

Introductory Material

How did public and private theatres differ in the late 16th and early 17th centuries? Name a couple of the public theatres.

What did Shakespeare do in the theatre? What theatres did he hold stock in?

What is a repertory company? What companies did Shakespeare belong to?

How do we know Shakespeare wrote the plays attributed to him? Who owned his plays?

What is a quarto? A folio? Why do texts of the same play often differ? What is the source of this *WT* text? Why did Shakespeare (or any Renaissance playwright) not want his plays published?

What kinds of elements set a Shakespearean romance apart from his other plays?

Act 1

Typically Shakespeare's plays begin with minor characters commenting on royal ones. Who starts this play? What do we learn from their exposition?

How long has Polixenes been visiting Leontes? Why does Polixenes wish to return to Bohemia?

How does Leontes try to persuade Polixenes to stay? How does Hermione persuade him?

How does Polixenes describe the boyhood of Leontes and himself?

The inciting event occurs in 1.2. 109ff. What do we learn from and about Leontes here? What is the meaning of *tremor cordis*? The root of *cordis*? His inferences about Polixenes and Hermione lead him to question what about Mamilius? About the child Hermione carries?

What does Leontes imagine is happening to his forehead, his brains? Why can others see what the mirror will not show him? Leontes's inferences lead him to conclude what about women?

Where do you see language indicating how characters value—what is dear, what is cheap? How does such language function ironically?

How does Camillo respond when Leontes asks him to poison Polixenes—note the use of *cordial*? What does Camillo think of Hermione (see ll. 279ff)?

Where do you see various statements about poison, potion, sickness? Who is sick?

Why does Camillo leave Sicilia? How is Camillo a disloyally loyal servant?

Why does Shakespeare keep Hermione out of this scene after l. 185?

If directing this scene, how would you block the lines involving Leontes's initial jealousy and the behaviors of Hermione and Polixenes just before and then after the inciting event?