

Handout 2

Primary Sources: The Window into Shakespeare's Plays

Throughout his work, Shakespeare dealt with sexual stereotypes, whether having the woman take the romantic initiative in *Romeo and Juliet*, or having male and female battle physically and mentally in *Taming of the Shrew*. As with most of Shakespeare, what we find in the plays reflects contemporary thought. So it is with *The Winter's Tale*, which deals with jealousy, revenge, regret, and gender expectations.

Materials:

The text, copies of Act 1.2.35-138 (enlarged, without footnotes),

hand-outs of *The Good and the Badde* and *Esther Hath Hanged Haman*.

Procedure:

- 1) Working with *The Good and the Badde*, divide the class into two or more groups and ask them to circle either the qualities of Wantons or Virgins; then write them on the board.
- 2) Based on the opening plot prognostications, into which group does Hermione fit?
- 3) Hand-out copies of 1.2.35-138, and ask groups to quickly prepare a reading, though make sure at least one group uses the subtext of a Virgin, and one group uses the subtext of a Wanton.
- 4) Using their readings as a clue, ask, "How does Leontes feel about this? What different emotions or reactions might he have?" When a student answers 'jealousy,' ask how the Virgin Hermione would react to him? How would the Wanton Hermione react?
- 5) Hand out copies of *Esther Hath Hanged Haman* and Act 1.2.139-185 (from "Too hot!" to "He . . . seems unsettled.")
- 6) Either for homework, or during the next class, have students use the primary sources to develop a brief scene in which Leontes accuses Hermione of adultery, and Hermione defends herself. They may use their own language, but need to base their ideas on the sources.
- 7) An alternative ending: if you have access to a video camera, tape the scenes. They can be used later as a comparison with the text of Act 3.2, or a videotape of that scene.