

SHAKESPEARE

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

In this early comedy, Proteus betrays his best friend, Valentine, and his lover, Julia, in order to gain Silvia's love, but repents when Valentine offers him Silvia.

In Verona, two friends, **Valentine** and **Proteus**, bid farewell to each other. Valentine is off to see the world, while Proteus stays behind to woo **Julia**, the woman he loves. Proteus sends Julia a letter, and though she tears it up impulsively, she immediately regrets doing so, because she loves Proteus too. Proteus's father forces Proteus to go to Milan. Proteus and Julia exchange rings and vows of love before Proteus leaves.

Valentine, already in Milan, has fallen in love with the **Duke's** daughter, **Silvia**. When Proteus arrives, he also falls in love with Silvia and betrays Valentine by warning the Duke about Silvia and Valentine's plan to elope. The Duke banishes Valentine.

Julia disguises herself as a young man, **Sebastian**, in order to follow Proteus to Milan, where she sees Proteus wooing Silvia. Proteus mistakes Julia for a page and sends her to deliver a ring to Silvia.

Valentine is stopped by a band of outlaws, who make him their king. To avoid marrying **Thurio**, her father's friend, Silvia runs away from home and is captured by outlaws. Proteus frees Silvia from the outlaws and then tries to rape her. Valentine intercedes, Proteus repents, and Valentine offers Silvia to Proteus. Proteus rejects the offer and marries Julia instead. Valentine marries Silvia.

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

Petrucchio tames his strong-willed wife, Katherine, by subjecting her to a grueling ordeal.

In the English countryside, a lord finds a drunk tinker named **Christopher Sly** asleep in front of a tavern. The lord has Sly carried to his house and has his servants treat Sly as a lord. A troupe of actors puts on a play for Sly, and their play comprises the rest of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Lucentio, a young nobleman and scholar, arrives in Padua and falls in love with the beautiful **Bianca**. Bianca's father, **Baptista**, refuses to let her wed before her bad-tempered sister, **Katherine**, does. Lucentio disguises himself as a Latin tutor so he can be with Bianca, while Lucentio's servant, **Tranio**, disguises himself as Lucentio to negotiate with Baptista for Bianca's hand.

Petrucchio, a brash nobleman, arrives in Padua and resolves to marry Katherine for her money, disregarding her reputation as a shrew. After a tremendous duel of words, he obtains Katherine's unstated consent to the marriage. Petrucchio tames the wild Katherine by embarrassing and abusing her. He makes them leave their wedding before the reception and then forbids her from eating or sleeping. Katherine ultimately satisfies Petrucchio by agreeing with everything he says.

Disguised as Lucentio, **Tranio** persuades Baptista to agree to marry Bianca to Lucentio by promising her a huge sum of money. At the wedding banquet, Katherine's superior loyalty to Petrucchio puts the other wives to shame.

HENRY VI, PART TWO

King Henry VI's weakness makes England vulnerable to ambitious nobles, a manipulative queen, and rebellious commoners.

King Henry VI of England finds his power dwindling. The **Duke of Gloucester**, the lord protector, has ruled the kingdom since Henry was a child. Henry is poised to marry **Margaret** of France, a politically unhelpful match, and Henry's nobles are angry that England is losing control of the French territories won by Henry's father, King Henry V.

Gloucester's wife, the **Duchess**, perceives the king's weakness and decides she wants to be queen. However, she allows her ambition to show too much, and she is arrested for hiring a witch and a conjurer and forced to parade through the streets in shame. Gloucester's fellow lords frame him for treason, and **Suffolk** imprisons him—Henry cannot help him. Gloucester is murdered, and the king banishes Suffolk. Queen Margaret and Suffolk declare their love for each other before Suffolk leaves. Later, Suffolk is beheaded by pirates, and Margaret carries the head around with her as she laments his death.

The **Duke of York** takes an army to Ireland to put down a rebellion there, but while he is gone, he prompts a commoner named **Jack Cade** to lead a people's rebellion against the king. Cade reaches London, where he creates havoc until he is defeated by the Lords **Buckingham** and **Clifford**. York returns from Ireland with his army, demanding the imprisonment of his enemy, **Somerset**. When King Henry fails to punish Somerset, York denounces the king and declares himself the rightful heir to the throne. With the help of his sons, York defeats Henry's army, but Henry has fled back to London at Margaret's urging. York prepares to enter London.

HENRY VI, PART THREE

With King Henry VI powerless, the Duke of York's family takes the crown, but the Duke of York's sons begin to struggle with one another.

The play picks up where *Henry VI, Part Two* ended. The **Duke of York** enters the throne room in London and, finding it empty, sits in the king's throne. **King Henry VI** enters with his supporters and argues with York about which man has the more rightful claim to the kingdom. York and Henry reach an agreement that Henry will remain king but that the kingdom will pass to York and York's heirs after Henry's death. **Queen Margaret** bitterly rebukes Henry for disinheriting his own sons.

York's sons convince York to try to seize the throne from Henry without waiting for him to die. Angered by Henry's weakness, Margaret leads an army against York. Margaret captures York and gives him a handkerchief dipped in the blood of his son **Ruford** to wipe his face. Margaret and her ally **Clifford** stab York to death. York's remaining sons, **Richard, Edward**, and **George** unite and continue to war with Margaret. Margaret and Clifford meet Henry at the town of York. Edward confronts them and demands the throne.

Edward's and Margaret's armies battle again while Henry watches from afar. Edward wins the battle and is crowned king; his supporters arrest Henry. Edward sends the **Earl of Warwick** to France to ask for the French king's daughter in marriage. When Edward then marries **Lady Gray**, a woman beneath his rank, he makes enemies out of his brother George and Warwick, who join forces with Margaret and march against him. Richard begins to plot secretly to seize the crown for himself.

Edward regains his brother George's allegiance and finally defeats Henry's forces for good. He imprisons Margaret, and Richard slips off to the Tower of London to murder Henry, who prophesies that thousands will suffer from Richard's deeds. Edward's son is born, and Edward's kingship at last seems secure, although Richard continues to plot against him.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

When Titus Andronicus sees his sons executed unjustly and his daughter raped and mutilated, he takes revenge by feeding the empress's sons to her in a pie.

Titus Andronicus, a Roman general, returns from ten years of war with only four of his twenty-five sons left. He has captured **Tamora**, the queen of the Goths, her three sons, and **Aaron the Moor**. In obedience to Roman rituals, Titus sacrifices Tamora's eldest son to his own dead sons, which earns him Tamora's unending hatred and her promise of revenge. Tamora gains power when the new Roman emperor, **Saturninus**, makes her his empress.

To get back at Titus, Tamora schemes with her lover, Aaron, to have Titus's two sons framed for the murder of **Bassianus**, Saturninus's brother. Titus's sons are arrested. Unsatisfied, Tamora urges her sons **Chiron** and **Demetrius** to rape Titus's daughter **Lavinia**, after which they cut off Lavinia's hands and tongue so she cannot reveal their crime. Finally, Titus's last surviving son, **Lucius**, is banished from Rome. The aging, battered Titus begins to act oddly, and everyone assumes he is crazy.

Tamora tries to capitalize on Titus's seeming madness: she pretends to be the figure of Revenge, come to offer Titus justice if he persuades Lucius not to attack Rome. Titus, having feigned his madness all along, tricks Tamora, captures and kills her sons, and makes them into a pie. He feeds this pie to Tamora and then kills both Tamora and Lavinia, his own daughter. Saturninus then kills Titus, and Lucius kills Saturninus. Lucius has the unrepentant Aaron buried alive and Tamora's corpse thrown to the beasts. Lucius becomes the new emperor of Rome.

HENRY VI, PART ONE

Following the high point of Henry V's reign, England devolves into personal rivalries and factionalism that result in the loss of France and the bloody Wars of the Roses.

Henry VI, Part One begins with the funeral of Henry V, the English king who conquered France. Under the new king, **Henry VI**, England's supremacy and civil order begin to unravel. In France, the English military hero **Lord Talbot** meets increasing opposition from forces led by **Jean la Pucelle (Joan of Arc)**, a Frenchwoman who claims that God has sent her to free her people. In England, the **Duke of Gloucester**, who rules the kingdom until Henry VI comes of age, clashes violently with the **Bishop of Winchester**, who suspects Gloucester of being too ambitious.

In a garden in England, a quarrel begins between **Richard Plantagenet** (who later becomes **Duke of York**) and the **Duke of Somerset**. The other English noblemen choose sides by plucking red or white roses. This quarrel develops into the Wars of the Roses, in which the Houses of Lancaster and York fight for the throne. Within this play, the struggle between York and Somerset results in the death of Lord Talbot and

the defeat of English forces in France, as York and Somerset cannot cooperate to support Talbot adequately. Finally, the **Earl of Suffolk** persuades King Henry to marry Margaret, a Frenchwoman whom Suffolk loves, thus making a politically bad match and leaving the king vulnerable to domination by Margaret and Suffolk.

RICHARD III

After resolving to steal the crown from his brother Edward, Richard descends deeper and deeper into evil as he murders everyone who stands in his way.

After a long civil war between the Houses of York and Lancaster, England enjoys peace under **King Edward IV**. Edward's younger brother, **Richard**, resents Edward's powerful yet peaceful rule. Malicious, power-hungry, and bitter about his physical deformity, Richard plots to seize the throne and resolves to kill anyone in his way.

Richard manipulates a noblewoman, **Lady Anne**, into marrying him. He has his older brother **Clarence** executed and shifts the guilt onto his sick brother, King Edward, in order to accelerate Edward's illness and death. After Edward dies, Richard becomes lord protector of England until Edward's eldest son comes of age.

Richard kills the noblemen loyal to the princes and has the princes' relatives on their mother's side arrested and executed. Richard's allies, led by **Lord Buckingham**, campaign to have Richard crowned king. Richard then imprisons the young princes in the Tower of London and sends hired **murderers** to kill both of them.

By this time, Richard's reign of terror has caused the common people of England to fear and loathe him, and he has alienated nearly all the noblemen. When rumors begin to circulate that the **Earl of Richmond** is gathering forces in France, preparing to invade England, noblemen defect in droves to join his forces.

Richard has his wife, Queen Anne, murdered, so that he can marry young **Elizabeth**, the daughter of the former **Queen Elizabeth** and the dead King Edward. Queen Elizabeth manages to stop the marriage and secretly promises to marry young Elizabeth to Richmond.

Richmond finally invades England. The night before the battle, Richard has a terrible dream in which the ghosts of the people he has murdered appear and curse him. Richard is killed in the battle, and Richmond is crowned King Henry VII. Promising a new era of peace for England, the new king is betrothed to young Elizabeth in order to unite the warring Houses of Lancaster and York.

VENUS AND ADONIS

In this long narrative poem, the goddess of love fails to make Adonis love her.

Venus, the goddess of love, falls in love with a beautiful youth named **Adonis**, who has no interest in her and would rather hunt boar with his friends. Afraid for Adonis's safety, Venus urges him not to hunt, but he does anyway, and a boar kills him. Adonis turns into a purple flower, which Venus plucks and keeps between her breasts.

THE RAPE OF LUCRECE

Shakespeare's second narrative poem describes the rape that led to the creation of the Roman republic.

At the Roman siege of Ardea, a group of Roman noblemen compete to determine who has the best wife. **Collatine's** wife, **Lucrece**, wins, and **Tarquin**, the son of the Roman king, goes to Collatine's house and rapes her. Lucrece sends for her husband and kinsmen, reveals Tarquin's crime, and makes them swear to avenge her. She then stabs herself to death. **Junius Brutus**, a Roman nobleman, avenges her rape by driving the Tarquins out of Rome and founding the Roman republic.

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

Antipholus of Syracuse and his servant Dromio live there.

Egeon, a merchant from Syracuse, is condemned to death in Ephesus for violating a ban against travel between the two rival cities. He tells the Ephesian **Duke** that he has come to Ephesus to find his wife and one of his twin sons, who were separated from him twenty-five years earlier in a shipwreck. The other twin, who grew up with Egeon, also is traveling the world in search of the missing half of their family. (Both twins are named **Antipholus**, and both have servants named **Dromio**.) The Duke is so moved by this story that he grants Egeon a day to raise the ransom that would save his life.

Egeon's missing son is a prosperous citizen of Ephesus. His other son, **Antipholus of Syracuse**, has just arrived in Ephesus as well. **Adriana**, the wife of **Antipholus of Ephesus**, mistakes Antipholus of Syracuse for her husband and drags him home for dinner, leaving **Dromio of Syracuse** to stand guard at the

“...SINCE BREVITY IS THE SOUL OF WIT, / AND TEDIOUSNESS
THE LIMBS AND OUTWARD FLOURISHES, / I WILL BE BRIEF.”

HAMLET

door and admit no one. Shortly thereafter, Antipholus of Ephesus returns home and is refused entry to his own house. Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse, pursued by Adriana and others, take refuge in an abbey. Antipholus of Ephesus tries to bring charges against his wife. The abbess, **Emilia**, resolves the situation by bringing out the set of twins and revealing herself to be Egeon's long-lost wife. Antipholus of Ephesus reconciles with Adriana; the Duke pardons Egeon, who is reunited with his spouse; Antipholus of Syracuse resumes his romantic pursuit of **Luciana**; and all ends happily with the two Dromios arm in arm.

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST

A King and his lords swear to avoid women but are unable to keep their oaths.

The **King of Navarre** and his three lords, **Biron**, **Longueville**, and **Dumaine**, swear an oath to study, fast, and avoid contact with women for three years. Not long after, when their vows are tested when the King is visited by the **Princess of France** and her ladies, **Rosaline**, **Catherine**, and **Maria**. Although the men try to conceal that they are in love with the ladies, their love poems and letters give them away. The men agree to court the ladies, and as a prank, they go to visit them disguised as Muscovites. The ladies learn of the prank before it happens and disguise themselves in one another's clothing so the men court the wrong ladies.

The jokes and games are cut short when a messenger arrives bearing the news that the Princess's father has died. The ladies impose punishments upon the men who love them and tell the men to seek them again in a year's time.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

After a bewildering night in a fairy-haunted forest, two couples are united in marriage.

As **Theseus**, the Duke of Athens, prepares for his wedding celebration, a nobleman named **Egeus** marches in and asks Theseus to compel Egeus's daughter, **Hermia**, to marry a young man named **Demetrius**. However, Hermia loves another young man, **Lysander**, so she refuses. Hermia plans to elope with Lysander and tells her friend **Helena** about the plan. Helena loves Demetrius, but he jilted her when he fell in love with Hermia, so Helena tells him of Hermia's plan in the hope of regaining his love. That night, Demetrius follows Hermia and Lysander into the woods, and Helena follows Demetrius.

In the woods, the fairy King and queen, **Oberon** and **Titania**, quarrel with each other. Oberon tells his servant **Puck** to sprinkle love juice on Titania's eyes when she sleeps so that she will fall in love with the first creature she sees upon awakening. Oberon also tells Puck to spread some love juice on Demetrius's eyes so that he will love Helena. Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius and makes Lysander fall in love with Helena instead. As Puck tries to undo his mistake, Demetrius and Lysander both end up in love with Helena. When they fight over her, she thinks they are mocking her.

Meanwhile, a group of clownish Athenian craftsmen are in the woods rehearsing a play to be presented at Theseus's wedding. Puck transforms the head of one of the craftsmen, **Bottom**, into the head of an ass, and causes Titania to fall in love with Bottom. Eventually, Oberon is satisfied with his revenge, and Puck undoes his magic. In the morning, Demetrius realizes he loves Helena, and Hermia loves Lysander. The couples are married at the same time as Theseus. Bottom and his comrades put on a hilarious play at the wedding.

ROMEO AND JULIET

Despite their families' mutual hatred, Romeo and Juliet fall in love and marry, and when circumstances force them apart, they kill themselves to be united in death.

The houses of the lords **Montague** and **Capulet** are engaged in a violent feud, and the **Prince of Verona** threatens death to anyone who breaks the peace. **Romeo**, the son of Montague, goes to a masked ball at the Capulet house and falls in love at first sight with Capulet's daughter, **Juliet**. Juliet falls in love with Romeo just as quickly. They are married secretly by **Friar Laurence**, who sees the possibility of ending the feud.

The next day, Juliet's hotheaded cousin **Tybalt**, who recognized Romeo as an intruder at the ball, challenges Romeo to a duel. Romeo refuses to fight Tybalt, but when Tybalt kills Romeo's friend **Mercutio**, Romeo flies into a rage and kills Tybalt. The Prince banishes Romeo from Verona, but Romeo stays behind one night to consummate his marriage to Juliet.

Juliet's father tries to force her to marry a nobleman named **Paris**. She seeks Friar Laurence's help, and he tells her to take a potion that will make her appear to be dead—after she is left for dead in her tomb, she can be with Romeo freely. She takes the potion, fools her family, and is placed in the tomb. Friar Laurence's message does not reach Romeo, who hears only that Juliet has died. Romeo goes to Juliet's grave

at night, kills Paris when Paris challenges him, drinks poison, and dies by Juliet's side. Juliet wakes and, finding Romeo dead, kills herself with his dagger. Friar Laurence reveals the whole story, and the Capulet and Montague families end their feud.

RICHARD II

Henry Bolingbroke takes the throne from King Richard II to become the first English king of the house of Lancaster.

King Richard II of England makes himself unpopular by spending money irresponsibly and giving too much power to his close friends. He exiles his cousin, **Henry Bolingbroke**, for six years as a way of resolving a dispute between Bolingbroke and the **Duke of Norfolk**. When Bolingbroke is away, Bolingbroke's father, **John of Gaunt**, the Duke of Lancaster, dies. Richard seizes John of Gaunt's property to pay for a war in Ireland.

Bolingbroke returns from exile with an army, bent on reclaiming his inheritance. Outraged by Richard's abuses, both commoners and noblemen flock to Bolingbroke's cause, and Richard loses the kingdom without even a battle. Bolingbroke is crowned King Henry IV. **Sir Piers Exton**, acting on King Henry's suggestion, assassinates the deposed King Richard. Henry repudiates the deed and vows to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for penance.

KING JOHN

In a play full of unpredictable twists and turns, King John's reign is challenged from all sides, but England unites around his son when he dies.

King John's right to the throne is shaky because **Arthur**, the young son of John's older brother, has a better claim. Arthur is only a child, but the **King of France** supports Arthur's right to England. The English and the French battle to a stalemate over the French town of Angers. The townspeople propose that the sides end their quarrel by having John's niece **Blanche** marry **Louis**, the son of **King Philip** of France. The marriage takes place, but then **Cardinal Pandolf** arrives and excommunicates John for disobeying the pope. This move convinces Philip to make war on John once again. John captures Arthur and returns to England, where he orders his follower **Hubert** to assassinate Arthur. Hubert cannot do it, but Arthur dies anyway, trying to escape prison, and the English nobles turn against King John and welcome the French invaders. John promises Pandolf that he will obey the pope, but Pandolf is unable to persuade Philip to call off his armies. The English nobles come back to John's side and defeat the French. John dies when he is poisoned by a monk. The English swear loyalty to John's son **Prince Henry**.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Shylock the Jew tries to use the law to butcher the merchant Antonio, but the resourceful Portia disguises herself as a legal scholar and saves Antonio.

Bassanio, a nobleman of Venice, wants to marry **Portia**, a wealthy heiress of Belmont, but he needs money so he can travel to Belmont in style. **Antonio**, a wealthy merchant of Venice who loves Bassanio, agrees to guarantee a large loan from **Shylock**, a Jewish moneylender. Shylock hates Antonio because Antonio has abused him, so he makes Antonio guarantee that Shylock can have a pound of his flesh if the money is not paid on time. Bassanio goes to Belmont and wins Portia by successfully passing a test in which he has to select among three caskets. Immediately thereafter, Bassanio receives word that Antonio has lost all of his ships at sea and cannot repay Shylock's loan.

Antonio returns to Venice with Portia's money, but Shylock insists on having his pound of flesh. Portia disguises herself as a legal scholar and argues in court that Shylock can have the flesh but must not spill any blood. Moreover, Shylock is guilty of conspiring against the life of a Venetian and must forfeit his land. Shylock is allowed to keep most of his money on the condition that he convert to Christianity and leave all his money to his daughter, **Jessica**, and **Lorenzo**, the Christian man she has secretly married.

HENRY IV, PART ONE

Prince Harry rises above his criminal youth to become a military hero.

King Henry IV, having recently seized the throne from Richard II, now finds the powerful allies who helped him become king turning against him. The powerful Lords **Worcester**, **Hotspur** (Harry Percy), and **Northumberland** join forces with the rebel **Mortimer** and the feared Welsh leader **Owain Glyndwr**. Meanwhile, King Henry's son **Prince Harry** spends his time drinking, thieving, and whoring with various scoundrels, especially an obese, debauched knight named **Sir John Falstaff**. Because of his wild ways, Harry has earned a bad reputation with his father and the rest of the kingdom, but he plans to exploit this reputation to make himself look spectacularly good when he reforms himself. When King Henry has to lead his forces against the rebels, Harry reconciles with his father

and performs heroically in battle, saving his father's life and killing the renowned Hotspur in single combat at the Battle of Shrewsbury. Falstaff abuses the command Harry gives him and behaves like a coward in the battle, but Harry backs up Falstaff's lie that Falstaff killed Hotspur.

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

Falstaff tries to seduce two wives, but they turn the tables on him and shame him.

Sir John Falstaff attempts to seduce two wealthy married women, **Mistress Ford** and **Mistress Page**, to try to get money from them. The women are offended and decide to take revenge on Falstaff by pretending to desire him and then playing tricks on him. Mistress Ford's husband, **Ford**, is jealous by nature, so the two women use Ford's jealousy to their advantage. Each time Falstaff comes to meet with Mistress Ford, Ford arrives, and Falstaff is dunked in a river and beaten during his escape. At last, the wives tell Ford about the game they are playing in order to relieve his jealousy. Then, the wives agree to meet Falstaff in the woods. They arrange to have the town children dress as fairies to terrify and pester Falstaff while he is exposed in front of the whole town.

Meanwhile, the unmarried men of Windsor compete for the chance to marry the Pages' daughter, **Anne Page**. Anne's mother wants her daughter to marry **Caius**, a French doctor, while her father wants her to marry a fool named **Slender**. Each parent tries to persuade Anne to disguise herself and elope with one of these men during the confusion with the children in the woods. Ultimately, Anne instead elopes with **Fenton**, the impoverished gentleman whom she loves.

HENRY IV, PART TWO

Prince Harry becomes King Henry V and puts aside his former friends to become a responsible king.

At the end of *Henry IV, Part One*, **King Henry IV** and **Prince Harry** defeated part of the rebel forces at the battle of Shrewsbury, and Harry became a military hero. As *Henry IV, Part Two* begins, Henry and Harry face the rebel forces of the **Archbishop of York**, **Lord Mowbray**, and **Lord Hastings**. This time, the rebels are defeated not by force of arms but by a trick: Harry's younger brother, **Prince John**, tricks the rebels into dismissing their troops by promising to negotiate with them. John then has the leaders executed for treason.

After the rebels are defeated, questions arise about whether Harry will become a responsible ruler or abuse his position by indulging the criminals he befriended in his youth. **Falstaff** is now a captain, and he and Harry's other friends think they will have the run of the kingdom when Harry is king. King Henry, concerned about the rebels and his wayward son, falls ill. Harry repents of his former behavior and vows to be a responsible king, and his father gives him advice just before he dies. Harry is crowned King Henry V, and when Falstaff comes to greet him in London, expecting to find the king to be his friend, Harry instead banishes Falstaff from his presence and goes into court to plan an invasion of France.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Claudio believes that Hero, his fiancée, is unfaithful, and publicly shames her in church before realizing his mistake and marrying her.

In the Italian town of Messina, several friends returning from a war stop to visit **Leonato**, the governor of Messina. Among the visitors are a prince named **Don Pedro** and his followers **Claudio** and **Benedick**. Claudio falls in love with Leonato's daughter, **Hero**, and a wedding is arranged. Benedick, a witty joker, has long carried on a rivalry with Leonato's clever niece **Beatrice**, but the pair's friends trick them into admitting that they love each other.

Before Claudio and Hero's wedding can take place, Don Pedro's envious bastard half-brother, **Don John**, fools Don Pedro and Claudio into thinking that Hero is cheating on Claudio. Claudio denounces Hero at the altar, refuses to marry her, and storms out. Leonato, Beatrice, and Benedick claim that Hero has died of shame but insist she is innocent. **Dogberry**, the bumbling town constable, brings Don John's treachery to light, and Claudio regrets his rash action. Leonato forgives Claudio and tells him that he must make amends by marrying a niece of Leonato's, who turns out to be Hero in disguise.

HENRY V

Despite his wild youth and his shaky claim to the throne, Henry V becomes the greatest king in English history by conquering all of France.

The recently crowned **King Henry V** must convince his unsettled nation that he is a competent and worthy king. He takes advantage of a legal technicality to argue that he has a right to the French throne and decides to invade France. The lower-

CONTINUED ON OTHER SIDE

class characters with whom he once associated prepare to leave their homes and families to go to war. Three of Henry's noble friends are convicted of treason, and he has them executed to show that he has abandoned his old ways. Against incredible odds, the English conquer the French town of Harfleur after Henry inspires his troops with an impassioned speech. After another powerful speech, Henry's forces rout the French at the Battle of Agincourt, even though the French outnumber them five to one. Henry forces the **King of France** to marry his daughter **Catherine** to Henry and appoint Henry his heir.

JULIUS CAESAR

Brutus helps to murder Caesar to protect Roman liberty, but Mark Antony casts doubt on Brutus's motives, drives him out of Rome, and hunts him down.

Caesar returns to Rome in triumph after defeating his enemy Pompey, and the people of Rome shower him with adoration. **Cassius**, a Roman nobleman, tries to convince Caesar's friend **Brutus** that they have let Caesar become too powerful when he really is unfit to rule. Caesar gains even more popularity when he refuses his lieutenant **Mark Antony's** three attempts to offer him a crown (and thus the title of monarch). Brutus fears that Caesar will make himself king and end the Roman republic, so he conspires with **Cassius** to kill Caesar.

Caesar, despite his wife **Calphurnia's** misgivings and a soothsayer's warnings, goes to the senate with the conspirators. On the way, they stab him to death. Mark Antony pretends to reconcile with the conspirators but secretly vows revenge. Brutus speaks at Caesar's funeral and tries to calm the crowd by explaining that he killed Caesar to save Roman liberty. Then, Antony speaks, and his ironic comments on Brutus's speech and his reading of Caesar's generous will enrage the people against Brutus and the other conspirators, who are driven out of Rome. Caesar's adopted son **Octavius** arrives in Rome and joins forces with Antony to pursue Brutus and Cassius. Defeated, Cassius, Brutus, and several other conspirators kill themselves. Antony finds Brutus's body and declares him the noblest of the conspirators because he acted out of love for Rome.

AS YOU LIKE IT

Exiled from a corrupt court, Orlando and Rosalind flee into the forest, where their problems are resolved effortlessly.

Although **Orlando** is the son of a deceased knight, his older brother, **Oliver**, refuses to educate him or support him like a gentleman. Oliver, hearing that Orlando plans to challenge the professional wrestler **Charles**, urges Charles to hurt Orlando.

Duke Senior has been ousted from his dukedom by his brother, **Duke Frederick**. Duke Senior now lives like Robin Hood with his followers in the Forest of Ardenne. Duke Senior's daughter, **Rosalind**, stays behind at court because she is close friends with Duke Frederick's daughter **Celia**. Seeing Orlando defeat Charles in the wrestling match, Rosalind falls in love with Orlando, and Orlando with her. Orlando flees to the forest to escape his brother, and Rosalind and Celia go there as well when Duke Frederick exiles Rosalind. In the forest, Rosalind dresses as a man and playfully teaches Orlando to be a better lover. While on his way to find Orlando, Oliver repents of his misdeeds and reconciles with him. Rosalind and Orlando, along with other couples, are married in front of Duke Senior. Duke Frederick repents and returns the dukedom to Duke Senior.

HAMLET

Prince Hamlet seeks to avenge his father's murder by bringing his uncle Claudius, the new king, to justice.

Prince Hamlet of Denmark is visited by the ghost of **King Hamlet**, his recently deceased father. The ghost reveals that his own brother, **Claudius**, killed him. Since the king's death, Claudius has married **Queen Gertrude** and taken the throne. Hamlet vows to avenge his father's murder but wants proof that the ghost's story is true. To keep Claudius from detecting his plans, Hamlet behaves as if he is insane, which concerns Claudius and Gertrude. **Polonius**, the lord chamberlain, suggests that Hamlet is lovesick for Polonius's daughter, **Ophelia**, but when they test this suggestion, Hamlet spurns Ophelia.

To test whether Claudius is guilty, Hamlet arranges for some actors to perform a play in which a king is murdered in a manner similar to that of King Hamlet's alleged murder. When the murder scene is performed, Claudius leaps to his feet and leaves the room, which Hamlet interprets as a proof of his guilt. Hamlet goes to kill Claudius but sees him praying and decides not to kill him yet. Hamlet angrily confronts his mother, Gertrude, in her bedroom. When he hears a noise behind a curtain in the room, he thrusts with his sword and kills the person behind the curtain, who turns out to be Polonius. Claudius orders Hamlet sent to England and entrusts the courtiers **Rosencrantz** and **Guildenstern** to deliver a letter asking the king of England to put Hamlet to death at once.

After her father's death, Ophelia goes mad and drowns in a river. Her brother, **Laertes**, returns from France to avenge Polonius's and Ophelia's deaths, which Claudius blames on Hamlet. Hamlet returns to Denmark after pirates attack his ship. Claudius arranges a fencing match between Laertes and Hamlet and poisons both Laertes's sword and a cup that he intends to give to Hamlet. Laertes wounds Hamlet but then is poisoned by his own sword. Gertrude drinks from the poisoned cup, Hamlet kills Claudius, and then Hamlet dies from his poisoned wound.

TWELFTH NIGHT

Viola dresses as a man to find employment with Orsino but then falls in love with her employer.

Viola, a young noblewoman, and her twin brother, **Sebastian**, are shipwrecked and separated. Viola washes ashore in the kingdom of Illyria, disguises herself as a man, and calls herself **Cesario** so she can gain employment. She finds work in the household of **Count Orsino**, who makes her his page boy. Orsino sends Viola to deliver love messages to **Lady Olivia**, but Olivia falls in love with Viola, thinking she is a beautiful young man. Viola, meanwhile, falls in love with her master, Orsino.

In Olivia's household, Olivia's uncle, **Sir Toby Belch**; her clown, **Feste**; and her servant, **Maria**; play a practical joke on the steward of the house, **Malvolio**, making him think that Olivia loves him and prodding him to act strangely to win Olivia's affections. Ultimately, the pranksters convince Olivia that Malvolio is mad and lock him in a dark cellar for treatment. At the same time, Toby's friend **Sir Andrew Aguecheek** tries to woo Olivia, without success. Sir Andrew perceives that Olivia loves Cesario (really Viola in disguise) and challenges Cesario to a duel.

Sebastian arrives in Illyria accompanied by **Antonio**, a man from a neighboring country who has cared for Sebastian since the shipwreck. Sir Andrew and Sir Toby mistake Sebastian for Cesario and attack him. Olivia also mistakes Sebastian for Cesario and marries him. Orsino's officers arrest Antonio because he is not supposed to be in Illyria; in vain, Antonio calls for help from Viola, mistaking her for Sebastian. Viola and Sebastian finally encounter each other at Olivia's house, and the misunderstandings are resolved at last. Orsino marries Viola, and Malvolio is released.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

Troilus persuades Cressida to be his lover, but she betrays him when she is traded to the Greek camp.

During the Trojan War, **Troilus**, a Trojan prince, falls in love with **Cressida**, the daughter of a Trojan priest, **Calchas**, who defected to the Greek side. Cressida's uncle **Pandarus** assists Troilus in his pursuit of Cressida. In the Greek camp, the general, **Agamemnon**, wonders why Greek morale is low. The crafty **Ulysses** informs him that the army's troubles spring from a lack of respect for authority brought about by the behavior of **Achilles**. Although Achilles is the greatest Greek warrior, he refuses to fight and instead spends his time sitting in his tent with his comrade and lover **Patroclus**, mocking his superiors. **Prince Hector**, the greatest Trojan warrior, challenges the Greeks to send a warrior to fight him in single combat. Rather than send Achilles, Ulysses decides to send **Ajax**, a headstrong fool, in the hope that this gesture will wound Achilles's pride and bring him back into the war.

Pandarus brings Troilus and Cressida together to consummate their love. The next morning, the Trojans agree to trade Cressida to the Greeks in exchange for a prisoner, and the Greek lord **Diomedes** leads Cressida away. That afternoon, Ajax and Hector fight to a draw, and after Hector and Achilles exchange insults, Hector and Troilus feast with the Greeks under a truce flag. As the camp goes to bed, Ulysses leads Troilus to Calchas's tent, where Troilus watches from hiding as Cressida agrees to become Diomedes's lover.

The next day, Hector and Troilus return to the battlefield and drive the Greeks back, but Patroclus is killed, which brings the vengeful Achilles back into the war. Achilles catches Hector unarmed, orders his followers to kill Hector, and drags Hector's body around the walls of Troy.

THE SONNETS and A LOVER'S COMPLAINT

In a series of 154 sonnets, Shakespeare explores themes of love, desire, and jealousy.

In the early sonnets, the speaker tries to persuade a young man to marry, and in the later sonnets, the speaker describes his desire for a dark woman, about whom he has ambivalent feelings. Most of the sonnets between are written to someone the speaker loves, but the gender of the beloved is not specified in most of them. In "A Lover's Complaint," a young woman tells an older man how she was seduced and abandoned.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

Angelo tries to enforce a strict code of sexual morals in Vienna but, at the same time, tries to force the chaste Isabella to have sex with him.

The **Duke of Vienna** decides that he has allowed his subjects to become too carefree toward the law, so he pretends to go on a journey and appoints **Lord Angelo** in his place, knowing that Angelo will be very strict. Angelo, cracks down on vice and sex crimes and arrests a man named **Claudio** for impregnating his fiancée, **Juliet**, before they are married. To set an example, Angelo condemns Claudio to death. Claudio's devoutly religious sister, **Isabella**, pleads with Angelo to show mercy, and Angelo, overcome with lust for her, offers to release Claudio if she has sex with him. She refuses, but Claudio urges her to reconsider her decision and save his life. The Duke, who remains in Vienna disguised as a friar, intervenes and tells Isabella to agree to Angelo's request. The Duke says that he will send **Mariana**, a woman Angelo jilted when she lost her money in a shipwreck, in Isabella's place. Angelo has sex with Mariana, thinking she is Isabella, but the next morning, he orders Claudio executed

anyway. The Duke sends Angelo a drunk pirate's severed head, making him believe it is Claudio's.

The Duke returns and takes back his power. Isabella comes forward and complains about how Angelo has treated her. The Duke pretends to disbelieve her at first, but when he reveals that he was there in disguise all along, Angelo is forced to admit his wrongs. Claudio and Angelo are pardoned, Angelo must marry Mariana, and the Duke asks Isabella to marry him.

OTHELLO

Iago's lies make Othello so jealous that Othello kills his wife, Desdemona.

Iago, a military officer of Venice, bitterly resents the fact that **Othello**, the black general of Venice's army, has passed him over for a promotion. Othello has just eloped with **Desdemona**, the daughter of **Brabantio**, a Venetian nobleman. Iago tries to stir up trouble for Othello by rousing Brabantio against him, but Brabantio can do nothing because the **Duke** needs Othello to fight the Turks. Desdemona, meanwhile, insists on staying with Othello. The Turkish fleet is scattered in a storm, and Iago, Othello, and Desdemona arrive in Cyprus.

Iago then plots to drive Othello mad with jealousy by convincing him that Desdemona is unfaithful. Iago pits **Roderigo**, a Venetian in love with Desdemona, against **Michael Cassio**, the lieutenant whom Othello promoted over Iago. Roderigo picks a fight with Cassio during a victory celebration, the two men brawl, and Cassio is stripped of his position. Iago plants the suspicion in Othello's mind that Cassio is sleeping with Desdemona. When Desdemona pleads on Cassio's behalf, her actions seem to confirm Othello's suspicions. Iago asks his wife, **Emilia**, to fetch Desdemona's handkerchief. She does so, and Iago plants it in Cassio's room. When Othello sees Cassio with the handkerchief, he considers it concrete proof of Desdemona's infidelity and swears revenge against both of them. Iago attacks Cassio and murders Roderigo in an alley. Othello murders Desdemona by smothering her with a pillow. Emilia realizes what Iago has done and reveals Iago's crimes to Othello, who kills himself. Iago is arrested and led off to be tortured.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

Bertram tries to avoid being a husband to Helen, but she tricks him into sleeping with her.

Helen, the orphan daughter of a famous physician, cures the **King of France**, who in return allows her to marry the man she loves, **Count Bertram**. Bertram, appalled by the match, flees with his scoundrel friend **Paroles** to fight in the army of the **Duke of Florence**. Bertram sends Helen a letter stating that he will never be her husband until she can get his family ring off his finger and become pregnant with his child. Helen travels to Florence and discovers that Bertram is trying to seduce a widow's daughter named **Diana**. Bertram gives Diana his family ring, but Diana gives it to Helen and trades places with Helen when Bertram comes to sleep with her. Back in France, Helen reveals that she is pregnant with Bertram's child, and he agrees to be a good husband.

TIMON OF ATHENS

When Timon goes broke and discovers that his friends are false, he turns against Athens.

Timon, a rich citizen of Athens, is amazingly generous to his fellow citizens. When he runs out of money and goes into debt, his so-called friends turn on him and demand repayment. He throws a final banquet at which he serves stones and water and then leaves Athens. Accompanied by his faithful servant, **Flavius**, Timon goes to live in the woods, where he discovers a hidden supply of gold. Timon gives some of this gold to **Alcibiades**, an Athenian who was exiled from Athens and who plans to lead an army to destroy it. Two senators of Athens apologize to Timon and urge him to return, hoping his presence will stop Alcibiades. However, Timon refuses. Alcibiades punishes only those Athenians who injured Timon or himself, and on hearing of Timon's death, he honors Timon, who was more admired in Athens than Timon believed.

KING LEAR

King Lear divides Britain between his flattering daughters, who bring ruin to the kingdom.

Lear, the aging king of Britain, decides to step down and divide his kingdom among his three daughters. Because his youngest daughter, **Cordelia**, refuses to flatter him, he disowns her and splits the kingdom between his two older daughters, **Goneril** and **Regan**. When Goneril and Regan subsequently abuse Lear, he begins to go insane and wanders out onto a heath, or field, during a great thunderstorm. Meanwhile, an elderly nobleman named **Gloucester** also experiences family problems. His illegitimate son, **Edmund**, tricks him into believing that his legitimate son, **Edgar**, is trying to kill him. Fleeing the manhunt that his father has set for him, Edgar disguises himself as a crazy beggar and calls himself Poor Tom. Like Lear, Edgar heads out onto the heath. When the loyal Gloucester realizes that Lear's daughters have turned against their father, he decides to help Lear in spite of the danger.

Regan and her husband, **Cornwall**, discover that Gloucester is helping Lear, accuse him of treason, put out his eyes, and turn him out to wander the countryside. Gloucester ends up

unwittingly following his disguised son, Edgar, toward the city of Dover, where Lear has been taken.

In Dover, a French army lands as part of an invasion that Cordelia is leading to save her father. Edmund becomes romantically entangled with both Goneril and Regan, and Goneril and Edmund conspire to kill Goneril's husband, **Albany**. The despairing Gloucester tries to commit suicide, but Edgar saves him by leading him off an imaginary cliff. The English troops reach Dover, where, led by Edmund, they defeat Cordelia's army. Lear and Cordelia are captured. Edgar duels with Edmund and kills him. Gloucester's heart breaks upon his reconciliation with Edgar, and he dies. Goneril poisons Regan out of jealousy over Edmund and then kills herself. Cordelia is executed on Edmund's earlier orders, and Lear dies of grief.

MACBETH

Macbeth murders his way to the throne of Scotland, but his conscience plagues him.

As two Scottish lords, **Macbeth** and **Banquo**, are returning victorious from a battle, they encounter three **witches**, who predict that Macbeth will be king and that Banquo's heirs will be kings after him. Macbeth, spurred by his ambitious wife, **Lady Macbeth**, decides to make the prophecy come true and murders the current king, **Duncan**, while Duncan is visiting him. Macbeth becomes king. To prevent the prophecy about Banquo's heirs from coming true, Macbeth hires murderers to kill Banquo and his children. However, Banquo's son **Fleance** escapes. At a feast, Banquo's ghost appears to Macbeth, who frightens his guests by raving at the ghost. Macbeth visits the witches, who tell him to beware a nobleman named **Macduff**. They also tell him he cannot be harmed by any man born of woman and that he will be safe until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Castle. Macbeth seizes Macduff's castle and murders **Lady Macduff** and her children. Macduff, along with King Duncan's son **Malcolm**, invades Scotland with an English army. The witches' warnings prove prophetic, as Macbeth learns that Macduff was not born of woman but was delivered by cesarean section. Macduff's army advances on Dunsinane hiding behind boughs cut from Birnam Wood. Macduff kills Macbeth, and Malcolm becomes king of Scotland.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Antony's love for Cleopatra leads to his defeat at the hands of Octavius Caesar.

Mark Antony, one of the three rulers of the Roman empire, is torn between his identity and duty as a Roman and his love for the exotic Egyptian queen, **Cleopatra**. Antony draws criticism from his fellow rulers, **Octavius Caesar** and **Lepidus**, for leading a life of pleasure in Egypt and ignoring his duties. Antony returns to Rome when he hears of his wife **Fulvia**'s death and the threat of the rebel **Pompey**. Antony marries Caesar's sister, Octavia, to cement his relationship with Caesar. The leaders make peace with Pompey, and Antony and Octavia leave for Athens. When Antony is gone, Caesar moves to seize exclusive power by waging war against Pompey and betraying Lepidus. Antony sends Octavia to Rome to make peace. Meanwhile, he leaves for Egypt to see Cleopatra and raise an army to fight Caesar.

Antony fights Caesar at sea, but when Cleopatra's ship flees the battle, Antony shames himself by fleeing after her. Antony scores a surprise victory in the next battle, on land, but in the sea battle that follows, the Egyptian fleet once again deserts Antony, who suffers defeat. Cleopatra hides herself inside a monument and sends a false report that she has committed suicide. Antony hears this news and tries to kill himself. He is taken wounded to Cleopatra, with whom he dies. Caesar takes Cleopatra prisoner, but she kills herself so that she may not be taken to Rome and put on display.

PERICLES

Pericles undergoes a long series of trials before being reunited with his wife and daughter.

In the kingdom of Antioch, **King Antiochus** has offered his daughter to anyone who can solve a riddle, but the penalty for guessing incorrectly is death. **Pericles**, the prince of Tyre, discovers the answer, but it reveals the incestuous relationship between Antiochus and Antiochus's daughter, so Pericles flees for his life. Fearing that Antiochus will wage war against Tyre to take his life, Pericles travels. He brings food to the starving nation of Tarsus, earning the gratitude of **King Cleon** and **Queen Dionyza**. Pericles is shipwrecked in Pentapolis, where he wins **King Simonides'** daughter **Thaisa** by his victory in a jousting contest and his virtuous behavior. The ship is caught in a storm on the way back to Tyre. Thaisa dies while giving birth, and her body is thrown overboard to save the ship.

Thaisa washes up in Ephesus, where a **doctor** discovers she actually is alive and revives her. She becomes a priestess of Diana. Pericles leaves his daughter, **Marina**, with the king and queen of Tarsus. When Marina grows up, the jealous queen tries to murder her, and she is captured by pirates and sold into prostitution on Lesbos. Marina protects her virginity by converting the men who come to her, and later, she finds work in a respectable house. Pericles believes that Marina is dead, but they are reunited on Lesbos. Finally, a dream leads Pericles to Diana's temple in Ephesus, where he reunites with Thaisa as well.

CORIOLANUS

Coriolanus's pride prevents him from becoming consul, so he attacks Rome.

The common people of Rome gain the right to elect five political representatives, or tribunes, despite the objections of the proud, aristocratic **Caius Martius**, who has nothing but contempt for commoners. When Martius heroically captures the city of Corioles from Rome's enemies, he is renamed **Coriolanus**, and the Roman senate offers him the position of consul. Coriolanus has to ask for the vote of the common people to earn the position. The common people support him until two of their tribunes accuse Coriolanus of being an enemy of the people. Furious, Coriolanus denounces the very idea of popular rule, and the tribunes and the Roman citizens demand that he be exiled. Allying himself with his former enemy **Aufidius**, Coriolanus leads an army of the Volscians, a neighboring tribe, against Rome. Coriolanus's mother, **Volumnia**, convinces him to call off the attack, and Aufidius's men later assassinate Coriolanus.

THE WINTER'S TALE

Leontes' insane jealousy causes him to lose his friend, wife, son, and daughter, but when his daughter grows up and marries the friend's son, he is reconciled with his family.

King Leontes of Sicily becomes insanely jealous of his pregnant wife, **Hermione**, because he is convinced that she is cheating on him with his visiting friend, **King Polixenes** of Bohemia, and that Polixenes is the father of his unborn baby. Against the objections of his entire court, Leontes throws Hermione into prison and sends a messenger to the Oracle of Delphi to confirm his suspicions. When Hermione gives birth to a girl, Leontes gives the baby to a lord named **Antigonus** to abandon her in some desolate place. The Oracle sends word that Hermione is innocent and that Leontes will have no heir until his daughter is found. Word arrives that Leontes' son, **Mamillius**, has died as a result of Hermione's imprisonment. Hermione, meanwhile, falls into a swoon, and the heartbroken Leontes learns that she has died of grief.

Antigonus, following instructions that Hermione gave him in a dream, names the baby **Perdita** and leaves her on the coast of Bohemia. Not long after, Antigonus is killed by a bear. Perdita is raised by a shepherd. Sixteen years later, Polixenes' son, **Florizel**, falls in love with Perdita. When Polixenes refuses to let Florizel and Perdita marry, they elope and flee to Sicily. The shepherd who raised Perdita reveals her story, and Leontes is reunited with his daughter and reconciled with Polixenes. **Paulina**, a lady in Leontes' court, brings a statue of Hermione to life and then reveals that Hermione was alive in Paulina's house the entire time.

CYMBELINE

Posthumus believes that his wife, Innogen, is unfaithful, and tries to have her killed, but she saves herself by disguising herself as a boy.

Innogen, the daughter of **King Cymbeline of Britain**, goes against her father's wishes and marries **Posthumus**, a low-born gentleman, instead of Cymbeline's oafish stepson, **Cloten**. Cymbeline sends Posthumus into exile in Italy. There, Posthumus makes a bet with **Giacomo**, a smooth-tongued Italian, that Giacomo will not be able to seduce Innogen. Giacomo goes to Britain, fails to seduce Innogen, hides in her bedroom to observe her as she sleeps, and steals her bracelet. He convinces Posthumus that he won the bet by showing Posthumus Innogen's bracelet and accurately describing a mole on her breast. Posthumus orders his servant **Pisanio** to murder Innogen, but Pisanio persuades Innogen to disguise herself as a boy and search for Posthumus.

Innogen gets lost in the wilderness in Wales and discovers a cave. Inside live a banished nobleman, **Belarius**, and Cymbeline's two sons, **Guiderius** and **Arviragus**, whom Belarius kidnapped and raised as his own. Cloten appears, searching for Innogen. Innogen feels ill, so Pisanio gives her a potion to drink, unaware that it is from Cymbeline's evil wife. The potion makes Innogen fall into a deathlike sleep. While Innogen sleeps, Guiderius kills Cloten, and a Roman army invades England. When Innogen awakens, she hires herself to the Roman army as a page. Posthumus and Giacomo arrive with the Romans, but Posthumus, filled with guilt over Innogen's death, fights for the Britons, then lets himself be taken prisoner as a Roman when the Britons win. Cymbeline calls the prisoners before him, and the confusion resolves. Giacomo confesses, and Posthumus and Innogen reunite.

THE TEMPEST

Prospero, a powerful magician who used to be the duke of Milan, causes his enemies to wash up on his island, then uses his magic to reconcile with them and regain his dukedom.

A storm strikes a ship carrying a party of Italian princes and noblemen returning from a wedding. On board the ship are **Alonso**, the king of Naples; Alonso's brother **Sebastian** and son **Ferdinand**; **Antonio**, the duke of Milan; and **Gonzalo**, an elderly courtier of Milan. The storm is the work of the magician **Prospero**, who was the duke of Milan until twelve years before, when his brother Antonio, with Alonso's help, over-

threw him and put him out to sea with his daughter, **Miranda**. Prospero and Miranda arrived on an island, and Prospero impressed into service a powerful spirit named **Ariel**, whom he freed from a tree, and **Caliban**, the brutish offspring of a witch, whom he and Miranda educated and then enslaved.

Prospero causes the ship's passengers to wash up onto his island and has Ariel lead Ferdinand into Miranda's presence. Ferdinand and Miranda fall in love. Prospero plans to marry the two of them, but to test Ferdinand, he first imprisons him and sets him to work carrying logs. Elsewhere on the island, Alonso bemoans the loss of Ferdinand, and Gonzalo tries to comfort him. Meanwhile, Antonio and Sebastian plot to kill their fellow castaways. Caliban offers himself as a slave to **Trinculo** and **Stefano**, Alonso's drunken jester and butler, and promises to teach them how to kill Prospero. Ariel, however, keeps Prospero informed of everything that is going on. Ariel leads Alonso and the other lords, who are tired and hungry, to a banquet set by spirits. Ariel then appears to the men as a harpy, causes the banquet to vanish, and accuses Alonso and Antonio of trying to supplant Prospero. Alonso feels remorse.

Meanwhile, Prospero releases Ferdinand from servitude, gives Ferdinand and Miranda his blessing, and orders spirits to perform a wedding masque for them. Ariel tells Prospero that he used his magic to lead Trinculo, Stefano, and Caliban into a filthy pond near Prospero's cell. Prospero and Ariel send spirits in the form of hounds to torment them. Then, Prospero brings Antonio, Alonso, and the other lords before him. He confronts Antonio and Alonso with their misdeeds and says that he forgives them. Alonso apologizes and laments the loss of Ferdinand, whereupon Prospero draws aside a curtain to reveal Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess. The ship's crew, who had been in an enchanted sleep since the storm, appear, as do Trinculo, Stefano, and Caliban. Prospero invites the others to stay the night and listen to him recount the events of the past twelve years, after which they will return to Italy and Prospero will once again become the duke of Milan.

HENRY VIII

During Henry VIII's reign, several powerful men and women of the kingdom fall from grace so that history can bring about the birth of Henry's daughter, Elizabeth.

The powerful **Duke of Buckingham** publicly criticizes the influence that the church leader **Cardinal Wolsey** has on **King Henry**, and Buckingham promptly ends up in prison. Wolsey produces a witness who accuses Buckingham of disloyalty, and Henry has Buckingham executed, despite Buckingham's eloquent defense. Henry falls in love with **Anne Boleyn** and petitions the pope for a divorce from his wife, **Katherine**. Katherine beseeches Henry not to divorce her after her years of faithful devotion, but Henry remains steadfast. Henry discovers that Wolsey has betrayed him by urging the pope not to grant the divorce and by enriching himself with possessions seized from fallen lords. Henry strips Wolsey of his title and possessions and has him killed. Henry marries Anne Boleyn, who soon becomes pregnant with **Elizabeth**. Henry's council falsely accuses and almost executes Henry's friend **Cranmer**, the archbishop of Canterbury, but Henry rescues him. Cranmer is a godparent at Elizabeth's christening.

THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN

When Arcite and Palamon, two equally worthy cousins, compete for Emilia's hand, Arcite beats Palamon in battle, but Palamon is fated to win Emilia anyway.

Theseus, the duke of Athens, returns to Athens to celebrate his wedding to **Hippolyta**, the newly conquered queen of the Amazons. Along the way, three **widowed queens** accost him and beg for his help. Creon, the ruler of Thebes, killed the three queens' husbands, denied them burial, and left their bodies to rot. Theseus goes to Thebes, conquers **Creon**, and returns the dead kings' remains to their spouses. He takes prisoner two of Creon's noblemen, **Palamon** and **Arcite**, cousins who performed nobly in the battle. From their prison, Palamon sees Hippolyta's sister **Emilia** in a garden and falls in love with her. Arcite then sees her and falls in love with her too, and Palamon accuses him of treachery for doing so. Not long after, Arcite is freed and banished from Athens because Theseus's friend **Pirithous** advocates for him.

Arcite returns to Athens in disguise and wins a running and wrestling competition, gaining the attention of Theseus and Emilia. Theseus promotes Arcite to be Emilia's servant, and the Athenians treat him as a gentleman. Meanwhile, the **daughter of the jailer** who keeps Palamon prisoner falls in love with Palamon and helps him escape into the woods, hoping that Palamon will have sex with her. Palamon rejects her, however, and when she fails to find him that night, she goes insane, to be cured only when another man has sex with her. Arcite encounters Palamon in the woods, and the two agree to fight each other after Arcite brings Palamon files for his shackles, food, and armor. They begin to fight, but Theseus finds them and plans to have them executed; Hippolyta, Emilia, and Pirithous, however, convince him otherwise. Theseus decrees that Palamon and Arcite must return in a month with three friends each and fight a tournament for Emilia. Before the tournament, Arcite prays to Mars, the god of war, and Palamon prays to Venus, the goddess of love. Arcite wins the tournament, but before he can marry Emilia, his horse falls on him and he dies, making Palamon Emilia's appointed spouse.