
- How successful is the inclusion of the bear?





EXTRA RESOURCES

The items listed here are all **optional** extras, to dip into before or after the course or not at all, depending on your personal interests. If there is anything specific you want to read about, do let me know.

Academic Articles

If you want to do any academic reading, please let me know what areas interest you and I email you some articles and a reading list.

Modern Novel inspired by *The Winter's Tale* (same series as *Hag-Seed*)

The Gap of Time by Jeanette Winterson

Audio

Radio3 recording (2018), with Danny Sapani and Eve Best <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06d27b2>

DVD / Streamed Productions

There are very few DVD or online professional productions of *The Winter's Tale* available. (Beware of the Hollywood film of the same name, with Russell Crowe, which is totally different.) Fortunately, those that exist are very good. I suggest that you watch either the RSC or BBC one in advance if you don't already know the play. They are both very faithful productions and will help flesh the text out for you. We will probably watch the Cheek by Jowl one on Saturday evening. If you don't want to shell out for a DVD, there are a couple of good semi-professional productions on YouTube listed below too, which you could watch in advance instead.

- **2016, Cheek by Jowl**, stage production, dir. by Declan Donnellan, available via www.cheekbyjowl.com/educationpacks/the-winters-tale-pack-preview/, using the password "fullof#No1ses"
- **2015, Royal Ballet** version, by Christopher Wheeldon (DVD or marqueetv.com)
- **1998, RSC**, dir. Greg Doran, with Antony Sher and Alex Gilbreath (DVD or cheaper via Amazon Prime Video)
- **1981, BBC Complete Works** series, TV version, with Robert Stephens and Anna Calder-Marshall (DVD)

YouTube semi-professional productions

- New Swan Shakespeare Festival - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MioaGICtMnQ>
- Shakespeare by the Sea - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9wn5Qo9PYI>

Other Websites

- 45-minute podcast/lecture Emma Smith, Oxford: <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/tempest-1> (focuses especially on how the play veers from tragedy to comedy)
- Cheek by Jowl – pack with clips and other resources - www.cheekbyjowl.com/educationpacks/the-winters-tale-pack-preview/. Use the password "fullof#No1ses"

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