

SOUTHWEST

SHAKESPEARE

COMPANY

The Merry Wives of Windsor



Falstaff and His Page by Adolf Schrodter (1867)

a teacher guide for studying the play and attending Southwest Shakespeare Company's performance

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March 2008

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Dear Educator:

Welcome to Southwest Shakespeare Company's 14th season! We are thrilled to continue to provide quality matinee productions to Arizona's students, and we are excited that you have chosen to bring your students to our performance of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the third show in our season of "Unlikely Couples."

At first glance, the most "unlikely couple" of all would be the typical twenty-first century student and the Bard ... a very unlikely couple, indeed! Today's teenager is interested in surfing the 'net, texting, and listening to their iPods ... definitely not reading the works of someone who died almost 400 years ago! But when these very modern teenagers are exposed to the works of Shakespeare, his timeless topics of finding love, lasting friendships, being betrayed, and finding redemption are relevant to their lives because of their own experiences with human nature. And we thank you, dear educators, for being committed to bringing Shakespeare alive to your students!

We hope you find the enclosed information, activities, and resources helpful and entertaining. If you have any suggestions for activities or topics not already found in this study guide, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at angee@mosaic-edu.com or by phone at 480.510.3808. We are always interested in hearing new ways to excite your students (and you!) about Shakespeare and live theatre.

Happy teaching!

Angee Lewandowski, Board Member
Southwest Shakespeare Company
Education Committee Chair

Meeting AZ State Standards

By viewing Southwest Shakespeare Company's production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, students can meet several of Arizona State Arts Standards. In addition, the activities included in this teacher's guide, when implemented in the classroom along with other teacher-assigned reading and writing activities, will allow students to meet various Arizona State Standards in Writing, Reading, and Listening and Speaking.

WRITING STANDARDS – STRAND 3: WRITING APPLICATIONS

Concept 2: Expository

Expository writing includes non-fiction writing that describes, explains, informs, or summarizes ideas and content (Concept Map, page 13; Act-By-Act Writing Topics, pages 14-16; Additional Activities, page 21).

Concept 3: Functional

Functional writing provides specific directions or information related to real-world tasks. This includes letters, memos, schedules, directories, signs, manuals, forms, recipes, and technical pieces for specific content areas (Additional Activities, page 21).

Concept 5: Literary Response

Literary response is the writer's reaction to a literary selection. The response includes the writer's interpretation, analysis, opinion, and/or feelings about the piece of literature and selected elements within it (Act-By-Act Writing Topics, page 14-16; Additional Activities, page 21).

READING STANDARDS – STRAND 1: READING PROCESS

Concept 6: Comprehension Strategies

Employ strategies to comprehend text (Character Guide: Who's Who in Windsor?, pages 11-12; Concept Map, page 13).

READING STANDARDS – STRAND 2: COMPREHENDING LITERARY TEXT

Concept 1: Elements of Literature

Identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure and elements of literature (Creating a Character, page 17).

Concept 2: Historical and Cultural Aspects of Literature

Recognize and apply knowledge of the historical and cultural aspects of American, British, and world literature (Act-By-Act Writing Topics, pages 14-16; Additional Activities, page 21).

LISTENING AND SPEAKING STANDARDS

Standard 3: Students effectively listen and speak in situations that serve different purposes and involve a variety of audiences (Performing a Scene, pages 18-20).

ARTS STANDARDS – THEATRE

Strand 3: Evaluate

Students describe physical and vocal attributes appropriate to the characters in the play in class and professional performances (attending and discussing Southwest Shakespeare Company's performance of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*).

Students justify the perception of a performance and critique its production elements (attending and discussing Southwest Shakespeare Company's performance of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*).

Recommended Reading

Reference Books

The Complete Works of Shakespeare edited by David Bevington
Discovering Shakespeare's Language by Rex Gibson & Janet Field-Pickering
The Friendly Shakespeare by Norrie Epstein
How to Speak Shakespeare by Cal Pritner and Louis Colaianni
Shakespeare A to Z by Charles Boyce
Shakespeare From Page to Stage by Michael Flachmann
Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human by Harold Bloom
Shakespeare: To Teach or not to Teach by Cass Foster and Lynn G. Johnson
Shaking Hands with Shakespeare by Allison Wedell Schumacher
Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-First Century edited by Ronald E. Salomone

Picture Books

A Child's Portrait of Shakespeare by Lois Burdett
All the World's A Stage by Rebecca Piatt Davidson
The Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare by Diane Stanley and Peter Vennema
Tales from Shakespeare by Charles and Mary Lamb
Tales from Shakespeare (comic book) by Marcia Williams
William Shakespeare and the Globe by Aliki

Websites

www.swshakespeare.org - see what's new at Southwest Shakespeare Company

www.folger.edu - access to primary documents and lesson plans for teaching Shakespeare

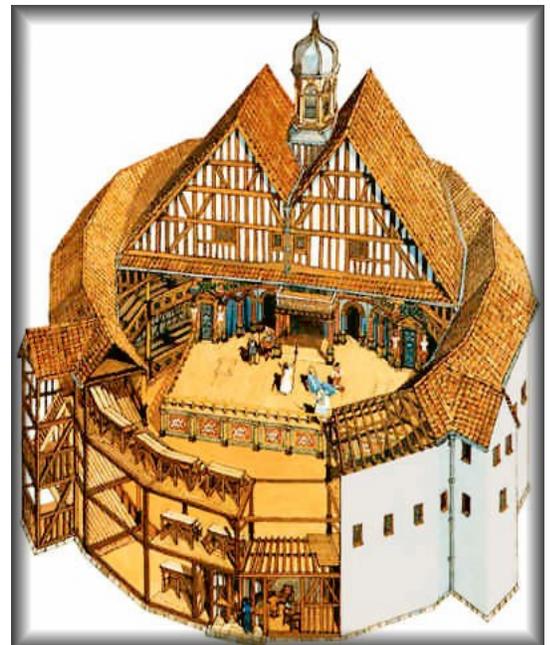
<http://nfs.sparknotes.com> - this is the "No Fear Shakespeare" website that presents the original text of Shakespeare's plays side-by-side with a modern version

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/educational.htm> - includes links to sites designed for teaching Shakespeare using the Internet; great for finding secondary resources to support the play being taught

www.stratford.co.uk - the official Stratford resource center on Shakespeare

www.teachersfirst.com/shakespr.shtml - on-line quizzes and surveys related to particular plays; also has related sites with information about Elizabethan England

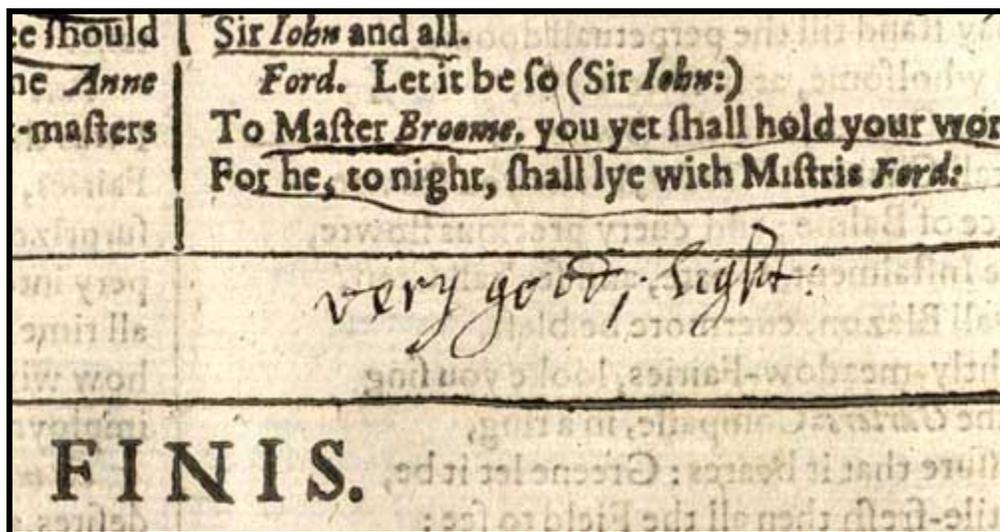
www.william-shakespeare.info/index.htm - a comprehensive site with links to the complete works, including background information, biographical information and pictures, information about Elizabethan theatre, a Shakespeare dictionary, quotes, and a discussion forum



Comments from the Director

These comments can be used to help you prepare your students to see Southwest Shakespeare Company's performance of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and may also answer any questions about changes or modifications made to the stage performance as compared to the written play.

Name of Production	THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR
Name of Director	Jared Sakren
In what time period is this production set?	Elizabethan England
Is this switched from the original text?	No.
Have any characters been cut?	Yes. William, the Page's son; he is irrelevant to the story.
Have any characters been combined? Why?	No.
Is there any cross-gender casting?	No.
Have any characters or scenes been added?	No.
Have any scenes been cut?	Yes. The so-called "Latin" Scene (Act IV, Scene 1) has been cut because it has nothing to do with the plot and is basically incomprehensible.
Are there fight scenes? Stage blood?	No.
Weapons?	Yes, but just for show.
Are there love scenes?	Yes, but very tame love scenes.
Sexual innuendo?	There is some sexual innuendo, but it is very minor.
Other comments:	This is a comedy that is appropriate for any age.



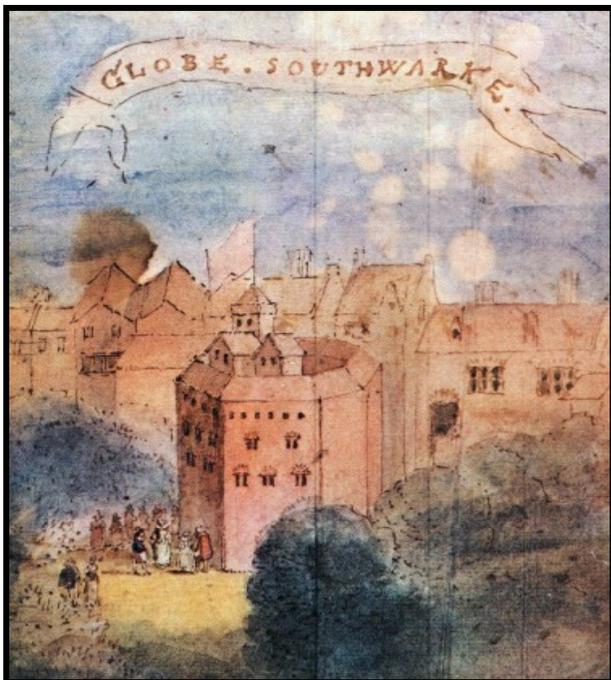
The ending of *Merry Wives*, page 60, from Glasgow University's copy of the First Folio edition

Helpful Tips for Seeing and Exploring Shakespeare

Before seeing the play ...

Before you see the characters of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* brought to life on stage by the vision of the director, spend some time imagining your own version. Go back to the text of the play and look for clues that suggest what the characters might look like and how they might behave. What movie stars might you cast in the various roles? Where would you set the play? What would the characters wear? It is up to you ... you are only limited by your imagination!

A director will often choose to "dramatize" a play by portraying a **wordless** scene that helps draw the audience into the action and mood. If you were directing *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and wanted to dramatize a scene just prior to Act I, Scene 1 being spoken, what would your scene portray?



"Neither the professor nor the actor has a monopoly on Shakespeare.

His genius is that he wrote **texts to be studied** and **scripts to be performed.**"

--Leonora Eyre

After seeing the play ...

Did your views about the play or the characters change after seeing the live production? If so, how? Try to be very specific about moments in the action that affected you.

Which actor best portrayed his/her character? What made the performance so effective?

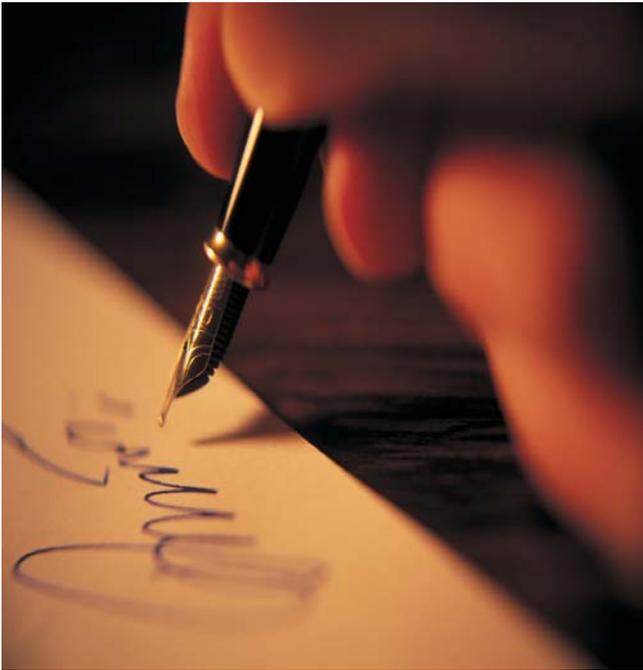
How was the live production different from the written play? What decisions did the director make about staging? Were these effective decisions? Why or why not?

What did you think of the production values (sets, costumes, lighting, sound)? Did they help you to better understand the plot of the play?

If you would like to share your opinions or ask questions of the director, actors, or crew of play, send your letters to:

Southwest Shakespeare Company
Education Committee
P.O. Box 30595
Mesa, AZ 85275-0595

Merry Wives - An Introduction



The Merry Wives of Windsor, a delightful slice of Elizabethan rural life, gives the upper hand in the plot to the female characters, rather than the male characters, which foreshadows the significance of the strong heroines Shakespeare created in his later comedies. It is a variation on a medieval morality tale, in which the virtuous wives triumph over the threat of corruption brought in by an outsider (in this case, the outsider is Sir John Falstaff, the self-aware companion of Prince Hal in the *Henry IV* plays, who is quite the buffoon in *Merry Wives*). Shakespeare's satirical comedy fully exposes human shortcomings by making fun of them: the jealous husband, the out-of-touch parents, the foolish law official, the cloying toady, the over-confident Casanova – they are all richly portrayed by Shakespeare in this charming domestic comedy.

Falstaff, the portly knight, is determined to use his sexual prowess to woo Mistress Ford and Mistress Page in order to get money from them as quickly and easily as possible. He believes that the wives control the purse strings in their households, so if he seduces them, they will hand the money over. And he is quite secure in his desirability: "O, she did so course o'er my exteriors with such greedy intention, that the appetite of her eye did seem to scorch me up like a burning-glass!" Of course, the virtuous wives proceed to have great fun in tricking Falstaff, first having him dumped into the Thames; disguising him as "the fat woman of Brainford," only to get beaten by Mr. Ford; and finally having him frightened and tortured by "fairies."

Of course, it wouldn't be a Shakespearean comedy without a marriage celebration. Anne Page has numerous suitors, two of which her parents approve. But these men, Slender and Dr. Caius, are completely wrong for Anne, who has ideas of her own as to whom she should marry. In the end all is right with the world because true love prevails, the wives are proven to be "merry, and yet honest, too," Falstaff is put in his place, and order and goodwill is restored to Windsor.

"Shakespeare applied a familiar formula,
**immediately understood by his audience
and so self-evident in its intentions**
that subsequence readers and theatre-goers have
responded just as instinctively."

--Charles Boyce
Shakespeare A to Z

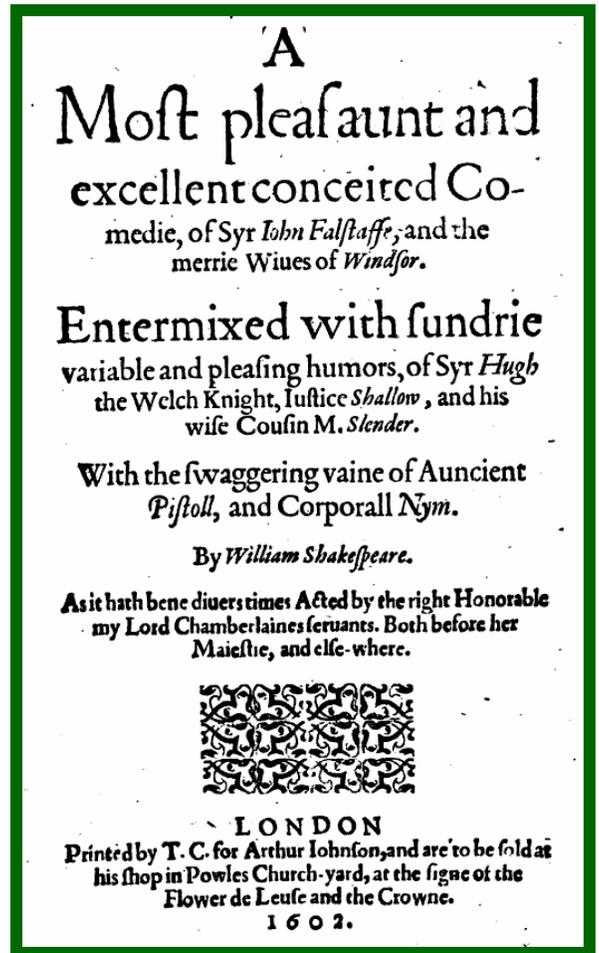


Merry Wives - Sources & History

The earliest performance on record of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was held at the court of King James I in 1604. However, although there is no absolute proof, most Shakespearean scholars believe that *Merry Wives* was commissioned for a specific occasion, a feast hosted by Queen Elizabeth I on April 23, 1597, in honor of the newly elected members of the Order of the Garter. And according to theatrical legend, Queen Elizabeth asked Shakespeare to write a play in which Sir John Falstaff is in love; supposedly Shakespeare only had 14 days in which to write the play! Although this may not be true, it does help to explain a few loose ends and undeveloped plot points (Shallow's threatened and then forgotten lawsuit, the stealing of the Host's horses by a German count, etc.) in the play. This also lends supports to the belief of some scholars that *Merry Wives* was based on another of Shakespeare's plays, now lost.

Unlike many of his other plays, the plot of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is not adapted from one particular source. There are, however, several literary sources that could have influenced him. Some of the details of Falstaff escaping from the jealous husband Francis Ford may have come from Giovanni Fiorentio's *Il Pecorone (The Simpleton)*, which was published in 1558. Robert Copland's *Gyl of Braintfords Testament* (1560) may have been the inspiration behind Falstaff's disguise as "the fat woman of Brainford," and sneaking him out of the house in the laundry basket may have come from Barnabe Rich's story *Farewell to Militarie Profession* (1581). The Host character seems to share similarities with the Innkeeper in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, and the scene in which the characters dress up as fairies in order to frighten and torture Falstaff may have been based on John Lyly's play, *Endimion* (1588), in which fairies punish a lecherous character.

The Merry Wives of Windsor was first published in 1602 in a bad quarto edition, which is known as Q1. It was an abridged version of the play, adapted for the public theatre rather than its originally intended aristocratic audience. It removed the scenes dealing with the Order of the Garter as well as the "Latin" scene. The play was reprinted with minor revisions in 1619; this edition is known as Q2. In 1623, the First Folio version of *Merry Wives* was printed and was immediately recognized as a far superior text to the Quartos; scholars believe that the First Folio was printed from a transcript of Shakespeare's own manuscript.



Title page of the first quarto of *Merry Wives*

Shakespeare's Critics



"Shakespeare's comic strategy in *The Merry Wives* seems reasonably clear: to translate highly popular comic figures such as Falstaff ... from the history plays into a ludicrously different kind of situation ... some admirers of Falstaff ... dismiss the play as an insult to his greatness, but surely to view the play thus is to create false expectations and thereby miss the point of Shakespeare's comic intent ... to see Falstaff in love!"

--David Bevington

The Complete Works of Shakespeare

"One of the uses of *Merry Wives* is to show us just how good Shakespeare's first farces, *The comedy of Errors* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, really are, compared with the false energy unleashed in this humiliation of pseudo-Falstaff. There are hints throughout that Shakespeare is uncomfortable with what he is doing and wishes to get it over with as rapidly as possible."

--Harold Bloom

Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human

"For today's playgoer the play is a delight, a revisiting of standard conventions so deftly used by Shakespeare in his other comedies. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is almost a refrain, repeating what has come before and anticipating what lies ahead."

--Elaine Pilkington

"A Collection of All Things Familiar," from *Insights*

"(It) is not one of Shakespeare's greatest plays; it lacks stirring poetry and monumental characters, and its concerns are not so sophisticated ... however ... it presents a delightfully picturesque view of sixteenth century rural life. An expertly plotted farce that ranges from gentle charm to high hilarity."

--Charles Boyce

Shakespeare A to Z

Shakespeare and *Merry Wives* by the Numbers

BORN: April 23, 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon, England	DIED: April 23, 1616 (on his 42 nd birthday)
PLAYS: 37 (give or take) – 10 tragedies, 10 histories, 13 comedies, and 4 romances; however, it is possible that he may have written a few more!	260: Hours it takes to read the 936,443 words in <i>The Complete Works of William Shakespeare</i> , if you read at the rate of 60 words per minute
23,788: Number of spoken words in the uncut version of <i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i> *	14: Number of days, according to theatrical legend, that Shakespeare had to write <i>Merry Wives</i> , after being commissioned by Queen Elizabeth I to write a play about Falstaff "in love."
1 PENNY: Price of the cheapest theater ticket in Shakespeare's day	90%: Percentage of U.S. high schools that require the study of Shakespeare

*according to the Complete Public Domain Text

Character Guide

Keeping all the characters straight in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* can be a challenge! Creating a visual representation of the characters and their relationships can help as you read and study the play.

Before reading the play, use the *Dramatis Personae* listed below (or from your copy of the play) to finish filling in the partially completed character guide, "Who's Who in Windsor?" Based on the Relationship Key and the character descriptions, see how accurately you can complete the guide (not all of the characters listed in the *Dramatis Personae* are represented on the guide). Have your teacher check your answers.

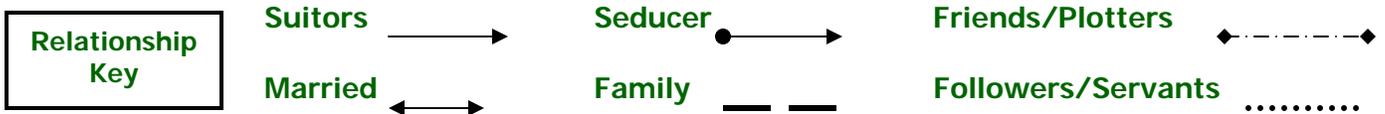
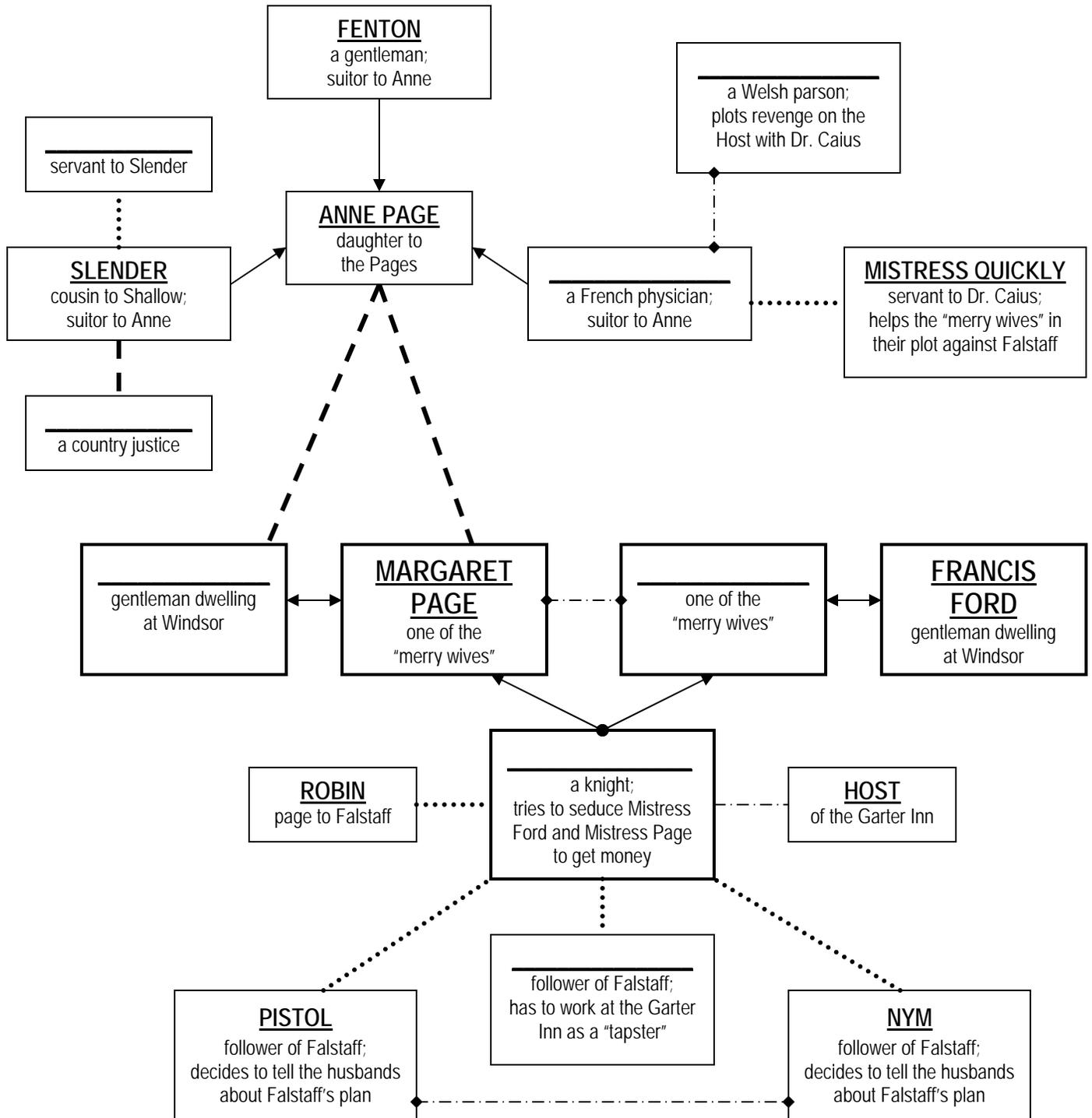
Once you have correctly completed in the character guide, recreate it on a large piece of paper, and use it as you read the play. Here are some ideas for how you can add information to the character guide as you read the play to give you even more information:

- Use pictures from magazines to represent each character
- Use different shapes or symbols for the characters (e.g., hearts could represent the different suitors)
- Use different colors for the relationship lines
- Use different colors to represent the characters (e.g., green could represent Mr. Ford's jealousy)
- Add different relationship lines (e.g., Mistress Quickly as messenger for the wives; Host plotting with Francis Ford, etc.)
- Include characters that are not on the original character chart (e.g., John Rugby, William Page, servants, etc.) as they are introduced in the play
- Don't cross relationship lines -- it becomes too confusing!
- If you need to, you can make any necessary changes or additions based on what you learn about the characters as you read the play.

Dramatis Personae

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF	<i>a knight</i>
FENTON	<i>a gentleman</i>
ROBERT SHALLOW	<i>a country justice</i>
ABRAHAM SLENDER	<i>cousin to Robert Shallow</i>
FRANCIS FORD	<i>gentleman dwelling at Windsor</i>
GEORGE PAGE	<i>gentleman dwelling at Windsor</i>
WILLIAM PAGE	<i>a boy, son to George Page</i>
SIR HUGH EVANS	<i>a Welsh Parson</i>
DOCTOR CAIUS	<i>a French physician</i>
HOST	<i>of the Garter Inn</i>
BARDOLPH	<i>follower of Falstaff</i>
PISTOL	<i>follower of Falstaff</i>
NYM	<i>follower of Falstaff</i>
ROBIN	<i>page to Falstaff</i>
PETER SIMPLE	<i>servant to Abraham Slender</i>
JOHN RUGBY	<i>servant to Doctor Caius</i>
MISTRESS ALICE FORD	<i>Francis Ford's wife</i>
MISTRESS MARGARET PAGE	<i>George Page's wife</i>
ANNE PAGE	<i>daughter to the Pages</i>
MISTRESS QUICKLY	<i>servant to Doctor Caius</i>
SERVANTS	<i>to Page, Ford, etc.</i>

Who's Who in Windsor?



Concept Map

BEFORE/DURING READING: Circle one of the concepts in the middle box and complete the graphic organizer. Add information to your concept map if your opinions develop or change as you read *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

DEFINE IT	GIVE EXAMPLES TO ILLUSTRATE IT
VIRTUE REVENGE MARRIAGE JEALOUSY	
CONSEQUENCES (GOOD/BAD) ASSOCIATED WITH IT	OTHER CONNECTIONS YOU CAN MAKE TO IT

AFTER READING: What role did this concept play in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*? Which character exemplified this concept? Cite specific examples from the play to support your opinion.

Act-By-Act Writing Topics

Act I

1. Marriage is usually the focus of Elizabethan comedy. How is this focus established early in Act I?
2. Falstaff, being a knight, is of higher rank than most of Windsor's citizens, and is somewhat of a celebrity. Compare Falstaff to modern-day celebrities. How does Falstaff take advantage of the locals through his position of being a knight? What about his entourage of Bardolph, Nim, and Pistol?
3. How does Abraham Slender behave when he is alone with Anne? Imagine that you are Anne. Write a letter to your friend Mistress Quickly and describe his behavior and how you felt about it.
4. Why do you think other characters in the play mock Sir Hugh Evans and Dr. Caius? What is it about each character that makes him a target for mockery? What does this say of Elizabethans' view of foreigners? Can you think of modern examples in movies, TV shows, books, etc. that show the same point of view in our contemporary society?
5. Falstaff announces that he is going to seduce Mistress Ford and Mistress Page. How does he hope to benefit from seducing the two women? Based on what you know so far about Falstaff, Mistress Ford, and Mistress Page, why is this plan of his so highly comic?
6. How is Mistress Quickly playing the various suitors against each other? Does she seem to favor one suitor over the others? Find evidence in the play to support your answer.
7. At the end of Act I, Dr. Caius sends a letter to Sir Evans, challenging him to a duel. Considering that this is a comedy and what you already know about these two characters, what do you think the outcome of the duel will be?

Act II

1. Mistress Page and Mistress Ford compare the letters they received from Falstaff and find out that they have been sent the same exact letters, only with the names changed. How does this discovery add insult to injury?
2. Mistress Ford and Mistress Page decide to take revenge on Falstaff to teach him a lesson, just as long what they do does not "sully the chariness of our honesty." What does this tell you about the personalities of the "merry wives"?

3. How do Mr. Ford and Mr. Page react to the news that Nym and Pistol tell them? Based on this dialogue and the dialogue between the two wives earlier in the scene, what does this tell you about the marriages of these two couples?
4. Disguised as "Brooke," Ford tells Falstaff that he is in love with Mistress Ford, and Falstaff promises to help "Brooke" in anyway he can to obtain her. What conclusion does Ford make at the end of the scene?
5. Describe how each of the following characters are attempting to "trap" other characters: Falstaff, Mistress Ford, Mistress Page, Mistress Quickly, and Ford.
6. Keeping in mind the view that Elizabethans' had of foreigners, why would the scene between the Host of the Garter Inn and Dr. Caius being entertaining? Do you think it is still entertaining for modern audiences? Why or why not?

Act III

1. After the Host tells them to not duel because he doesn't want to lose his doctor and his priest, what do Dr. Caius and Sir Evans decide to do? How is this similar to other events happening in the play?
2. Considering what you know about George and Margaret Page, do you think their individual choice of husbands for Anne suits their personalities? Knowing that Page does not approve of Fenton, what conclusions can you draw as to whom Anne might choose for a husband? How do these two elements add to the comedy of the play?
3. The scene where Falstaff attempts to woo Mistress Ford and is then carried out in the laundry basket is highly comical. Yet there are dark undertones in regards to Ford's jealousy; if this was one of Shakespeare's tragedies, Mistress Ford would surely be killed by her husband and Falstaff and Ford would duel, with one or both men dying. Re-write this scene as a Shakespearean tragedy, in which Ford discovers Falstaff wooing his wife and challenges him to a duel, while Mistress Ford pleads with her husband that she is innocent.

Act IV

1. In the Southwest Shakespeare Company version of the play, the director decided to cut Scene 1 of this act. Why do you think he made the decision to do this? Since this scene does not seem to further the plot of the story, why do you think Shakespeare included it in the play?
2. Falstaff attempts to woo Mistress Ford again, and once again he must escape before Ford finds him. How does this scene contribute to the comedy of the play?

3. Write a journal entry as Alice Ford, describing the fun she and Margaret Page are having in tricking her husband and Falstaff. Also write about how she feels about her husband's jealousy, especially since she has never given him cause to be jealous.
4. Why do the wives decide that Falstaff must be "publicly sham'd"?
5. What are the husbands' reactions when their wives tell them of their plot against Falstaff?
6. What is the final plan that the wives come up with to put Falstaff in his place?
7. Although Ford seems to have learned his lesson about being jealous, the Pages have not yet learned to listen and actually hear what their daughter, Anne, is trying tell them. What do they do that shows that they still need to learn this lesson?

Act V

1. How is the final plot to fool Falstaff a culmination of all of the other events in the play?
2. How does Anne's marriage to Fenton represent the conventional Elizabethan comedy?
3. Since female roles were played by young boys in Elizabethan England, how are the "marriages" of Slender and Dr. Caius somewhat ironic?
4. Discuss the characters of Mistress Ford and Mistress Page. What kind of freedom do they have? What evidence shows that they are the most sensible and competent characters in the play? How do they show the high value that Shakespeare placed on female influence in human affairs (something he would continue to do with even stronger female characters in later plays)?

Creating a Character

How do actors create the characters they portray on stage? What if you are playing a character that many other actors have played before (like ALL of the characters in Shakespeare's plays!)? One way of "getting inside your character's head" is to create a Character Score. This can help you "fill in the gaps" with information that might not be stated directly in the script.

Choose one of the characters from *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and answer the questions below. Remember, all of your decisions MUST be based on what you know about the character from the script. Yes, you are trying to create a three-dimensional character, and you will need to INFER some of the information, but your choices must be true to the script!

Character's Name:

How old is my character? Does my character act his/her age?	
What does my character look like? Dress like?	
Does my character have any complexes, neuroses, obsessions, superstitions?	
How does my character express his/her feelings?	
What is my character's education? Is he/she smart or not?	
Who does my character hang out with?	
What would my character's favorite color be? Why?	
What does my character like to do in his/her free time? Hobbies?	
What is my character's biggest fear?	
What makes my character angry?	
What makes my character happy?	
What makes my character sad?	

Performing a Scene

Presentation skills are becoming more and more important in today's society. The ability to speak well, whether it is with one person or in front of a large group, is a skill that people use everyday. By encouraging your students to memorize and perform a scene written by William Shakespeare, you will be immersing them in great thoughts and language.

Although your students may be initially nervous about performing in front of their classmates, you can make the experience non-threatening by participating in it yourself ... you will show your students that even YOU can do it, and probably provide them with some good laughs!

1. Ask students to choose a scene from the play to memorize. Students can choose one of the suggested scenes or choose another scene from the play after checking with the teacher.
2. The teacher can model both effective and ineffective scenes (you can have fun with this, especially when modeling the "ineffective" scene!). Ask a student to read the lines of one character as you perform the role of the other character. Then ask students to point out which elements of the performance were successful and which were not. On the board, write down a list of bad habits that can distract the audience or take away from the performance, such as fidgeting, monotone voice, inaudible volume, mispronunciations, and speaking too quickly. Then write down a list of elements that a successful performance should contain: eye contact with the audience, voice inflection, sufficient volume, evidence of understanding, pronunciation, and appropriate speed with the proper pauses.
3. Allow some time in class for students to practice their scenes. Pair student groups together (rotating with different groups at each practice session). Have students practice with their partner groups; the groups should offer constructive criticism, using the included checklist to help them make constructive suggestions.



Scene Performances

Name: _____ Character: _____

The following requirements are graded on a scale of **1 to 5** (1 being lowest and 5 being highest):

_____ **knowledge of lines** (did not miss any lines; very few awkward pauses)

_____ **stage presence** (commands the audience's attention; use of eye contact; not constantly looking at the floor or shifting feet; did not stand in one spot without moving)

_____ **body movement** (movements seem natural; no forced or unmotivated movements; movements fit the character)

_____ **use of voice** (use of pauses; easy to hear and understand words)

_____ **use of space** (did not stand in one spot)

_____ **rehearsal is obvious** (actually took time to rehearse; everything flows)

Scene Suggestions

The following scenes are suggestions for student performances of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (all line numbers are from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, Fifth Edition, edited by David Bevington):

Act I, Scene 1, Lines 246-293 (three characters) Slender attempts to make small talk with Anne until her father insists they come into dinner.

Act I, Scene 3, Lines 34-70 (three characters) Falstaff reveals to Nym and Pistol his plans to seduce Mistress Ford and Mistress Page.

Act II, Scene 1, Lines 31-80 (two characters) Mistress Ford and Mistress Page discuss Falstaff's weak attempt to woo them with identical "love" letters.

Act II, Scene 2, Lines 75-127 (two characters) Mistress Quickly tells Falstaff that the two wives are very interested in his advances.

Act III, Scene 3, Lines 37-77 (two characters) Falstaff tries to woo Mistress Ford.

Act IV, Scene IV, Lines 1-65 (five characters) The wives tell their husbands and Sir Evans about their final plan to teach Falstaff a lesson.

Act V, Scene V, Lines 103-162 (six characters) The Fords, the Pages, and Sir Evans reveal to Falstaff that he has been duped.

Act V, Scene V, Line 174-240 (nine characters; Mistress Ford does not speak) Anne and Fenton reveal that they are married.

Additional Activities

- Queen Elizabeth I supposedly had Shakespeare write *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as entertainment for the famous Order of the Garter. Research the Order of the Garter and present your findings in the form of a brochure that is given to hopeful knights who desire to be part of this exclusive group.
- Create a MySpace home page for one of the main characters of the play. Include personal information, pictures, clip art, quotes, links to other “friends,” links to other websites that are related to the character’s interests, and anything else that would demonstrate the personality of the character. The character’s status and mood should reflect how he/she is feeling at the end of the play.
- Imagine the characters from the play are part of a reality TV show. Rewrite a scene from the play as it would have been caught from the cameras of the show. Film your scene using a video camera or write a transcript of the scene. Be sure to include “confessionals,” where characters speak to the camera away from the rest of the cast. Yes, reality TV shows stole their idea for “confessionals” from Shakespeare’s soliloquies!
- Write a diary from the perspective of one of the main characters from the play. The diary may be from the timeframe before, during, or after the play’s events. You will need several entries, and you may want to include personal keepsakes. Remember that thoughts and feelings are very important in a diary.
- Make several drawings of some of the scenes from the play and write a caption for each drawing. Put all the drawings and captions in chronological order on a poster board to create a storyboard of the play.
- Create a newspaper that reports the various events of the play. You could include a front-page story that reports the play’s main conflict and its resolution, a features article about one of the prominent characters from the play (similar to an article about a celebrity), sports and entertainment relevant to the setting of the play or the interests of the characters, a society page detailing any wedding celebrations, a weather report, etc.
- Create a sculpture of a character from the play. You may use any combinations of materials – soap, wood, clay, sticks, wire, stones, old toy pieces, or any other object – to create your sculpture.
- Create a comic strip that depicts a few scenes from the play. You may draw, use computer graphics, use pictures from magazines, use photos you take yourself, or any other way you wish to graphically create your comic strip.
- Create a movie poster for the play using two or more of the following media: paint, crayons, chalk, coloring pencils, ink, markers, etc. You may want to choose modern-day actors to star in the movie and include their names and/or pictures on the poster. Look at current movie posters to help you determine what information to include on your poster.

Educator Comments

Please help us to improve. We invite you to share your thoughts about this production. Please **return this form** to any Southwest Shakespeare Company volunteer as you leave, **OR mail** it to us at P.O. Box 30595, Mesa, AZ 85275, **OR fax** it to 480.924.4310. Thank you for completing this form, for coming to our performance, and for introducing your students to the wonders of Shakespeare and live theatre!

Please feel free to use the back of this form to include any additional comments.

Name of Play: _____ Performance Date: _____

Did the confirmation packet provide you with the information you needed? Why/why not? _____

Did you find the Teacher Guide helpful? What did you particularly like/dislike? _____

Did you enjoy the performance? Why/why not? _____

Could you understand it? _____

Could you hear it? _____

What did you think of it visually? _____

Would you recommend Southwest Shakespeare to other educators? Why/why not? _____

Your name and school (optional) _____

E-mail address (optional) _____