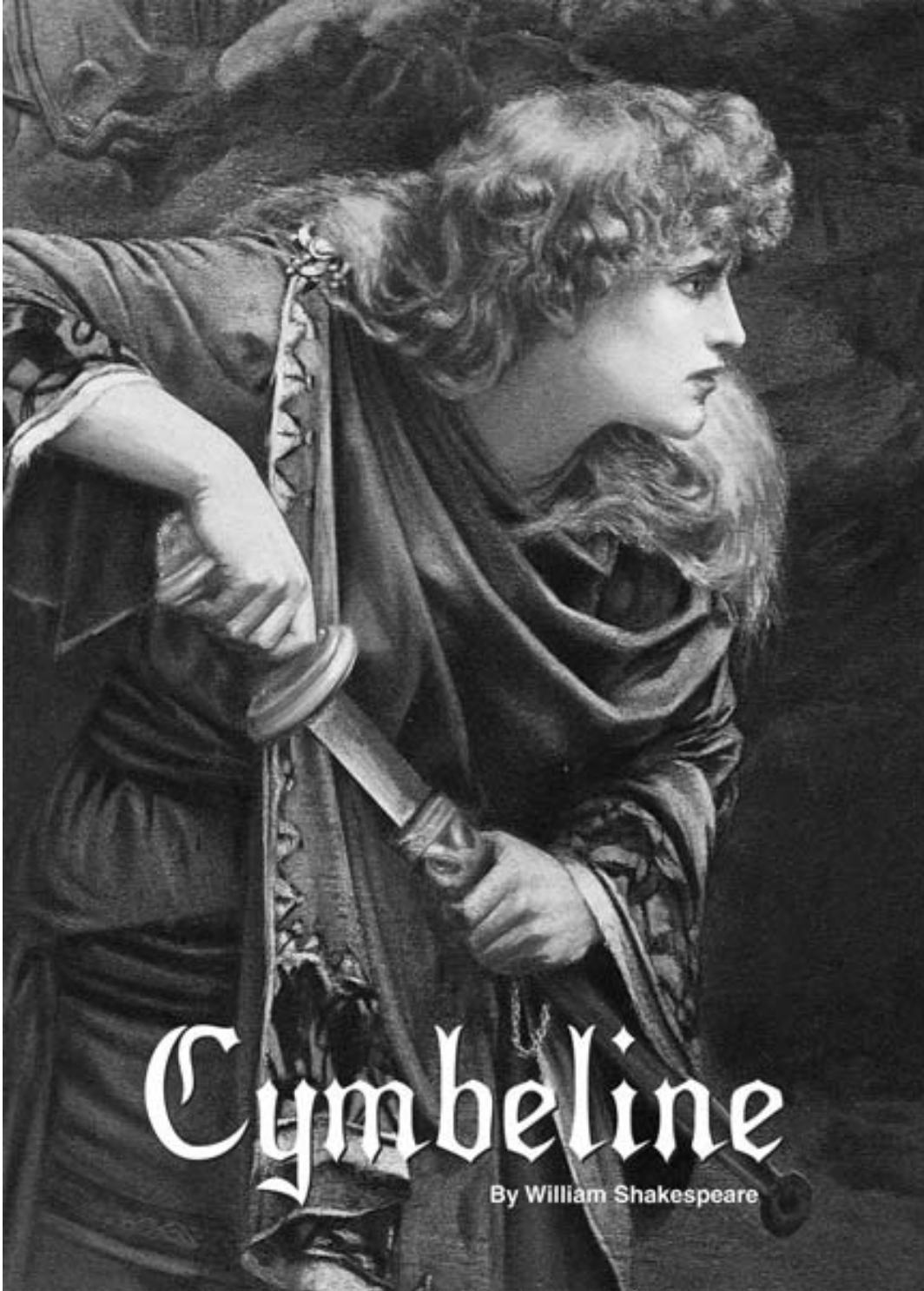


The
SHAKESPEARE
Theatre of
New Jersey

Bonnie J. Monte
Artistic Director



Cymbeline
By William Shakespeare

a study guide

compiled and arranged by
the Education Department of
The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey

CYMBELINE

a study guide

a support packet for studying the play and attending The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's Main Stage production

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The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is an independent, professional theatre located on the Drew University campus.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's programs are made possible, in part, by funding from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/ Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as funds from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional major support is received from The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the F. M. Kirby Foundation, The Edward T. Cone Foundation, The Shubert Foundation and Drew University, as well as contributions from numerous corporations, foundations, government agencies and individuals. Crystal Rock Bottled Water is the official water supplier of The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey.

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CLASSROOM

FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

What we hear most from educators is that there is a great deal of anxiety when it comes to Shakespeare; seeing it, reading it and especially teaching it. One of the principal goals of the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey’s Education Programs is to demystify Shakespeare, take him “off the shelf” and re-energize his work for students and teachers alike. Toward these goals, this Study Guide provides educators with tools to both allay their own concerns and to expand the theatre-going experience for their students beyond the field trip to the Shakespeare Theatre.

The information included in this study guide will help you expand your students’ understanding of Shakespeare in performance, as well as help you meet many of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. We encourage you to impart as much of the information included in this study guide to your students as is possible. The following are some suggestions from teachers on how you can utilize elements of the study guide given limited classroom time.

Many teachers have found that distributing or reading the one-page “BRIEF SYNOPSIS” has greatly increased students’ understanding and enjoyment of the production. It provides the students with a general understanding of what they will be seeing and what they can expect. Some teachers have simply taken the last five minutes of a class period to do this with very positive results.

When more class time is available prior to your visit, we recommend incorporating the background information on William Shakespeare and the play itself. One teacher divided her class into groups and assigned each group research topics based on the divisions found in the study guide. Using a copy of the corresponding study guide page as a launch pad, the students had one week to research the topics. The students then presented their information to the class in three- to five-minute oral reports. Including the questions that evolved from the presentations, the entire project took only one class period. I am told that the reading of Old English and Middle English texts was “quite entertaining and very informative.”

Using the questions found in the “TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION,” many teachers will opt to take a class period after the trip to The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey to discuss the play with their students. The questions help keep the comments focused on the production, while incorporating various thematic and social issues that are found in the play.

One school spent two days working through performance-based activities (a few of which are suggested in the “FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES” section) with a particularly “difficult and rowdy” class. They were astounded with the results. Their students took the opportunity to “ham it up,” and discovered a great joy and understanding from performing Shakespeare.

To learn more about these and many other suggestions for engaging your students, I encourage you to join us this summer for our acclaimed summer professional development institute for teachers, *ShakeFest*. Again, we hope you will incorporate as many portions of this study guide as you are able into your classroom experience. If you have any suggestions for activities or topics not already found in the study guide, please contact our education department. We are always interested in hearing new ways to excite young people (and teachers) about Shakespeare and live theatre.

“What’s My Line?” Promoting Active Listening

Teacher-tested, student-approved! Try this exercise with your students:

Before attending the production, give each student one line from the play to listen for. Discuss the meaning of the line and encourage their input in deciphering what Shakespeare meant by the line. How would the student perform the line? Why is the line important to the play? Does it advance the plot, or give the audience particular insight into a character or relationship?

Following the production, discuss the line again. Did the actor present the line in the way your student expected? If not, how was it different?

Happy Teaching,



Brian B. Crowe, Director of Education



ACTIVITIES

Shakespeare: Helpful Tips For Exploring & Seeing His Works

“Just plunge right in

(to Shakespeare). See a play, read it aloud, rent a video, listen to a tape. It’s up to you. When you look at Shakespeare close up, he’s not as intimidating as when he’s seen from afar.”

Norrie Epstein
The Friendly Shakespeare

Tragedy can have humor, and
great comedy always has
elements of the tragic.

Eighteenth-century critics complained that Shakespeare’s tragedies weren’t consistently serious enough. According to the classic rules, tragedy should be uniformly somber. Shakespeare’s use of humor in his tragedies prevents us from becoming washed away in a dense fog of emotion. Rather, it forces us out of the “tragic” long enough to appreciate the level to which the play’s passions have taken us.

“Some of the plays have taken on mythic proportions. By myths, I mean we grow up knowing certain things about [Shakespeare’s] characters but we don’t know how we know them.

There are lots of
SHAKESPEAREAN MICROCHIPS
lodged in our brains.”

Charles Marowitz, director

“It was Olivier’s *Henry V*
that made me realize that

Shakespeare is
about real
people
and that his language
wasn’t simply beautiful
poetry.”



Robert Brustein, director

“My advice to anyone seeing Shakespeare:

Don’t worry so much!

Just make sure your ears are clean and your eyes are sharp. Listen and look and watch.

Look at the distance people stand from each other; look at the relationships being developed.

Stay with it.

Don’t negate the move that Shakespeare will make toward your gut, toward your soul--

because he will touch you there,
if you allow yourself to be touched.”

David Suchet, actor

“There are some parts of the plays you’ll never understand. But excuse me, I thought that’s what great art was supposed to be about.

DON’T FREAK OUT OVER IT!”

Peter Sellars,
Director

Don’t be afraid to
LISTEN, WATCH AND REACT;
laugh, cry, and be moved.

Shakespeare wrote for
a live and active audience.

Both audience and actor
must be involved to create
a truly winning performance.

The Life of William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare, recognized as the greatest English dramatist, was born on April 23, 1564. He was the third of eight children born to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden of Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire, England. Shakespeare's father was a prominent local merchant, and Shakespeare's childhood, though little is known about it for certain, appears to have been quite normal. In fact, it seems that the young Shakespeare was allowed considerable leisure time because his writing contains extensive knowledge of hunting and hawking. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer. She was eight years his senior, and the match was considered unconventional.

It is believed that Shakespeare left Stratford-on-Avon and went to London around 1588. By 1592 he was a successful actor and playwright. He wrote 38 plays, two epic poems, and over 150 sonnets. His work



was immensely popular, appealing to members of all social spheres including Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. While they were well-liked, Shakespeare's plays were not considered by his educated contemporaries to be exceptional. By 1608 Shakespeare's involvement with theatre began to dwindle, and he spent more time at his country home in Stratford. He died in 1616.

Most of Shakespeare's plays found their first major publication in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, when two of his fellow actors put the plays together in the First Folio. Other early printings of Shakespeare's plays were called quartos, a printer's term referring to the format in which the publication was laid out. These quartos and the First Folio texts are the sources of all modern printings of Shakespeare's plays.

Shakespeare's London

London, in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, was a bustling urban center filled with a wide variety of people and cultures. Although most life centered around making a living or going to church, the main source of diversion for Londoners was the theatre. It was a form of entertainment accessible to people of all classes. The rich and the poor, the aristocrats and the beggars all met at the theatre. Though often appeasing the church or the monarchy, theatre at this time did experience a freedom that was unknown in previous generations. Evidence of this can be found in the numerous bawdy and pagan references found in Shakespeare's plays. This relative artistic license and freedom of expression made theatre extremely unpopular among certain members of society, and it was later banned entirely by the Puritans. Not until the reign of Charles II (1660-1685) was the theatre restored to the status it held in Shakespeare's day.

The Globe Theatre, the resident playhouse for Shakespeare's company of actors, was easily accessible to Londoners and an active social center. Actors and performers were also regularly brought to court or to private homes to entertain. Despite their social popularity, actors maintained a relatively low status, sometimes no better than a common beggar or rogue. Most performers were forced to earn a living doing trade work. The aristocracy's desire for entertainment, however, did spur the development of numerous new theatre pieces. Often a nobleman would become a patron to an artist or company of actors, providing for their financial needs and sheltering them to some degree from official sanctions. In return, the company would adopt the name of the patron. Shakespeare's acting company was originally named "Lord Chamberlain's Men" after their patron, Henry Carey, Lord Chamberlain. Later,

under the patronage of King James I, they were known as "The King's Men," an unprecedented honor at the time.

Despite the flourishing of the arts at this time, London was sometimes a desolate place. Outbreaks of the Black Plague (the bubonic plague) frequently erupted, killing thousands of citizens. Theatres, shops, and the government were all shut down during these times in hopes of preventing the spread of the disease. Elizabethans were unaware that the disease was being spread by the flea and rat populations, which well outnumbered the human population of London.



The Sonnets

You might have thought that Shakespeare wrote the sonnets earlier in his career, as a type of "stepping stone" to his plays. However, Shakespeare actually penned most of his sonnets during the various outbreaks of the plague in London, when the theatres were closed.

Are You SURE This Is English?

Contrary to popular belief, Shakespeare and his contemporaries did not write in Old English, or even Middle English. **PLAYWRIGHTS OF THE 16TH AND EARLY 17TH CENTURIES WROTE IN MODERN ENGLISH.** Shakespeare spoke (and wrote in) the same language which we speak today. It is possible to be thrown a bit by grammatical “carry-overs” from earlier English [“thee” and “thou” instead of “you”] and the poetic liberties that Shakespeare took, but there is no doubt that the words and syntax used in his plays can be understood today without any “translation.” To help clarify this point, here are some examples of Old, Middle and Modern English.

Old English (500 - 1150 CE)

When Julius Caesar invaded Britain in BC 55-4, the Celtic (pronounced KEL-tic) tribes lived in the British Isles. Their languages survive today in the forms of Gaelic (Scotland and Ireland), Welsh (Wales) and Manx (Isle of Man). The Romans brought Latin to Britain. However, early English developed primarily from the language of tribes which invaded and settled England from what is now Germany. This language, known as Old English, was also influenced by the Latin spoken by Catholic missionaries from Rome as well as the Scandinavian dialects of Viking raiders and settlers.

selection from *Beowulf* author unknown, ca 800 CE

Oft Scyld Scefing sceaðena prëstum,
monegum mægðum meodo-setla oftëah,
egsode eorlas. Syððan ærert wearð
fëasceaft funden, hë þæs frofre gebåd,
wëox under wolcnum, weorð-myndum þäh,
oð-þæt him aeghwylc ymb-sittendra
ofer hron-råde hýran scolde,
gomban gyldan. þæt wæs god cyning!

Middle English (1150 - 1500 CE)

The conquest of England by the Norman army in 1066 brought great changes to English life and the English language. The Old French spoken by the Normans became for many years the language of the Royal Court and of English literature. Over time, the spoken English still used by the lower classes borrowed about 10,000 words from French, as well as certain grammatical structures. By the time English reappeared as a written, literary language in the 14th century, it only distantly resembled Old English. This German-French hybrid language is known as Middle English.

selection from *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer, ca 1390 CE

But natheless / while I haue tyme and space
Er that I ferther / in this tale pace
Me thynketh it acordant to resoun
To telle yow / al the condiciun
Of eeche of hem / so as it seemed to me
And whiche they weere / and of what degree
And eek in what array / that they were inne
And at a knyght thanne wol I first bigynne.

Modern English (1450 - present day)

With the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, the English language began to develop and mutate at an unprecedented rate. Books, previously a precious and expensive commodity, were now widely available to anyone with basic literacy. Works in Latin, Italian, Spanish, French and Portuguese were being translated by the hundreds, and the translators found it necessary to borrow and invent thousands of new words. English trade and exploration fueled even more cultural and linguistic exchange. The early Modern English of Shakespeare and his contemporaries has been referred to as “English in its adolescence”: daring, experimental, innovative and irreverent.

selection from *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, ca 1595 CE

Well, you have made a simple choice; you know not how to choose a man: Romeo! No, not he; though his face be better than any man's, yet his leg excels all men's; and for a hand, and a foot, and a body, though they be not to be talked on, yet they are past compare...

What did Shakespeare sound like?

While we may associate Shakespeare with the “refined” British accent of an Ian McKellen or Judi Dench, linguistic scholars say that the closest approximation to the London accent of Shakespeare’s day is the accent heard nowadays in the Appalachian region of the United States.

IN MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

*Oft Scyld the Scefing from squadroned foes,
from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore,
awing the earls. Since first he lay
friendless, a foundling, fate repaid him:
for he waxed under welkin, in wealth he throve,
till before him the folk, both far and near,
who lived by the whale-path, heard his mandate,
gave him gift: a good king he!*

IN MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

*But nonetheless, while I have time and space
Before I continue in this story
I think it appropriate to speak of,
To tell you, the condition
Of each of them, as it seemed to me.
And who was who, and of what degree,
And in what fashion each was dressed.
And with a knight then I will begin.*

Cymbeline: A Brief Synopsis

Cymbeline begins with a conflict in the British royal family. At the prompting of his second wife, King Cymbeline had promised his daughter Imogen's hand to his stepson, Cloten. When the play opens, Cymbeline discovers that Imogen, the heir to the throne, has defied his will by secretly marrying Posthumus Leonatus, an orphan whom the king raised in his own household. Despite Imogen's pleas, the king banishes Posthumus from Britain on pain of death. The Queen, Imogen's stepmother, tries to reassure the couple that she will persuade the king to allow Posthumus to return. Reluctantly, Posthumus departs for Rome, leaving his trusted servant, Pisanio, to comfort and watch over Imogen. Before the couple separate, they exchange tokens of their love and fidelity— Posthumus gives Imogen a bracelet, and she gives him a diamond ring.

Arriving in Rome, Posthumus tells his new Roman companions about his wife's beauty and virtue. Iachimo, one of the Romans, scoffs at the description, and bets Posthumus that he can seduce her, with the diamond ring as the wager.

Back in Britain, the queen asks the court physician, Doctor Cornelius, to give her a poison for use in killing vermin. He suspects her motives, though, and replaces the poison with a sleeping potion. Cornelius's suspicions are justified— the queen gives the "poison" to Pisanio, telling him that it is medicine, in hopes that, with Pisanio's death, Imogen will be left unprotected.

Iachimo arrives in Britain, and seeks out Imogen. He tells her that in Rome Posthumus has been carousing in the company of other women, and suggests that Imogen revenge herself on Posthumus by having an affair with him. Imogen angrily and immediately refuses, and Iachimo explains that he was only testing her fidelity with "a false report." He apologizes, and asks her if she will store a trunk of presents for the Roman Emperor in her bedroom for the night.

That night, Iachimo conceals himself in the trunk until Imogen goes to sleep. Creeping out, he notes the details of her bedroom and her appearance, and slips Posthumus's bracelet from her arm, but is too afraid and ashamed to touch her. As Iachimo steals away, Cloten arrives with musicians to woo his stepsister. Despite Cloten's clumsy attempt at romance, Imogen dismisses him with the remark that Posthumus's "meanest garment" is more dear to her than Cloten will ever be.

Iachimo returns to Rome and tells Posthumus that he has won the bet. When Posthumus demands proof, Iachimo describes Imogen's bedroom and her body, and shows Posthumus the bracelet, saying that Imogen gave it to him before he left. Posthumus flies into a jealous rage, giving Iachimo the ring and vowing vengeance on his wife.

Meanwhile, the Roman general and ambassador, Caius Lucius, arrives at Cymbeline's court to demand that the British pay their annual tribute to Caesar. Egged on by Cloten and the queen, Cymbeline refuses to pay, although Caius Lucius warns them that it will mean war with Rome.

Pisanio receives two letters from Posthumus: one telling Imogen to travel to the port of Milford Haven, in Wales, where Posthumus will meet her and take her away; one telling Pisanio to kill Imogen for her infidelity once they are in the Welsh wilderness. Imogen is overjoyed by the news of Posthumus's return, and she and Pisanio leave the palace quickly and secretly.

The action of the play shifts to the mountains and forests of Wales, where "Morgan," an old huntsman, is living with his sons "Polydor" and "Cadwal." When the boys leave for the day's hunt, Morgan reveals to the audience that he is really Belarius, a nobleman unjustly banished by Cymbeline sixteen years before. In anger at his banishment, Belarius kidnapped Cymbeline's young sons, Guiderius and Arviragus, who have been presumed dead. Since the older boy was only three at the time of the kidnapping, they remember nothing of their identity as princes.

Imogen and Pisanio reach the Welsh mountains, and Pisanio, racked by guilt, decides to reveal the contents of the second letter to her. Stunned and broken-hearted, Imogen tells Pisanio to follow his master's orders and kill her. Pisanio refuses, insisting that there has been some misunderstanding. To buy them time, Pisanio suggests that he send Posthumus Imogen's handkerchief, soaked in blood, as proof of her death. Meanwhile, she will dress as a boy ("Fidele," or "Faithful") and will travel to Rome to investigate. To protect her on her voyage, he gives her the queen's "medicine" before he departs to return to the court.

Upon Pisanio's return, he is confronted by Cloten, who threatens him and demands that he reveal Imogen's whereabouts. Fearing for his life, Pisanio tells Cloten that she is on her way to Milford Haven. Cloten resolves to bring her back by force, and remembering her mockery about Posthumus's "meanest garment," dresses himself in some of Posthumus's old clothes.

Imogen, disguised as "Fidele," takes shelter in Belarius's cave and is caught eating some of the men's food. They welcome her warmly however, and offer their friendship and hospitality. Grief and travel have taken a toll on Imogen, and she becomes sick. While the men go out again to hunt, Imogen remains in the cave and takes the "medicine."

On their way to hunt, the three are confronted by Cloten, who insults them with his usual arrogance. Although Belarius recognizes him as the king's stepson, he cannot restrain the angry Guiderius, who challenges Cloten to fight, and chases him from the stage. Moments later, Guiderius returns with Cloten's severed head. Meanwhile, Arviragus discovers "Fidele" in the cave, unconscious and apparently lifeless. Both boys are overcome with grief, and sing a melancholy farewell. All three depart to dig graves, leaving the two bodies side-by-side.

As the potion wears off, Imogen wakes to find a headless corpse beside her. From the clothes, she believes it to be Posthumus, and that Cloten, informed by Pisanio, is the killer. She faints again from sorrow, and is discovered by the Roman army, led by Caius Lucius, which has just landed at Milford. Imogen tells the Romans that she is a page mourning her slain master, and Caius Lucius offers her employment as his own page.

At the palace, Cymbeline prepares for battle, although his thoughts are on the queen, who has become gravely ill upon hearing of Cloten's mysterious disappearance. Hearing of the Roman invasion, Guiderius and Arviragus persuade Belarius to take them to join in the battle for their country. Elsewhere, in the Roman army, Posthumus, having received the bloody handkerchief, is tortured by remorse at Imogen's supposed death. He decides to seek death by disguising himself as a British peasant and fighting on the outnumbered British side.

The two armies meet, and although the disguised Posthumus disarms Iachimo in single combat, the advantage is initially with the Romans, as expected. Cymbeline is captured, and the British army flees, pursued by the Romans. The tide is turned, as Posthumus explains in the aftermath, by the arrival of Guiderius, Arviragus, and Belarius, who rally their countrymen and turn the British retreat into a victory, with Posthumus's own assistance. Cymbeline is rescued, and Caius Lucius, Iachimo, and other Roman officers are taken prisoner.

Posthumus, however, is more depressed than ever, having found victory when he sought only death. He removes his British disguise, restores his Roman disguise, and allows himself to be captured by the British army, believing that he will be executed.

Jailed and awaiting execution, Posthumus dreams that he is visited by the spirits of his dead father, mother and brother, who plead with Jupiter to take pity on his suffering and save him. In the vision, Jupiter descends "in thunder and lightning, sitting upon an eagle," to assert that he has still been, and will continue to be, Posthumus's protector and benefactor. Posthumus awakes to find a mysterious book that contains a cryptic prophecy.

In the palace, Cymbeline honors "Polydor," "Cadwal," and "Morgan" for their heroism. Doctor Cornelius enters to report that the queen has just died, after confessing to a plot to poison Cymbeline and place Clotene on the throne. Cymbeline has Caius Lucius and the other Roman prisoners brought in to face sentencing, including Posthumus and Imogen, both of whom are still in disguise. Belarius and his "sons" are astounded to see the dead "Fidele" apparently restored to life, but only Pisanio realizes that it is in fact Imogen.

Imogen spots her ring on Iachimo's finger, and demands that he reveal where he obtained it. Iachimo reveals how he deceived Posthumus, which spurs Posthumus, in turn, to reveal himself and confess that, in his jealous rage, he caused Imogen's death. Pisanio admits that he never carried out the order to kill Imogen, and "Fidele" reveals that "he" is actually Imogen. In this whirlwind of revelations and reunions, "Morgan" steps forward and tells the king that he is the banished Belarius, and that the boys are the long-lost princes. One by one, everyone is forgiven for their misdeeds. Posthumus reveals the mysterious prophecy, which is interpreted by a soothsayer to have predicted both the reunion of Cymbeline's family and a renewed peace between Britain and Rome. Cymbeline gladly concurs with the prophecy, pardoning the captured Romans and promising to restore the tribute to Rome.



Above, Imogen enters the cave. Engraving by James Parker (1795) after a painting by Richard Westall, from the Boydell Shakespeare Folio.



At right, Belarius, Guiderius and Arviragus discover an unconscious Imogen in their cave. Painting by George Dawe (1809) from the collection of the Tate Gallery, London.

Sources and History of the Play

While Shakespeare often borrowed most of his plots and characters from other pieces of literature, *Cymbeline* is one of a handful of plays in which almost the entire plot seems to have been of his own invention.

According to Raphael Holinshed's 1587 *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*—one of Shakespeare's favorite sources for historical background—Cymbeline became King of Britain in 33 B.C. and ruled until 2 A.D. Holinshed notes that Cymbeline was educated in Rome, served in the Roman legions, and was a favored knight of Augustus Caesar, being "at liberty to pay his tribute or not" (unlike Shakespeare's depiction of this relationship). Holinshed also records that Cymbeline died leaving two sons, Guiderius and Arviragus. The rest of the British court in the play—the wicked queen, Cloten, Imogen, Belarius, Doctor Cornelius and the rest—are entirely invented by Shakespeare.

Shakespeare was possibly intrigued by a historical discrepancy which Holinshed points out: the earliest English historians maintain that Cymbeline "ever showed himself a friend of the Romans," while Roman sources record that Cymbeline and his father refused to pay the required tribute, and that Augustus Caesar planned three separate invasions of Britain to compel the British to submit. To that slight extent that *Cymbeline* is a historical and political play, it represents Shakespeare's imagined resolution of this discrepancy.

Holinshed highlights only one other fact about the reign of Cymbeline, that "our Lord Jesus Christ the only son of God... was born about the 23rd year of the reign of this Cymbeline" and that "it pleased the almighty God so to dispose the minds of men at that present, not only the Britons, but in manner all nations were contented to be obedient to the Roman empire." This idea of a universal peace (the *Pax Romana*) was of great interest to King James I, and seems to equally animate Shakespeare's play.

Holinshed's history is employed in one other significant way. While there is no record of Cymbeline's having a daughter at all, there is a "Queen Imogen" in Holinshed: the wife of Brutus, the legendary founder of Britain. "Posthumus," in turn, was supposedly the name of the son of Aeneas (the Trojan founder of Rome), and the grandfather of the King Brutus who founded Britain. The names of the play's central couple suggest that their marriage represents the birth of Shakespeare's England, England's roots in the epic heroism of ancient Rome and Troy, and the peaceful and fruitful relationship of British and Roman culture.

As for the "wager plot," in which a wife's fidelity is made the subject of a bet between her husband and another man, the general outlines of this story were borrowed from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a popular collection of short stories from 14th century Italy. This strange combination of sources is probably, at least in part, why the "wager plot" seems to be taking place in the Renaissance, while the "war plot" seems to be taking place in the heyday of the Roman Empire.

Cymbeline is thought to have been written in 1609, although the only record of a performance in Shakespeare's lifetime comes from a diary entry by the physician Simon Forman, who attended a performance in 1611, probably at the Globe.

It was published in the 1623 First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, where it is curiously listed with the tragedies. In 1634, it was performed at court, and King Charles I is reported to have "well liked" it. However, like many of Shakespeare's plays, its complex plot and uneven tone exasperated Restoration critics. In 1682, Thomas D'Urfey premiered an adaptation focusing on Imogen and her tribulations, entitled *The Injured Princess*. D'Urfey's version remained standard until the mid-18th century, when David Garrick restored Shakespeare's text.

Nevertheless, the complex and improbable plot has continued to make *Cymbeline* a subject of critical controversy up to the present day. It is also one of Shakespeare's more rarely staged plays, although the role of Imogen has traditionally been a favorite of actresses and audiences. In the last few decades, directors have used more imaginative and dream-like stagings of the play to reflect the fairy-tale atmosphere of Shakespeare's text.



Guiderius and Arviragus lament the "death" of Imogen. Illustration by Arthur Rackham for the 1909 edition of *Tales from Shakespeare*, by Charles and Mary Lamb.

Commentary and Criticism

“The play tells of love and loss, of jealousy and fury, of the joy of finding and the near-delirium of reuniting after heartrending separation; and the language in which the emotions accompanying these human states are expressed has never been more potent... a dramatization of improbable story lifted, through its characters and its language, into a realm that is nearly mythic in scope.”

Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine
The Folger Shakespeare Library *Cymbeline*

“[The ending of *Cymbeline* is] a tedious string of unsurprising denouements with insincere sentimentality after a ludicrous stage battle. [It is] stagey melodramatic trash of the lowest order.”

George Bernard Shaw

“The final scene... [of *Cymbeline* is an] outstanding virtuous triumph. An improbable number of loose ends have been teased out of the plot to the extent that, even more so than usual, the play is set to either stand or fall upon its resolution. The climactic scene in *Cymbeline* is prefaced by one showing a despairing Posthumus wishing for death; the wicked plots of Iachimo and the Queen are not yet discovered; Imogen remains disguised as Lucius’s servant; and the true identities of the stolen princes Guiderius and Arviragus remain hidden.”

Andrew Stewart
“Some Uses for Romance”

“This play has many just sentiments, some natural dialogues, and some pleasing scenes, but they are obtained at the expense of much incongruity. To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names, and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation.”

Samuel Johnson
General Observations on Shakespeare’s Plays (1768)

“This play is perhaps the fittest in Shakspeare’s whole theatre to illustrate the principle that great dramatic genius can occasionally venture on bold improbabilities, and yet not only shrive the offense, but leave us enchanted with the offender. I think I exaggerate not, in saying that Shakspeare has nowhere breathed more pleasurable feelings over the mind, as an antidote to tragic pain, than in *Cymbeline*.”

Thomas Campbell
“Shakespeare’s Plays” (*Life*, 1838)

“In depth and variety of coloring, in richness of matter, profundity of thought, and heedlessness of conventional canons *Cymbeline* has few rivals among Shakespeare’s plays. Fascinating as it is, however, this tragi-comedy has never been very popular on the stage. The great public, indeed, has neither studied nor understood it.”

Georg Brandes
William Shakespeare: A Critical Study (1898)

He Said...

“*Cymbeline* is a very uneven play, with much in it that can seem hasty or even perfunctory... Something is askew in *Cymbeline*... The plot is a chaos, and Shakespeare never bothers to be probable... What, besides Imogen, keeps us attentive, Shakespeare must have known, but I cannot account for it... We seem to confront the author’s sickness of spirit.”

Harold Bloom
Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human



Iachimo spies on Imogen. Engraving by James Stow (1795) after a painting by Richard Westall, from the Boydell Shakespeare Folio.

...She Said

“There is nothing wrong with calling *Cymbeline* an experiment, unless by that we mean to undercut its standing as a play worth reading, staging, remembering, and discussing. For this is a play that tackles, and to a large extent solves, an intriguing set of problems about the relationship between political stories and psychological stories.”

Marjorie Garber
Shakespeare After All

Shakespeare's Common Tongue

alack- expression of dismay or shock
anon- soon, right away
ere- before
hath- has
hence- away (from here)
henceforth- from now on
hither- here
lest- or else
naught- nothing
oft- often
perchance- by chance, perhaps, maybe
sirrah- "hey, you" as said to a servant or someone of lower status
thee- you
thence-away, over there
thine- yours
thither- there
thou- you
thy- your
whence- where
wherefore- why
whither- where

... and the "thys" have it

Often Shakespeare will alternate his usage of "thou" for "you", or "thy" for "your", or "thine" for "yours". Though the words are synonymous, there is a great deal of information that can be obtained by looking closely at these choices.

The different use of these pronouns have to do with status, relationship, degrees of intimacy and shifting attitudes. "You" is used in formal situations and conveys respect from the speaker. It is used when addressing royalty and parents. "Thou," used in more informal settings, also can suggest contempt or aggression from the speaker. The use of "thou" places the speaker above the status of the person to whom s/he is speaking. Children are addressed using "thou," "thee" or "thy." In a conversation between two people of equal status, the use of "you" suggests that everything is going along smoothly, whereas "thou" would suggest that there is some kind of upset or unrest in the relationship.

Terms and Phrases Found In *Cymbeline*

ACT I

sur-addition – an added name denoting accomplishments
election – choice
inform – to equip, supply
cere up – to shroud or conceal
puttock – a carrion bird, such as a kite or vulture
puppies – fools
senseless – insensate, unfeeling
orisons – prayers
moiety – half
approbation – proof
confections – compounds, concoctions
allayments – antidotes
cordial – a restorative drug (literally, for the heart)
handfast – marriage bond
bend her humor – change her mind
Arabian bird – the mythical Phoenix (of which only one specimen supposedly existed)
snuff – partly consumed candlewick
by-peeping – sidelong glances
tomboys – loose women (also **ramps**)
runagate – unfaithful, straying
fan – to test (literally, to winnow, as grain)
chaffless – faultless
factor – agent

ACT II

kissed the jack – hit the target (in lawn bowling)
Tarquin – Roman king in "The Rape of Lucrece"
movables – furniture
Gordian knot – legendary intricate knot
conscience – consciousness
voucher – proof, evidence
tuned up ace – rolled a one in dice (the lowest score)
minion – sweetheart
hilding – a lower-class person (also **pantler**)
clipped – embraced
sprited – haunted
limb-meal – torn limb from limb
pudency – modesty, purity
mutability – changeability, fickleness

ACT III

ribbed – enclosed (also **paled**)
giglet – a promiscuous woman
crook'd noses – hooked noses (a Roman stereotype)
franchise – freedom
fedary – confederate, conspirator
astronomer – astrologer
physic – medicine, treatment
bores of hearing – ears
jet through – strut through
stride a limit – cross a boundary
demesnes – regions
reft'st – robbed
mortal – fatal, deadly
panged – pained
retired – unsociable, taciturn
packing – scheming
homely – plain, simple, humble

ACT IV

saving reverence – with all due respect
alike conversant – equally experienced
citizen – "sissy" (literally, citified)
wanton – spoiled brat
gentle – of noble birth
dieter – dietician, chef
apprehension – understanding
reck – care, caution
clotpoll – blockhead
fan – temples
Thersites...Ajax – in the Iliad, two Greek warriors, one foul-mouthed and dishonorable, the other heroic
thunder-stone – lightning bolt
'Ods pittikins – a mild oath (literally, God's pity)
irregulous – lawless
lucre – greed
pregnant – obvious
subjection – duties (as a subject)
cloyed importantly – distracted by urgent business
courtesy – courtly upbringing

ACT V

- wrying – *erring, straying*
- carl – *peasant*
- strait- *narrow*
- faces fit for masks – *delicate or girlish faces*
- mortal bugs – *deadly terrors*
- silly habit – *humble clothing*
- affront – *attack, charge*
- Lucina – *Roman goddess of childbirth*
- suffer – *allow*
- geck – *dupe*
- hardiment – *valiant service*
- fangled – *fancy, ornate*
- tongue, and brain not – *speak without understanding*
- targes of proof – *shields of tempered metal*
- stones of sulphur – *lightning*
- curious – *artfully wrought, decorated*

A Man of Many Words

Shakespeare used over **20,000 different words** in his plays and poems. Of these, 8.5% (1700 words) had never been seen in print before Shakespeare used them. To give you a sense of just how extraordinary this is, consider that the King James Bible uses only 8,000 different words. Homer is credited with using approximately 9,000 different words in his works. Milton is estimated at using 10,000 different words in his works.

Cymbeline: Food For Thought

Westward Ho!

Milford Haven, the Welsh port town which is plays a significant role in *Cymbeline*, is also the most westerly setting in any of Shakespeare’s plays. (Shakespeare mentions America in *The Comedy of Errors*, but none of his plays takes place in the Western Hemisphere). The most northerly is Cawdor Castle in Scotland (*Macbeth*), the most easterly the Syrian cities of Tyre and Antioch (*Pericles*), and the most southerly the Egyptian city of Alexandria (*Antony and Cleopatra*).

Ghosts on the Stage

The Elizabethan idea of a ghost was somewhat different than how we might think of a ghost today. They were not believed to be wispy air-like entities, but as having the appearance and solidity of the living. Ghosts also always came with a mission; to warn the living, to revenge or expose a murder, or to punish someone. Not all ghosts were malignant— we see the beneficent ghosts of Posthumus’s parents and brother in *Cymbeline*. Ghosts were a very popular device in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.

Shakespeare’s Women of Many Words

Only a few Shakespearean women have more to say than Imogen, who has about 522 lines of verse in the uncut text of the play. The only female characters who “out-talk” Imogen are Rosalind (*As You Like It*), Cleopatra (*Antony and Cleopatra*), and Portia (*The Merchant of Venice*). Of course, none of the ladies comes close to matching Shakespeare’s “talkiest” character, Prince Hamlet, with his 1,422 lines of verse.

What’s in a Name?

Imogen’s name may have originally been spelled *Innogen*, to reflect her purity and innocence. Her chosen alias, *Fidele*, means “faithful.”

Posthumus’s name refers to the fact that he is an orphan. In keeping with Roman custom, he has acquired a second name, *Leonatus* (“lion-born”), to indicate the military heroism of his family.

Cloten’s name is derived from the same root as “clod”— to which Guiderius alludes when calling his severed head a “clot-poll.”

Iachimo, like *Iago*, is a variation on the name Jacob or James.

Wales: It’s a Whole Other Country

Shakespeare, who grew up in the far west of England near the Welsh border, frequently makes reference to Wales and Welsh characters in his plays. At the time of the historical *Cymbeline*, Wales was truly a different country from England (then known as “Britain”), with its own language and culture. This is reflected in the play when *Cymbeline* instructs his lords to escort the Roman ambassador, Caius Lucius, “till he have crossed the Severn [River],” the border with Wales, and thus the limit of his authority. For the play’s characters, Wales represents an alternative, more natural culture.

Wales did not come under English rule until 1282, when King Edward I defeated the Welsh in battle and had his son named Prince of Wales. Welsh nationalists continued to resist English rule for hundreds of years— in *Henry IV, Part 1*, Shakespeare depicts the Welsh chieftain Owen Glendower, who used the mountainous terrain to his advantage in leading a long guerilla war against King Henry IV. In 1999 and 2006, acts of Parliament finally reestablished limited sovereignty for the people of Wales.

More Ado About Milford

The town of Milford Haven is situated at the mouth of the River Cleddau, at the extreme southwestern end of the county of Pembrokeshire in Wales. The natural harbor has been used by seagoing ships since at least the 9th century, when Viking raiders dropped anchor there. In the late 18th century, it was the eastern port of call for American whalers from Nantucket, and in 1802 Admiral Nelson called it one of the great harbors of the world.

In *Cymbeline*, Imogen calls it “blessed Milford.” Partly this is because she believes she will be reunited with her banished husband there, but Shakespeare may also have intended to compliment the Tudor ancestors of King James I. In English history, Milford played its most critical role as the landing point for the “puissant navy” of Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, on his way to overthrow Richard III and become king.

The English Legacy of the Roman Empire

Although *Cymbeline* often seems to shuttle back and forth in time, inasmuch as it is a historically-based play, it is set during the reign of Augustus Caesar (27 BC- 14 AD), a time at which Britain was just beyond the margin of direct Roman rule. Not long after the events depicted in *Cymbeline*, most of modern-day England would come under centuries of Roman military occupation. Although most physical vestiges of the Roman presence in England had long vanished by Shakespeare's day, the cultural impact of ancient Rome persisted, and was especially important to educated English men and women of Shakespeare's time.

To the ancient Greeks and Phoenicians, Britain and Ireland were the *Cassiterides*, the "tin islands." As early as the 5th century BC, a Carthaginian explorer named Himilco was said to have visited these lands at the edge of the known world. To those who had not traveled with the tin merchants on this long and arduous voyage, Britain remained little better than a myth. Direct contact with the classical world did not come until Julius Caesar made two expeditions to the southeastern coast of Britain in 55 and 54 BC. Caesar, then the Roman general in charge of Gaul (modern France), believed that British tribes had been providing supplies and troops to their cousins in Gaul who were resisting Roman rule. His landings were not so much invasions as shows of strength designed to impress the British chieftains and win their allegiance to the growing superpower of Rome.

Caesar succeeded in establishing a positive relationship with at least two major tribes, the Atrebates and the Catuvellauni (whose chieftain, Cassivellaunus, or Cassibelan, was the ancestor of the historical Cymbeline). Trade was reestablished with Roman-controlled Gaul, with the stipulation that the tribes would pay taxes and tribute to maintain their relationship with Rome. A number of British boys of noble birth were also sent to Rome, where they were simultaneously hostages and Roman military cadets. Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* alludes to this arrangement when he reminds Caius Lucius that "Caesar knighted me; my youth I spent much under him."

Throughout the dictatorships of Julius Caesar and his adopted son Augustus, these small British kingdoms remained client states of Rome, tied to the empire by diplomacy and trade. There is no evidence that the historical Cymbeline ever opposed Augustus Caesar in the bold way that Shakespeare depicts, although Roman historians record three separate planned invasions of Britain during Augustus's reign. The historian Strabo, writing near the end of the Augustan period, notes that British taxes and trade were far more profitable for Rome than a military conquest would have been.

The relationship with the British kingdoms collapsed under the administrations of Augustus's successors, Caligula and Claudius, and in 43 AD Imperial legions finally invaded Britain in large numbers to bring the tribes back under control. By 84 AD, most of modern-day England and Wales were under Roman administration as the province of Britannia, and large numbers of Roman soldiers were permanently stationed on the island. The occupation would remain until approximately 430, during which time Roman culture substantially influenced the native Celtic culture of Britain.

A hallmark of Roman rule in Europe was the sophisticated administrative apparatus which accompanied the troops. Lawyers, tax and customs officials, engineers and diplomats were employed to bring the new province up to the legal and economic standards the

rest of the Empire. The presence of these officials and their families meant numerous craftsmen, merchants and servants also accompanied the occupation. The city of London owes its existence and its long history as a center of European and world trade to the Roman period in England.

Even after the Roman troops and governors were long gone, the German and Celtic rulers of the medieval era bolstered their reputations by associating themselves in any way possible with the wealth and sophistication of the Roman period. Traditional history began to backdate the Roman relationship with Britain, asserting that the mythical founder of Britain was one of the sons of Aeneas, the Roman ancestor. In this way, Roman culture persisted in many forms, including serving as the basis for the English legal tradition.

For Elizabethans, Imperial Rome was the ultimate model of a strong, prosperous society under the rule of law. As a schoolboy, Shakespeare would have heard the reign of the early Caesars extolled in his history lessons. The popularity of plays such as *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* reflects the degree to which Englishpeople of Shakespeare's day knew and were fascinated by the history of Imperial Rome.

The historical setting and themes of *Cymbeline* may have been particularly influenced by the Roman interests of the new king, James I. An avid reader, James was particularly interested in Augustan Rome, and the Emperor's establishment of the *Pax Romana*, a Europe-wide peace that marked the height of Roman stability and prosperity. In uniting the thrones of England and Scotland, and in his foreign policy, James believed that he was in some way a new Augustus, ushering in an era of enlightened peace in Europe.

These historical influences can be seen as the basis for the complicated relationship between British nationalistic pride and admiration of Rome that appears in *Cymbeline*. In keeping the play suspended between ancient and contemporary times (and, ultimately, balancing the relationship between Britain and Rome), Shakespeare may have wished to reflect his nation's aspiration to be both the product of Roman greatness and the heir to that greatness on the world stage.



The eagle of Jupiter abducts Ganymede. Roman floor mosaic (3rd century AD) from Kato Paphos Archaeological Park, Cyprus.

Cymbeline and the Romance Genre

Along with other plays written late in his career, such as *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline* has often been classified as a “romance,” to distinguish it from the genres of both comedy and tragedy. As a category of Shakespearean plays, the term “romance” was first applied in the late 18th century as a way of grappling with the fact that Shakespeare often bent or broke the classical Aristotelian rules of genre, especially in these late plays. In Shakespeare’s own lifetime, his friend and competitor Ben Jonson took him to task for his disregard of literary “rules.” In 1709, Nicholas Rowe wrote that Shakespeare’s plays “which are called histories, and even some of his comedies, are really tragedies, with a run or mixture of comedy among them.”

This “tragicomic” quality is especially prominent in Shakespeare’s romances. Dark themes and potentially tragic, even catastrophic, events are key elements in the romances, yet each culminates in the miraculous restoration of peace and harmony.

As a literary genre, “romance” far predates Shakespeare. The term was derived from the medieval French *romanz*, adventure narratives such as the Arthurian legends recorded by Chrétien de Troyes. Long before even these tales of high adventure, however, Hellenistic Greeks (330–30 BC) were circulating similar fantastic stories of peril and heroism on papyrus scrolls. These ancient romances were much like today’s comic books or graphic novels, using artwork and brief pieces of text to relate the adventures of superheroes.

Shakespeare’s romances have several common elements which bring them together as a single genre. All feature young lovers, as the comedies do, but the action of the plays is shaped by death, loss, and catastrophe as it is in the tragedies. The settings are exotic, far removed in time and/or place from contemporary London. A quest or search (usually, at least in part, for lost family members) drives the protagonists, and miraculous events intervene to bring these quests to a successful resolution.

Some of these common elements were probably a result of changing theatrical tastes and theatre technology at the time when they were written. Although English theatre began as a popular artform enjoyed by the masses, by the early 1600s its profile as elite literary entertainment was beginning to develop. The new king, James I, was an avid theatre-goer with a fascination for the supernatural, and his taste undoubtedly shaped the tastes of the English upper class. New indoor theatres like the Blackfriars allowed Shakespeare’s theatre company to expand their season through the winter, and to serve this growing aristocratic audience (at higher ticket prices). Flickering candlelight and a high ceiling made possible far more dramatic and magical scenic effects, such as flying a “god” in from the rafters.

While Shakespeare and other playwrights obviously had good reason to experiment with a new genre at this time, each of Shakespeare’s romances is more than the sum of its generic ingredients. As Harold Bloom notes, “the mature Shakespeare almost always is beyond genre. Though we classify *Cymbeline* with the other ‘late romances,’ it does not share much with *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, let alone with *Pericles*.” Although *Cymbeline* is a quest tale set in the ancient world, it is far more rooted in the real material of history and politics than *Pericles*. It can hardly be said to share the deep psychological explorations of *The Winter's Tale* or *The Tempest*. Each romance tackles its tale of bittersweet fantasy in a very different, though related, way.

In her article “*Cymbeline: A Modern Perspective*” (in the Folger edition of the play) Cynthia Marshall begins by noting the play’s “unusual interest in sleeping characters.” Of course, Shakespeare’s plays frequently address sleep, dreaming, and the relationship between dreams and other human experiences (like hearing a story or viewing a play). *Cymbeline*, however, takes the stage depiction of both the act of sleep and of passivity generally to a level where it might seem to threaten the whole project of telling a story. As Marshall observes, “the dramatic possibilities of an actor miming sleep are distinctly limited.” As in a dream, the plot and setting of *Cymbeline* move abruptly and arbitrarily, and emblematic objects (like the ring, the bracelet and the potion) seem to exert more force than the characters themselves.

Marjorie Garber suggests that if *Cymbeline* is organized according to the logic of dreams— if the play represents “a transformed world where dream and reality are one”— this may explain its “apparent disjointedness.” “If, instead of seeking the play’s meaning from the plot, one seeks it instead in a logic of repetition, layering, and dream, there is a surprising unity” in the play’s symbolic objects, in its sundered and reunited families, and in its focus on the theme of sacrifice. “The dream’s here still,” Imogen says. “Even when I wake it is without me as within me; not imagined, felt.”

Recovering a lost family (or a lost loved one) is one of the most potent and primal of myths, which is repeated and reworked throughout the history of folk tales and romances. Garber, for example, points to the Harry Potter books as a recent example of this “family romance.” It is easy to see how the stories of Imogen and her brothers, and Posthumus as well, fit this romance model.

How do we account for the political and historical elements of *Cymbeline* within the context of romance? Garber suggests that this can be done by understanding the play as “a myth of national origin... at once historical and romancelike by its very nature” and simultaneously seeing that “myths are the dreams produced by a culture.” As the story of the birth of a nation, and more importantly, a national identity, *Cymbeline* may make use of historical figures, but they are there, first and foremost, to serve a symbolic, allegorical purpose.



Belarius, Guiderius and Arviragus prepare Imogen for burial. Drawing by Henry William Bunbury (1792–96), from the collection of The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

Additional Topics for Discussion

About the Play

1. In the First Folio of 1623, this play was entitled *The Tragedy of Cymbeline*; some scholars have suggested that it is, instead, a history play. What similarities do you find between this play and Shakespearean tragedies such as *Othello*, *King Lear*, or *Macbeth*? In what other ways is it a play about history and politics?

2. The titles of most of Shakespeare's plays are based on the name of the main character in each. Cymbeline, however, hardly seems like the most prominent character in this play. Even though he is the king, Shakespeare makes it clear that his decisions are mostly manipulated by others. The great event of his reign in the play is the climactic battle with the Romans, yet even here, Cymbeline appears primarily as a helpless captive, rescued by Belarius and his long-lost sons. Why might Shakespeare have made his title character in this play so passive? If Cymbeline is *not* the main character, who would you say deserves this designation?

3. One of the most common criticisms leveled at this play is that it is a hodgepodge of characters, events and styles that simply don't fit together very well. For example, Caius Lucius seems like a typical noble Ancient Roman who could easily have stepped out of *Julius Caesar*, while his supposed countryman Iachimo seems like a typical scheming Renaissance Italian who would be more at home in *Othello*. Would you agree with those critics who say that this is a lapse on Shakespeare's part, or is there a valid dramatic reason for constructing *Cymbeline* in this way?

4. In the play's opening scenes, Posthumus is proclaimed by numerous other characters to be a paragon of honor and virtue. Yet some critics have noted that he hardly seems to deserve the level of loyalty that he receives from Imogen. What do you think? Do Imogen and Posthumus make a good and compatible couple? If so, what do you make of Posthumus's multiple changes of heart regarding Imogen? If Imogen is the heroine of the play, does Posthumus make an adequate hero?

5. Several elements of *Cymbeline* (such as the sleeping potion, the wicked stepmother, the long-lost brothers) may remind you of traditional fairy tales like "Snow White" or "Cinderella." Why do you think Shakespeare chose fairy tales (or folk tales) as a model for this play? What does *Cymbeline* have in common (thematically or otherwise) with fairy tales?

About this Production

1. This production of *Cymbeline* uses live music performed by members of the cast and composed by Robin Weatherall. What is the role of music in helping tell the story? Why do you think music was an important element to this director?

2. The director of this production, Joe Discher, compared *Cymbeline* to *The Princess Bride* at one point. In what ways did this production highlight the "fairy-tale" qualities of Shakespeare's play as you watched it? What similarities do you see between Cymbeline and other famous adventure stories from literature or film?

Follow-up Activities

1. Write a review of this production of *Cymbeline*. Be sure to include specific information and your own reactions to both the acting and the design elements (lights, set, costumes and sound). Explain what you liked about the production, and what you disliked, and support your opinions. Then submit your review to The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's Education Department, or see if it can be published in your school newspaper.

2. **Shakespearean songcraft.** "Fear no more the heat o' the sun," the song which Guiderius and Arviragus sing over Imogen's "corpse," is one of many beautiful and evocative song lyrics which Shakespeare wrote for his plays. Examine this song, and use it as a writing prompt for your own elegy (memorial poem) beginning with the same three words: "Fear no more..." Discuss what makes Shakespeare's song so moving and effective.

3. **"I learn by this letter..."** Letters play an important role in *Cymbeline*, as they do in many of Shakespeare's plays. Write your own letter from the point of view of one of the characters, discussing an event or situation in the play. For example, a letter from Dr. Cornelius to Cymbeline voicing his suspicion of the queen, or a letter from Iachimo to Philario revealing his inner turmoil after meeting Imogen.

4. **Alternate endings.** George Bernard Shaw famously detested the ending of this play, and wrote his own adaptation, *Cymbeline Refinished*, in an attempt to make the ending more "realistic." How else might the play end? Consider different possibilities, think of their consequences, and draft your own "refinished" ending for *Cymbeline*.

5. Divide into five groups, and have each group take one act of the play. Your task is to create a three-minute version of your act, using only Shakespeare's words. Choose carefully the lines from your act that carry the most important information and advance the story. When each group is done, you will have a 15-minute version of *Cymbeline* which you can perform for one another. Afterwards, discuss both the process of adaptation and how your "abridgement" compared to the full-length performance.

6. **Play-ing with Parallels.** As mentioned at right, someone watching *Cymbeline* might almost think that Shakespeare had thrown the rest of his plays in a blender, and that this was the result. Both characters and events in *Cymbeline* sometimes seem strangely reminiscent of characters and events in other Shakespeare plays. On a large sheet of paper, create a "map" or web that traces these connections. For example, Iachimo uses jealousy to deceive a husband, like *Othello's* Iago. Posthumus is banished but returns in disguise to fight for his king, like *Lear's* Kent. See just how many of these interconnections you can find.

Teachers:

Do you have activities or exercises to suggest for this play? We are always looking for new ideas to inspire students (and teachers). Send your suggestions to info@ShakespeareNJ.org and we will share them with other teachers, and maybe even include them in future study guides.

Test Your Understanding

1. Shakespeare's plays are most often written in:
 - a) rhyming couplets
 - b) Old English
 - c) blank verse
 - d) prose
2. Shakespeare wrote in what language?
 - a) Old English
 - b) early modern English
 - c) Middle English
 - d) Latin
3. Who is the heroine of the play?
 - a) Imogen
 - b) Cymbeline
 - c) Posthumus
 - d) The Queen
4. Cymbeline is the:
 - a) King of Britain
 - b) King of Wales
 - c) Emperor of Rome
 - d) Mayor of Lud's Town
5. Imogen is in love with _____, but her father wants her to marry _____.
 - a) Pisanio, Cloten
 - b) Cloten, Caius Lucius
 - c) Posthumus, Cloten
 - d) Caius Lucius, Belarius
6. Why is Posthumus banished from Britain?
 - a) he kidnaps the king's sons
 - b) he wants to usurp the throne
 - c) he wants to go to war with Rome
 - d) he marries the king's daughter
7. Iachimo makes what wager with Posthumus?
 - a) That he can defeat him in battle
 - b) That he can pin him in wrestling
 - c) That he can seduce his wife
 - d) That he can deceive Cymbeline
8. Iachimo tries to convince Imogen that:
 - a) The Romans are invading Britain
 - b) Posthumus has joined the Roman army
 - c) Pisanio is trying to poison her
 - d) Posthumus has been unfaithful to her
9. "Guiderius" is the name of the king's long-lost:
 - a) cousin
 - b) son
 - c) servant
 - d) stepson
10. _____ attempts to enlist _____ to kill Imogen.
 - a) The Queen, Cloten
 - b) Cloten, Pisanio
 - c) Posthumus, Pisanio
 - d) Cymbeline, Iachimo
11. What does Cloten plan to do on his journey to Wales?
 - a) Defeat the Romans and usurp the throne
 - b) Capture both Belarius and Imogen
 - c) Kill Posthumus and abduct Imogen
 - d) Kill Pisanio and abduct Imogen
12. What does the Roman ambassador, Caius Lucius, demand from Cymbeline?
 - a) That he pay a tribute to Rome
 - b) That he give the throne to Posthumus Leonatus
 - c) That he swear an oath of loyalty to Rome
 - d) That he change his name to Cymbelinus
13. Why does Imogen disguise herself as a boy?
 - a) So that she can escape from Cloten
 - b) So that Pisanio won't kill her
 - c) So that she can pretend to be Guiderius
 - d) So that she can journey to Rome to see Posthumus
14. What is *really* in the bottle that the Queen gives to Pisanio?
 - a) a medicine that can cure anything
 - b) a sleeping potion
 - c) a deadly poison
 - d) Roman wine
15. Among other events in the final scene:
 - a) Posthumus is pardoned
 - b) Cloten is executed
 - c) Cymbeline makes peace with Rome
 - d) Both A and C

What Did He Say?

This is an opportunity to test your comprehension of Shakespeare’s language. Below you will find passages from *Cymbeline*. Answer the questions for each passage as specifically as possible.

BELARIUS

O thou goddess,
Thou divine Nature, thou thyself thou blazon’st
In these two princely boys! They are as gentle
As zephyrs blowing below the violet,
Not wagging his sweet head; and yet as rough,
Their royal blood enchafed, as the rud’st wind
That by the top doth take the mountain pine
And make him stoop to th’ vale. ’Tis wonder
That invisible instinct should frame them
To royalty unlearned, honor untaught,
Civility not seen from other, valor
That wildly grows in them but yields a crop
As if it had been sowed.

1. Who are “these two princely boys?”
2. What comparison does Belarius make in lines 3-8? What is the significance of this metaphor?
3. What is meant by “royalty unlearned, honor untaught?”
4. What metaphor does Belarius introduce in the last three lines?
5. What does this speech reveal about Belarius, as well as about the “princely boys?”

IMOGEN

These flow’rs are like the pleasures of the world;
This bloody man, the care on’t. I hope I dream,
For so I thought I was a cave-keeper
And cook to honest creatures. But ’tis not so;
’Twas but a bolt of nothing, shot at nothing,
Which the brain makes of fumes. Our very eyes
Are sometimes like our judgments, blind.

1. What is the “bloody man” that Imogen refers to?
2. What is the situation that she is trying to understand?
3. Who are the “honest creatures?”
4. What is meant by “a bolt of nothing, shot at nothing?”
5. What is the larger significance of Imogen’s reference to blind judgments in the last line?

Who Said That?

Match the spoken line to the character who speaks it. Two characters have two quotes each. Three characters have none of the quotes listed below.

- | | | |
|----|--|-------------------------|
| A. | “How hard it is to hide the sparks of nature!” | CYMBELINE |
| B. | “No, be assured you shall not find me, daughter,
After the slander of most stepmothers,
Evil-eyed unto you.” | THE QUEEN
CLOTEN |
| C. | “I do suspect you, madam,
But you shall do no harm.” | IMOGEN |
| D. | “If she be furnished with a mind so rare,
She is alone the Arabian bird, and I
Have lost the wager.” | POSTHUMUS
PISANIO |
| E. | “There’s no motion
That tends to vice in man but I affirm
It is the woman’s part.” | IACHIMO
CAIUS LUCIUS |
| F. | “O, for a horse with wings!” | DR. CORNELIUS |
| G. | “Since I received command to do this business
I have not slept one wink.” | BELARIUS |
| H. | “She hath despised me rejoicingly, and I’ll be merry in my
revenge.” | GUIDERIUS |
| I. | “I see a man’s life is a tedious one.” | ARVIRAGUS |
| J. | “O, what am I?
A mother to the birth of three?” | |
| K. | “Hang there like fruit, my soul,
Till the tree die!” | |

Meeting NJ Core Curriculum Standards

With New Jersey’s implementation of the Core Curriculum Content Standards, teachers and administrators are seeking programs and materials that will help achieve these new classroom requirements. By merely viewing a performance at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey and participating in the post-performance discussion, students can meet many Curriculum Standards. The activities included in this study guide, when implemented in the classroom, as well as teacher assigned writing assignments will allow students to meet additional Curriculum Standards.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS STANDARDS

The Visual and Performing Arts Standards require students to experience, perform and comment on various forms of fine art. A *Student Matinee Series* performance, and incorporation of the enclosed study guide exercises, will help meet the following Curriculum Standards.

STANDARD 1.1: All students will use aesthetic knowledge in the creation of and in responses to dance, music, theatre and visual arts.

STANDARD 1.2: All students will utilize those skills, media, methods, and technologies appropriate to each of art form in the creation, performance, and presentation of dance, music, theatre and/or visual arts.

STANDARD 1.4: All students will develop, apply and reflect upon knowledge of the process of critique.

STANDARD 1.5: All students will understand and analyze the role, development, and continuing influence of the arts in relation to world cultures, history, and society.

LANGUAGE ARTS LITERACY STANDARDS

Active listening and responding to what has been presented are two major aspects of the Language Arts Literacy Standard. A performance at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey can be used as a springboard for classes to help students meet the following Standards.

STANDARD 3.2: All students will listen actively in a variety of situations to information from a variety of sources.

STANDARD 3.3: All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.

SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

Gaining an awareness and understanding of various cultures and cultural influences throughout history is part of the root of the Social Studies Standards. A *Student Matinee* performance can, once again, be used as a springboard into activities that will help meet the following Standard.

STANDARD 6.2: All students will learn democratic citizenship through the humanities, by studying literature, art, history and philosophy, and related fields.

Additional Artwork Credits:

cover: *Imogen* by Herbert Schmalz (1896) from *The Graphic Gallery of Shakespeare’s Heroines*. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

p3: Photo of the F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre, the Main Stage venue of The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, 1998.

p5: Engraving of William Shakespeare by Droeshout from the First Folio, 1623.

Sources for this study guide:

THE ANNOTATED SHAKESPEARE, Introductions, Notes, and Bibliography by A.L Rowe

ASIMOV’S GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE by Isaac Asimov

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FREEING SHAKESPEARE’S VOICE by Kristin Linklater

THE FRIENDLY SHAKESPEARE by Norrie Epstein

THE MIRACLE OF LANGUAGE by Richard Lederer

SHAKESPEARE A TO Z by Charles Boyce

SHAKESPEARE FOR BEGINNERS by Brandon Toropov

SHAKESPEARE FOR DUMMIES by Doyle, Lischner, and Dench

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THE ESSENTIAL SHAKESPEARE HANDBOOK, by Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding

SHAKESPEARE AND THE YOUNG WRITER, by Fred Sedgwick

The Folger Shakespeare Library and Pelican editions of *CYMBELINE*, by William Shakespeare

Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia (www.wikipedia.com)

The SparkNotes guide to *Cymbeline* (www.sparknotes.com)

Test Your Understanding Answer Key

- | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. c | 2. b | 3. a | 4. a | 5. c | 6. d |
| 7. c | 8. d | 9. b | 10. c | 11. c | 12. a |
| 13. d | 14. b | 15. d | | | |

Who Said That? Answer Key

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| A. Belarius | G. Pisanio |
| B. The Queen | H. Cloten |
| C. Dr. Cornelius | I. Imogen |
| D. Iachimo | J. Cymbeline |
| E. Posthumus | K. Posthumus |
| F. Imogen | |

About The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey

The acclaimed Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey (formerly called “New Jersey Shakespeare Festival”) is one of the leading Shakespeare theatres in the nation. Serving nearly 100,000 adults and children annually, it is New Jersey’s only professional theatre company dedicated to Shakespeare’s canon and other classic masterworks. Through its distinguished productions and education programs, the company strives to illuminate the universal and lasting relevance of the classics for contemporary audiences. The longest-running Shakespeare theatre on the east coast, The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey marks its 44th season in 2006.

In addition to producing and presenting classic theatre, the Theatre’s mission places an equal focus on education— both for young artists and audiences of all ages. The Theatre nurtures emerging new talent for the American stage and cultivates future audiences by providing extensive student outreach opportunities. Through our work, we endeavor to promote literacy, civilization, community, cultural awareness, the theatrical tradition, and a more enlightened view of the world in which we live and the people with whom we share it.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is one of 20 professional theatres in the state of New Jersey. The company’s dedication to the classics and commitment to excellence sets critical standards for the field. Nationwide, the Theatre has emerged as one of the most exciting “new” theatres under the leadership of Artistic Director, Bonnie J. Monte since 1990. It is one of only a handful of Shakespeare Theatres on the east coast, and in recent years has drawn larger and larger audiences and unprecedented critical acclaim. The opening of the intimate, 308-seat F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre in 1998, provided the Theatre with a state-of-the-art venue with excellent sightlines, and increased access for patrons and artists with disabilities.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is a member of ArtPride, The Shakespeare Theatre Association of America, Theatre Communications Group, and is a founding member of the New Jersey Theatre Alliance.

Other Opportunities for Students... and Teachers

SHAKESPEARE LIVE! EDUCATIONAL TOURING COMPANY

Shakespeare LIVE! is the educational touring company of The Shakespeare Theatre. This dynamic troupe of actors brings exceptional abridged productions of Shakespeare’s masterworks directly into the classroom. Workshops are also available in Stage Combat and Shakespeare in Performance.

JUNIOR AND SENIOR CORPS

Young actors are given the opportunity to participate in the excitement of the Theatre’s summer season through this program, which offers classes, a final presentation, as well as behind-the-scenes and front-of-house experience. Geared for students in grades 6 through 12, admission to this program is through audition and/or interview.

SUMMER PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM

For graduating high school seniors and for university students, the intensive Summer Professional Training Program offers acting apprenticeships and professional internships, providing academic training and hands-on experience in acting, technical, artistic and arts management areas. For a full brochure of the opportunities available, please contact the Education Department.

SHAKEFEST: SUMMER SHAKESPEARE INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

Designed for elementary and secondary teachers of Shakespeare, *ShakeFest* is an weeklong intensive filled with myriad practical ways to conquer “ShakesFear” and excite students about the Bard. In hands-on sessions, experienced teaching artists model active and exciting performance-oriented techniques to get students on their feet and “speaking the speech.”

For more information about these and other educational programs
at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey,
log onto our website,
www.ShakespeareNJ.org
or call **(973) 408-3278**