

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL  
(New Folger Library)

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

LIVING  
LITERATURE  
SERIES

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

*This guide was prepared using the Washington Square Press New Folger Library edition, © 2001. Other editions may differ.*

**SYNOPSIS**

**Act I, Scene 1** Bertram, Count of Rossillion, falls under the court's protection after his father dies. Helen, daughter of the recently-deceased court physician Gerard de Narbon, conceals her affection for Bertram because she is of lower birth.

**Act I, Scene 2** The king of France, who is in poor health and unable to take a stand during the war between Florence and Siena, welcomes Bertram. The king wishes that the former doctor of Rossillion were still alive to treat his illness.

**Act I, Scene 3** The countess, Bertram's mother, scolds Lavache for his lust for Isabel. She forces Helen to admit she loves Bertram and permits her to take medicines belonging to her late father to treat the king's ailment.

**Act II, Scene 1** As the French depart to the war, the king keeps Bertram at court in Paris. Helen arrives and, introduced as a female healer, promises to cure the king on pain of death if her medicines fail. As a reward, she asks the king to wed her to the man of her choice.

**Act II, Scene 2** The countess sends a fool to the French court with a letter for Helen, who begins the two-day treatment of the king's fistula.

**Act II, Scene 3** After the treatment cures the king's seemingly fatal illness, Lefew is amazed. Helen chooses Bertram as a husband. He declines to marry the daughter of a poor doctor. Although the king forces him to comply, Bertram marries Helen with the intent of abandoning her and going to war.

**Act II, Scene 4** Parolles, Bertram's companion, informs Helen that Bertram is going to Tuscany that night. Helen must ask leave of the king to return to Rossillion.

**Act II, Scene 5** Lafew, a French noble, warns Bertram that Parolles is untrustworthy. Bertram gives Helen a letter and dispatches her to Rossillion. He says he will join her, but conceals his decision not to return home.

**Act III, Scene 1** The Duke of Florence, who wonders why the French king remains neutral during the Italian wars, welcomes French nobles and their troops who join the side of Florence against Siena.

**Act III, Scene 2** The fool carries Bertram's letter to his mother detailing his intent to abandon Helen. His mother considers him rash and undisciplined. Helen receives a letter from him outlining obstacles to his return. Realizing his decision to stay away because of her, Helen resolves to slip away that night to keep him from risking his life in combat.

**Act III, Scene 3** The Duke of Florence puts Bertram in charge of the cavalry.

**Act III, Scene 4** The steward gives the Countess a letter from Helen explaining that she will make a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James to seek forgiveness for trapping Bertram

into matrimony. The countess writes her son to return home.

**Act III, Scene 5** On the way to the shrine, Helen, who is disguised, meets Diana Capilet, a woman whom Bertram courts. As the army marches past, Helen, Diana, and a neighbor named Mariana discuss Bertram's commendable war record and the despicable behavior of Parolles and Bertram toward women. Helen stays overnight with Diana's mother, the widow Capilet, and treats all to dinner.

**Act III, Scene 6** In an episode over a drum that Parolles lost on the battlefield, the French nobles join in a plot with Bertram to trick Parolles into admitting his cowardice. Bertram searches for Diana.

**Act III, Scene 7** Helen pays Diana's mother a purse of gold to help her deceive Bertram into bedding Diana in exchange for his ring. Helen intends to slip into Diana's place in the dark. Afterward, Helen pledges 3,000 crowns to Diana for the completed deception.

**Act IV, Scene 1** From ambush at 10:00, a French noble pretending to be from Siena captures Parolles, blindfolds him, and questions him in a made-up language that he takes for Russian. To save his life, Parolles promises to divulge military secrets.

**Act IV, Scene 2** After gaining the family ring, Diana sets up the assignation with Bertram for midnight at her bedroom window. The tryst will last only an hour.

**Act IV, Scene 3** After the seduction, two lords discuss Bertram's deflowering of Diana. Bertram returns to the duke's court and learns that a rector confirms that Helen died on her way to St. James's shrine. Cheerfully glad to be rid of Helen, Bertram assumes he can safely return home.

Parolles betrays Bertram by revealing troop strength and slanders Captain Dumaine, Dumaine's brother, and Bertram. The nobles unmask and abandon Parolles.

**Act IV, Scene 4** Helen, Diana, and the widow set out for Marseilles to see the king.

**Act IV, Scene 5** The countess, believing Helen dead, learns that both Bertram and the king of France are coming to Rossillion. Lord Lafew offers his own daughter to Bertram. The countess agrees to the match.

**Act V, Scene 1** After traveling day and night, Helen arrives too late at Marseilles and learns that the king has set out for Rossillion.

**Act V, Scene 2** When Parolles returns to Rossillion, he convinces Lafew to accept him into service.

**Act V, Scene 3** The king pardons Bertram for causing Helen's death and agrees to his union with Lafew's daughter Maudlin. Bertram gives Helen's ring to Lafew. When the king recognizes it as the one he gave Helen, Bertram claims that a Florentine noblewoman threw it to him from a window. He is arrested for murdering Helen. When Diana claims him for her husband, Parolles corroborates her story. Bertram brands her a common camp follower; she counters with the ring he gave her. Before the king can imprison Diana, Helen,

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

who is pregnant, reveals her presence. The king reunites Helen with Bertram.

**Epilogue** The speaker claims that the actors intend the play as entertainment.

### TIME LINE

- 1558 Elizabeth I becomes queen of England.
- 1564 **April 23** Shakespeare is born, the son of John and Mary Shakespeare.
- 1567 Mary, Queen of Scots, is deposed; she flees to England.
- 1570 Shakespeare attends a Latin grammar school.
- 1576 London's first theatre is built.
- 1577 John Shakespeare suffers failing finances. Holinshed's *Chronicles* is published.
- 1577-80 Francis Drake sails around the world.
- 1582 **Nov. 28** Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway of Shottery.
- 1583 **May** Susanna Shakespeare is born.
- 1584 Sir Walter Raleigh claims Virginia for England.
- 1586 **February** The twins, Judith and Hamnet, are born.
- 1587 Shakespeare moves to London. Mary, Queen of Scots, is executed.
- 1588 The Spanish Armada is defeated.
- 1592 Shakespeare receives critical acclaim.
- 1596 Hamnet dies.
- 1597 Shakespeare builds New Place, a country estate.
- 1599 The Globe Theatre is built.
- 1600 Population of England and Ireland is estimated at 5.5 million.
- 1603 James VI of Scotland becomes King James I of England.
- 1605 Shakespeare buys real estate.
- 1606 A law forbids foul language on the English stage.
- 1607 Virginia Company founds colony at Jamestown.
- 1608 Shakespeare holds stock in Blackfriars Theatre. Mary Shakespeare dies.
- 1611 Shakespeare retires to Stratford.
- 1612 Shakespeare writes *Henry VIII*, his last play. Virginia colonists begin to raise tobacco.
- 1613 The Globe Theatre burns.
- 1616 **late March** Shakespeare revises his will. **April 23** Shakespeare dies.
- 1623 The First Folio is published.

### AUTHOR SKETCH

William Shakespeare (ca. April 23, 1564-April 23, 1616) attended a Latin grammar school in his hometown of Stratford-on-Avon. At eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway of Shottery, eight years his senior, and fathered a daughter, Susanna, and twins, Judith and Hamnet. He moved to London at the age of 23 or 24, joined the Lord Chamberlain's company, later known as the King's Men, and remained active in theater until 1611. Much about his early adulthood is a mystery, but it is clear that he obtained a thorough knowledge of his chosen field—acting—and was well-known by 1592.

Shakespeare gained the approval of Elizabeth I and her Scottish successor, James I, both regular theater-goers. His success as an actor-playwright enabled him to invest in real estate, to build the popular Globe Theatre, and to purchase a coat of arms for his father, John Shakespeare, a glover and bailiff in Stratford. Having written and produced 37 plays, a sonnet sequence, and two long poems, Shakespeare retired

to a large house in Stratford. As a country gentleman, he lived out his life in harmony with his family and lies buried in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

Composed around 1604, *All's Well That Ends Well* may have originally carried the title *Love's Labours Won*. It reprises a plot and Italian settings from William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* (1566). Painter recycled the story of Beltramo de Rossiglione and Giglietta de Narbone from Boccaccio's *Decamerone* (1353), a bestselling collection of witty, rollicking fabliaux and novelle that earned him the title "the Father of Italian Prose." Shakespeare apparently read the popular French translation of Boccaccio's work published in 1545 by Antoine Le Maçon, an attendant at the court of Marguerite of Valois. Additional source material came from the real adventures of poet Barnabe Barnes, a boaster and coward who was convicted of murder and escaped from Marshalsea Prison in 1598. *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594), written by Thomas Nashe may have provided supporting characters Lafew and Parolles.

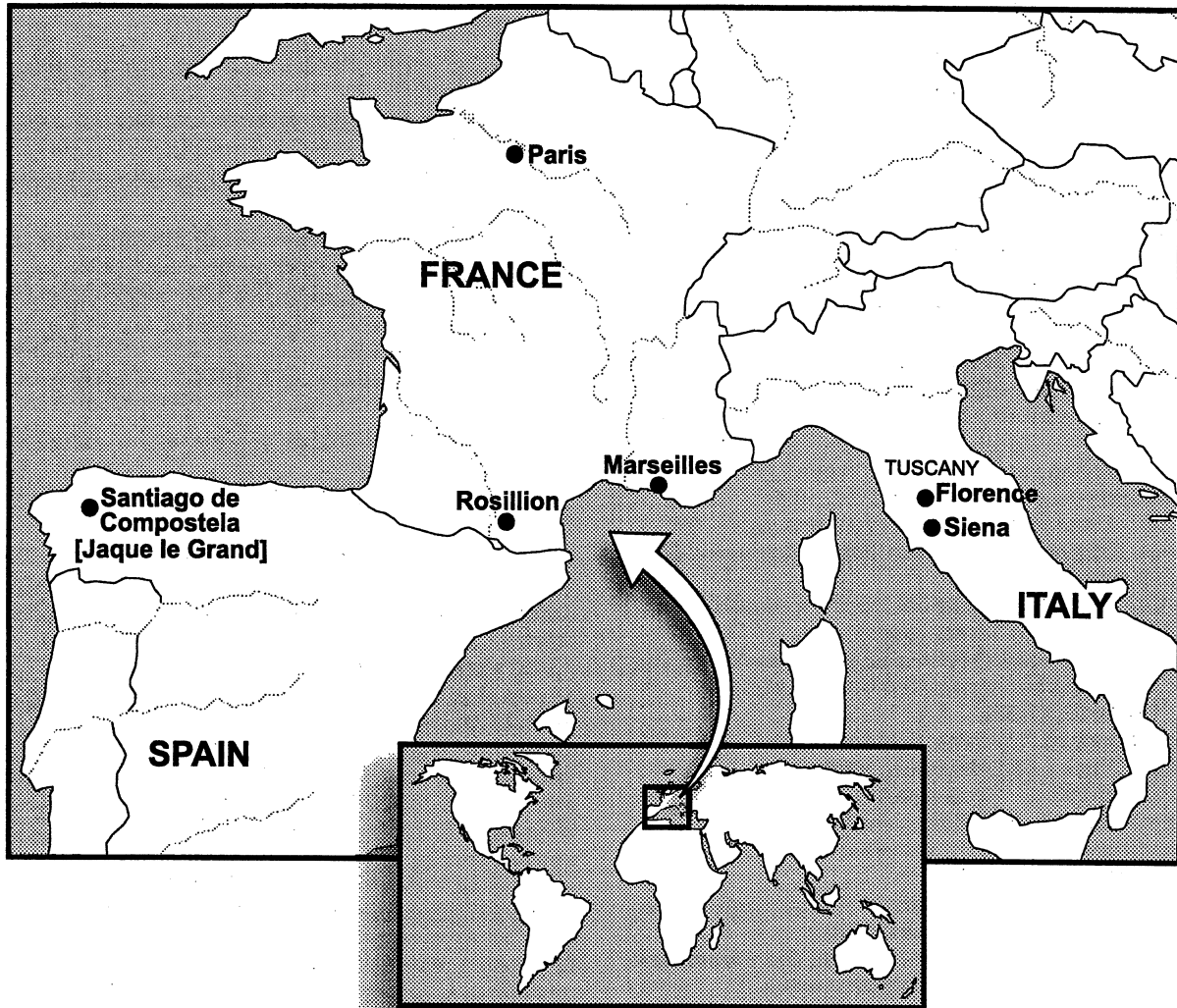
*All's Well That Ends Well* was apparently first published in 1623 in the First Folio from Shakespeare's own stage copy, which contained many omissions and sketchy erasures and revisions. Revived on March 7, 1741, at Goodman's Fields Theater, the neglected play was later a vehicle for Irish-born actress Peg Woffington as Helen and Theophilus Cibber, an English comic lead who played Parolles at Drury Lane. On December 12, 1794, another revival at Covent Garden based the staging on British producer John Philip Kemble's adaptation, which was bowdlerized and shortened. Kemble himself played Bertram opposite Dorothy Bland as Helen. In 1823, a greatly altered version opened at Covent Garden as an opera.

In the mid-twentieth century, *All's Well That Ends Well* did not fare well as an audience pleaser. Robert Atkins, Tyrone Guthrie, Michael Benthall, and John Barton returned the play to the stage to mixed reviews. Four popular actresses—Claire Bloom, Fay Compton, Zoe Caldwell and Edith Evans—strengthened the female leads, particularly at the 1953 opening at the Shakespearean Festival Theatre at Stratford, Ontario. In the 1980s, Trevor Nunn brought the work to Broadway with Peggy Ashcroft as Bertram's mother.

Classified as one of Shakespeare's dark comedies or problem plays, *All's Well That Ends Well* is a blend of adventure, romance, humor, and moral complexity. Enhancing the plot is a charming portrait of an aged countess dealing with a rascal son and a parallel widow from Florence protecting the virtue of her daughter Diana. Samuel Taylor Coleridge believed that Shakespeare issued the original after revamping *Love's Labours Lost* (ca. 1595). The ironic turn of events and cynical depiction of the virtues of bravery and loyalty reflect Shakespeare's maturity after the composition of lighter, less complex romantic comedy and fantasy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (ca. 1595) and *As You Like It* (1599).

Critical opinion presents varying interpretations of the play and of the author's purpose. Samuel Johnson found *All's Well That Ends Well* entertaining, but not probable. In 1864, Thomas Kenny believed that Shakespeare failed to harmonize Helen with his more admirable female characters. In 1875, Edward Dowden blamed the plot for lacking moral force and for failing to establish validity of romance or morals. In 1931, W. W. Lawrence agreed with other evaluations of

**ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL**



the play's artificiality, but found "flashes of tenderness and fineness" in Helen and Bertram's mother. In 1949, Thomas Marc Parrott commented that Shakespeare expressed his own estimation of human worth in the characterization of Parolles.

**OTHER WORKS BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

- Antony and Cleopatra* (ca. 1605)
- As You Like It* (ca. 1599)
- The Comedy of Errors* (ca. 1580s-1594)
- Coriolanus* (ca. 1605-1609)
- Cymbeline* (ca. 1608-1610)
- Hamlet* (ca. 1599-1600)
- Henry IV, Part I* (ca. 1596)
- Henry IV, Part II* (ca. 1597-1598)
- Henry V* (1599)
- Henry VI, Part 1* (ca. 1589)
- Henry VI, Part 2* (ca. 1590-1591)
- Henry VI, Part 3* (ca. 1590-1591)
- Henry VIII* (ca. 1612-1613)
- Julius Caesar* (ca. early 1599)
- King John* (1590)
- King Lear* (ca. 1603-1606)
- Love's Labours Lost* (ca. 1593-1595)
- Macbeth* (ca. 1603-1606)
- Measure for Measure* (1604)
- The Merchant of Venice* (1596-1598)
- Merry Wives of Windsor* (ca. 1597)
- A Midsummer Night's Dream* (ca. 1593-1595)
- Much Ado About Nothing* (ca. 1598)
- Othello* (ca. 1603-1604)
- Pericles* (ca. 1606-1608)
- Rape of Lucrece* (1594)
- Richard II* (ca. 1595-1596)
- Richard III* (ca. 1589)
- Romeo and Juliet* (ca. 1593-1595)
- Sonnets* (ca. 1592-1598)
- The Taming of the Shrew* (ca. 1589)
- The Tempest* (ca. 1610-1611)
- Timon of Athens* (ca. 1606-1608)
- Titus Andronicus* (ca. 1588-1594)
- Troilus and Cressida* (ca. 1602)
- Twelfth Night* (ca. 1599 to 1601)
- The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (ca. 1613)
- The Two Noble Kinsmen* (possibly written by Shakespeare)

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

and John Fletcher in 1613)  
*Venus and Adonis* (1593)  
*The Winter's Tale* (ca. 1610-1611)

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "All's Well That Ends Well," *Chicago Times*, May 1, 2000.  
Bentley, Gerald E. *Shakespeare: A Biographical Handbook*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1961.  
Boyce, Charles. *Shakespeare A to Z*. New York: Facts on File, 1990.  
Campbell, Oscar James, ed. *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare*. New York: MJF Books, 1966.  
Carey, Gary, ed. *Shakespeare's Minor Plays*. Lincoln, Neb.: Cliffs Notes, 1991.  
Chute, Marchette. *An Introduction to Shakespeare*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1951.  
———. *Shakespeare of London*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1949.  
Claybourne, Anna, and Rebecca Treays. *The World of Shakespeare*. London: Usborne Pub., 1996.  
"The Ghost of Shakespeare," (panel) *Harper's*, April 1999.  
Kroll, Jack, "London's Brave New Globe," *Newsweek*, June 23, 1997, p. 77.  
McMurtry, Jo. *Understanding Shakespeare's England*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1989.  
Muir, Kenneth, and Samuel Schoenbaum. *A New Companion to Shakespearean Studies*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971.  
Sandler, Robert, ed. *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1986.  
Stearns, David Patrick, "Reconstructed Globe Provides Theater in the Real," *USA Today*, June 12, 1997, p. 4D.  
Swisher, Clarice, ed. *The Comedies*. San Diego, Calif.: Greenhaven Press, 1997.  
Thrasher, Thomas. *The Importance of William Shakespeare*. San Diego, Calif.: Lucent Books, 1999.  
Tillyard, E. M. W., and Elizabeth Tillyard. *The Elizabethan World Picture*. New York: Macmillan, 1943.  
Waller, Gary, ed. *Shakespeare's Comedies*. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman, 1991.  
Zitner, Sheldon. *All's Well That Ends Well*. Boston: Twayne, 1989.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To experience and read aloud from a Shakespearean play
2. To identify and explain dramatic conventions, particularly letters, aside, repartee, and soliloquy
3. To place *All's Well That Ends Well* in the Shakespearean canon
4. To envision the staging of a cynical comedy
5. To enumerate items upon which the action hinges
6. To explain examples of Elizabethan social custom
7. To set the comedy in its social, historical, and geographical context
8. To comprehend love, lust, and longing as motivators
9. To evaluate constraints on females in a patriarchal society
10. To discuss the Elizabethan delight in disguises and trickery

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To determine why Helen chooses not to reveal her love to Bertram
2. To analyze the importance of the countess as Helen's confederate
3. To explain how Helen gains the betrothal she wants
4. To account for the use of an epilogue to end the play
5. To discuss Shakespeare's concept of woman's place in society
6. To analyze the importance of wily servants to the plot
7. To enumerate poetic devices that play a major role in the dialogue, such as parallelism, assonance, allusion, simile, metaphor, poetic justice, caesura, euphony, cacophony, and alliteration.
8. To contrast Helen before and after she goes on the pilgrimage
9. To contrast examples of disloyalty in Bertram and Parolles
10. To predict the future harmony of the countess and the newlyweds

### LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of William Shakespeare's style, present the following terms and applications to the play:

**foil** a character whose presence in a literary work offsets or enhances the contrasting traits of another character, for example, the countess and Diana's mother are older, wiser women who shed light on the needs of young women in the throes of unrequited love and pursued by despoilers of women. As contrasted with two lovely maids, each of whom is capable of satisfying the needs of Bertram, the older women serve as anchors to supply compassion and wisdom.

**irony** an implied discrepancy between what is said or done and what is meant, as found in the swagger of Bertram as he exults in his tryst with the supposed girl of his choice. The irony is that he is satisfied with Helen, the woman he spurned as a unsuitable bride of low estate. Content when the trappings of status are not an issue, Bertram's attitude presages a happy marriage, once he reconciles the fact that the woman he loved in Florence from midnight to 1:00 A. M. was not Diana.

**round character** a realistic being who possesses a complex or multifaceted array of traits. One example is Helen, a fully fleshed human character capable of fault and nobility. Grieving for her father, Gerard de Narbon, in the opening scene, she joins a family who has also lost the male head of household. In pursuing Bertram with her knowledge rather than through feminine wiles, Helen displays a level-headedness that endears her to the audience. After she repents of entrapping Bertram and sets out to confess her sin before the shrine of St. James, the shift in attitude elevates her and worsens the pain of Bertram's castigation of a woman too low in status to tempt him. In the end, Helen is both schemer and mother-to-be, two additions to the multiple views of her life after she ended maidenhood to become Bertram's wife.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

The milieu of Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* lacks definition. The rapidly shifting scenes, which take Bertram from the court of Rossillion on the French border with Spain to the king's court in Paris, makes little use of sumptuous surroundings. Perhaps because of the king's dire

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

illness, the setting is muted and court trumpery avoided. After Helen cures the king and marries Bertram, the shift to combat emphasizes the Renaissance male's manipulation of warfare as an excuse to flee domestication and the duties of a husband and father. The rough treatment of Parolles, the loss of the drum on the battlefield, and ridicule of colorful slashed sleeves suggest that the Frenchmen who join Florence in a war with Siena are wearing plain, durable uniforms and boots befitting combat.

The shift to the open road and Helen's disguise as a pilgrim on her way to St. James's shrine at Compostela, Spain, extends the outdoor settings and the need for shoes, cloaks, and hats that would protect a foot traveler. Helen's costume conceals from Diana and her widowed mother Helen's true status, perhaps because Helen rids herself of feminine finery to humble herself and seek forgiveness at the shrine. The coincidence of the bumptious French army passing nearby allows Helen, Mariana, Diana, and the widow to survey Bertram from a safe distance without his awareness.

In the final scene, action returns indoors to Rossillion, where the king of France can examine contributors to the confusing plot and determine the truth. The apprehension of Diana in readiness to imprison her requires guards or attendants for the king. Helen's appearance as the wronged wife anticipating a birth further alters the rough outdoor setting to a domesticated environment in which Helen, Bertram, and the countess will presumably live in peace.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

#### Novels

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*  
Amy Tan, *Joy Luck Club* and *Kitchen God's Wife*  
Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*

#### Play

Edmond Rostand, *Cyrano de Bergerac*

#### Nonfiction

Edward Berry, *Shakespeare's Comic Rites*  
Ann Jennalie Cook, *Making a Match: Courtship in Shakespeare and His Society*  
Sarah Munson Deats, and Laretta Tallent Lenker, *The Aching Hearth: Family Violence in Life and Literature*  
Norrie Epstein, *The Friendly Shakespeare: A Thoroughly Painless Guide to the Best of the Bard*  
Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her, a History of Women's Lives from 1500-1800*  
J. R. Mulryne, *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt*  
Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today*  
Paul Robert Walker, *The Italian Renaissance*

#### Internet

"All Shakespeare," <[www.allshakespeare.com/index.php3](http://www.allshakespeare.com/index.php3)>  
"The Globe Theatre," <[home.earthlink.net/~feiffer/bard/content/globe.html](http://home.earthlink.net/~feiffer/bard/content/globe.html)>  
"The Globe Theatre," <[naples.net/ent\\_th/globe.htm](http://naples.net/ent_th/globe.htm)>  
"The Globe Theatre," <[www.twingroves.district96.k12.il.us/renaissance/Globe/GlobeTheatre.html](http://www.twingroves.district96.k12.il.us/renaissance/Globe/GlobeTheatre.html)>  
"Medieval/Renaissance Internet Resources," <[www.library.yale.edu/Internet/medieval.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/Internet/medieval.html)>  
"Santiago de Compostela," <[www.cyberspain.com/ciudades-patrimonio/fotos/sancami.htm](http://www.cyberspain.com/ciudades-patrimonio/fotos/sancami.htm)>

"Search Shakespeare,"

<[the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/search.html](http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/search.html)>  
"Shakespeare Links," <[www.yahoo.com/Arts/Drama/Plays/Playwrights/Shakespeare\\_\\_William\\_\\_1564\\_1616\\_/>](http://www.yahoo.com/Arts/Drama/Plays/Playwrights/Shakespeare__William__1564_1616_/>)  
"William Shakespeare" (audio), <[town.hall.org/Archives/radio/MS/Harper.Audio/020994\\_harp\\_ITH.html](http://town.hall.org/Archives/radio/MS/Harper.Audio/020994_harp_ITH.html)>

#### Video/DVD

*Cyrano de Bergerac*  
*A Midsummer Night's Dream*  
*Much Ado About Nothing*  
*Shakespeare in Love*  
*Twelfth Night*

### THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in William Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* should include these aspects:

#### Themes

- grief
- status
- healing
- duplicity
- audacity
- marriage
- forgiveness
- obedience
- war
- disloyalty
- logic

#### Motifs

- the retreat from marriage and family
- a convoluted plot to woo a young girl
- making a pilgrimage to gain forgiveness
- identity confusion at a midnight assignation
- the clever wife and her mother-in-law

### MEANING STUDY

Below are significant words, phrases, or sentences from the play. Explain each in context. Act, scene, line, and page numbers pinpoint each entry so that you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. What is it, my good lord, the king languishes of?  
A fistula, my lord. (I, i, 34-35, p. 9)  
(The king suffers from an ulcer, an open sore that saps his strength and refuses to heal. In Renaissance medical practice, external ulcers often yielded to soaking in strong herbal solutions or salt water. Serious infections like chilblains required branding with a hot iron to cauterize the opening to rid it of infection. When fistulas occurred within an organ, physicians lacked systemic antibiotics to cure them.)
2. Thy blood and virtue  
Content for empire in thee, and thy goodness  
Share with thy birthright. (I, i, 64-66, p. 11)  
(The countess's blessing on her fatherless son urges him to be like his father. She obviously knows his weaknesses and cautions him to let morality and status share place with goodness to round out his character. Like Polonius's advice to Laertes in Hamlet, the speech presents a parent's advice in a compressed admonition to "an unseasoned courtier.")

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

3. Why not a mother? When I said "a mother,"  
Methought you saw a serpent. What's in "mother"  
That you start at it? (I, iii, 143-145, p. 35)  
*(Helen, who wants Bertram for a husband, can't think of his mother as her own mother. Such a relationship would turn Helen's love into incest. The reference to a serpent alludes to Eve, the serpent, Satan, and the fall of Adam and Eve before their expulsion from Eden.)*
4. I am Saint Jaques' pilgrim. (III, iv, 4, p. 113)  
*(During the Middle Ages, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, was a favorite shrine for Christian pilgrims setting out from all parts of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. The value of walking the long distance was the opportunity for prayer, reflection, and penitence on the journey and the humbling experience of traveling on foot among the lowliest company.)*
5. Though my estate be fall'n, I was well born,  
Nothing acquainted with these businesses,  
And would not put my reputation now  
In any staining act. (III, vii, 4-7, p. 133)  
*(Although Diana's mother has lost her fortune, she has not surrendered the values of a gentlewoman, who wants no part in seduction or deceit. The elevation of the character is essential to the theme of quality behavior in people of all stations.)*
6. A ring the County wears  
That downward hath succeeded in his house  
From son to son some four or five descents  
Since the first father wore it. This ring he holds  
In most rich choice. (III, vii, 26-30, p. 133)  
*(Helen carefully specifies a piece of jewelry that bears sentimental value as a family heirloom among males. The capture of the ring is valuable enough to Helen that she would add 3,000 crowns to the bag of gold she has given the widow.)*
7. I know you are the Muskos' regiment,  
And I shall lose my life for want of language.  
If there be here German or Dane, Low Dutch,  
Italian, or French, let him speak to me.  
I'll discover that which shall undo the Florentine. (IV, i, 73-76, p. 143)  
*(In fear for his life, Parolles needs a translator. He is so desperate for a go-between that he interprets the situation as life-threatening. The first soldier corroborates that "seventeen poniards are at thy bosom".)*
8. My mother told me just how he would woo  
As if she sat in's heart. She says all men  
Have the like oaths. (IV, ii, 81-83, p. 151)  
*(Diana recognizes truth from her mother, who is experienced enough with courtship to know that Bertram is a frivolous flirt who would ruin Diana's reputation. In retaliation, Diana is eager "to cozen him that would unjustly win.")*
9. Captain I'll be no more,  
But I will eat and drink, and sleep as soft  
As captain shall. Simply the thing I am  
Shall make me live. (IV, iii, 353-356, p. 171)  
*(Parolles recovers quickly from humiliation and multiple self-incriminations. He accounts for his resilience as a normal urge toward self-preservation. Even if he is demoted from captain, he intends to live as well as he ever has.)*

10. In Florence was it from a casement thrown me,  
Wrapped in a paper which contained the name  
Of her that threw it. Noble she was. (V, iii, 109-111, p. 199)  
*(Bertram's lie about the noblewoman throwing him a ring from her window is a likely scenario. Any respectable woman who wanted to draw the attention of a man in the streets had to outwit her duenna, the chaperone who remained with a noblewoman from birth to marriage to assure her virtue and safety.)*

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important. Be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the play.

#### Plot

1. Explain how Diana fits into the play.  
*(Diana Capilet is an important character for two reasons. She is evidence of Bertram's playboy attitude toward women, even after his marriage to Helen. On the road with pilgrims to St. James's shrine, Helen hears testimony from Mariana that Bertram and Parolles are two wayward soldiers who have bad reputations for seducing women. Diana's mother adds that Bertram comes nightly "with musics of all sorts and songs composed to her unworthiness" and "persists as if his life lay on 't." Diana's experience with Bertram proves that he seeks illicit sexual pleasure and that he lacks character where women are concerned.*  
*The second purpose of Diana in the cast is her use to Helen, a gentlewoman who shares her fatherless state. For Helen's ruse to work, Diana must entrap Bertram in an assignation at night in her chamber. By luring him to a one-hour sexual encounter, Helen is able to satisfy her husband's stipulation that she produce a child. The fact that Bertram thinks he is making love to Diana makes no difference to Helen, who is his legal wife and rightful bedmate. A side issue, the pursuit of Diana, eases the widow's concern for her daughter's virtue by a trick that makes Bertram believe that Diana is his.)*

#### Character

2. How do characters describe Helen?  
*(Helen is a worthy character to all but Bertram. To the countess, she is a companion as well as daughter/daughter-in-law. The countess knows Helen's heart so well that she interprets tears as proof that Helen loves Bertram. On hearing Helen's plan to cure the king, the countess offers the perfect set-up: "my leave and love, means and attendants, and my loving greetings to those of mine in court." As she stays behind in Rossillion, the countess prays for Helen and promises, "What I can help thee to thou shalt not miss."*  
*The king of France greets Helen as "fair one," but doubts that she can prove more effective against his fistula than his team of court physicians. He questions her confidence and boldness in assuring him that she can cure him in two days. Hesitant to trust a woman, he concludes, "Methinks in thee some blessed spirit doth speak his powerful sound within an organ weak." After his cure, he declares that he will alter her lowly state with appropriate gifts—"dower, honor and wealth from me."*

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

Others recognize Helen's quality. As she makes her selection of a husband, Lefew mutters against any man who would refuse her, "An they were sons of mine, I'd have them whipped, or I would send them to th' Turk to make eunuchs of." Even Bertram, upon bedding the supposed Diana, describes his experiences as satisfying "nicer needs." When characters assume that Helen has died on pilgrimage, the countess declares her as dear as a natural-born daughter. Lafew adds, "'twas a good lady," whom he compares to the marjoram in a salad. The king adds, "We lost a jewel of her." Lafew later adds that Bertram "lost a wife whose beauty did astonish the survey of richest eyes, whose words all ears took captive, whose dear perfection hearts that scorned to serve humbly called mistress.")

### Conflict

3. How does the king settle the issue of Helen's supposed murder?

(In the resolution in Act V, Scene iii, the king comes to Rossillion and investigates the matter of Helen's disappearance. Angry at Bertram for his mistreatment of the wife that the king gave him, the king plays judge as Bertram presents Maudlin with a ring. After Lafew recognizes it as Helen's, Bertram lies about receiving a gift tossed from a window by an amorous Florentine noblewoman. The king also recognizes the ring and has Bertram placed under guard.)

To Diana's accusation that Bertram was her seducer, the king grows worried that Helen has been kidnapped and killed. Because Bertram rejects Helen, Lafew withdraws Maudlin from the discussion of a future wife for Bertram. After Diana produces Bertram's ring, a family heirloom, the king has her arrested as an accomplice to the plot and condemns her to death within the hour. Only the appearance of Helen settles the matter of the rings and Bertram's bedding of his own wife rather than the maiden he courted in Florence.)

### Action

4. Describe the questioning of Parolles.

(In Act IV, Scene iii, when the lords cart in Parolles blindfolded, their dropped hints of torture and phrases in a made-up language convince him that he has fallen into the hands of an enemy general. In hopes of surviving capture, Parolles immediately divulges that the duke has five or six thousand troops, "very weak and unserviceable." He degrades them as scattered and poor quality. To questions about infantry strength, Parolles says that Spurio has 150, Sebastian 150, Corambus 150, Jaques 150, and Gultian, Cosmo, Lodowick, and Gratii 250 each. He totals the group at not over 15,000.)

In further questioning, Parolles denounces the Dumaine brothers as worthless soldiers and insults Bertram, whom he describes as "a foolish idle boy" and "ruttish." Terrified by the ominous voices, Parolles pleads, "Let me live, sir, in a dungeon, i' th' stocks, or anywhere, so I may live." The interrogation continues with descriptions of Captain Dumaine as thieving, raping, ravishing, lying, drunken, and dishonest. Of the captain's brother, Parolles compares the two Dumaines as "[crows] o' th' same nest."

After a soldier threatens to decapitate Parolles, he pleads for his life or else an easy death. The soldier

removes the blindfold and reveals the pranksters. When they leave, Parolles tosses off his disloyalty as a natural response to a plot. The men hastily depart for France, leaving Parolles to lick his wounds. He admits to himself that he is a braggart who "shall be found an ass." His self-esteem intact, he hastens after his tormenters.)

### Character Development

5. Describe Helen's sacrifice.

(Returned to Rossillion after her marriage to Bertram, Helen receives the mothering of the countess, who loves her daughter-in-law better than she loves her wayward son Bertram. The hurtful dismissal letter that he sends with Helen rings in her thoughts. She aches over his castigation that she is nothing to him. Rather than blame him for his callousness, Helen blames herself for chasing him out of France to the battlefield and for exposing his body to "the event of the none-sparing war.")

As the visions of "smoky muskets" and "violent speed of fire" inflame her imagination, Helen pleads with fate, "do not touch my lord." She claims credit for setting him in harm's way. Charging herself harshly, she confesses, "I am the caitiff that do hold him to 't . . . I am the cause his death was so effected." To return him home to Rossillion, she decides to abandon a heavenly home with the countess and leave rumor to "report my flight to console thine ear." That night, she steals away.)

### Structure

6. Explain how Shakespeare employs rhyme.

(Shakespeare employs blank verse for most of his play when nobles speak. When the steward carries on a foolish conversation with the countess, the playwright resorts to prose to express conversation devoid of lyricism. The most poetic of lines come at crucial moments in the action, for example, the last 14 lines of Act I, Scene i, which comprise a Shakespearean sonnet. Rhyming with strong masculine line ends, the sonnet expresses Helen's understanding of self-healing. The final two lines state her intent to cure the king and to win Bertram as her love.)

Less structured is Helen's soliloquy at the end of Act III, Scene ii, when she concludes a 31-line speech with an apostrophe to night and day and a couplet explaining her intent to "steal away." She repeats the use of the couplet finale at the end of Act IV, Scene iv, as she sets out for Marseilles with Diana and the widow Capilet. Introducing the title in her speech, Helen hopefully exults, "All's well that ends well. Still the fine's the crown./Whate'er the course, the end is the renown." At a high point for Diana before the epilogue, Shakespeare gives her three lines heavy with parallel structure in Act V, Scene iii, in which she rebuts Bertram's casual denial of any relationship with her. At play's end, Shakespeare evens out the lines with five rhymed couplets from the king and three more for the epilogue as models of restored balance among the characters.)

### Motivation

7. Explain why Shakespeare presents so unromantic a pairing as Helen's marriage to Bertram.

(The mating of unlikely pairs is not uncommon in Shakespeare's plays. Like the marriage of Kate and Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the alliance between the idealistic Helen and the immature Bertram presents a

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

view of wedlock that robs it of the "happily ever after" aura that prevailed in romantic comedy during the Renaissance. To Shakespeare, the tension created by human union was not rare. Rather, it was an unavoidable situation common to all couples.

Bertram, who is content with the beauty he bedded in Florence in the dark, must learn to love the real woman, the Helen whom he had already married in Paris. To the playgoer, the concluding apologies are few and frail. Nonetheless, they characterize Bertram as duly humbled and begging, "O, pardon!" Proved false by ring and letter, he vows that, if Helen can prove herself with child by him and still in possession of his heirloom ring, he will "love her dearly, ever, ever dearly." However, after all his brusqueness toward his wife and his shenanigans and flirtations while serving with the army, the two lines are meager proof that he has matured and undergone a sincere and lasting change of heart.)

### Interpretation

8. Explain Shakespeare's choice of title.

(Shakespeare complicates his puzzling play with a light-hearted title that rings false. Exacerbated by the cynicism of Parolles, who tosses aside his loyalty without grief or self-recrimination, the play's promise that all can be well in the end of a convoluted plot leaves the reader with doubts that the playwright truly means it. Critics point to the playwright's own unusual domestic situation—married to a woman eight years older than he whom he left behind in Stratford while he built a career in London as actor, playwright, and theater owner.

There is little idealism in Shakespeare's plots, which depict people at their basest and worst as well as their noblest and most entertaining. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, he attempts to balance admirable with base. The tender scenes between Helen and the countess present love and reassurance shared by the two women who love Bertram and want him to prosper. Countering uncompromising goodness, Shakespeare also depicts the cruel French soldiers reducing Parolles to his lowest elements, then abandoning him as if he were a momentary amusement, the product of between-battles ennui. The balance is precarious and loses momentum in the last scene, when the king makes a hasty arbitrary judgment on Bertram and reduces marriage to a mechanism set into motion by royal fiat.)

### Comparative Literature

9. How does *All's Well That Ends Well* compare to Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*?

(Duplicity is the soul of both plays. Just as Shakespeare sets up a spur-of-the-moment marriage based on coercion after Helen cures the king, Rostand has the famed warrior-poet *Cyrano de Bergerac* enter a phony courtship of his cousin Roxane to win her for Christian shortly before the two men leave for combat. The resulting marriages lack sincerity because they rush both parties into wedlock and violate the strength of bond that should develop slowly between husband and wife. In remorse for her haste and thoughtlessness, Helen commits herself to penance for forcing Bertram into battle far from home to avoid her. Similarly endangered, *Cyrano*, who is hopelessly in love with Roxane, devotes himself to battlefield heroics to send daily dispatches to her

through enemy lines. The difference between the two plays lies in their conclusions. Whereas Helen sheds a disguise and returns to Rossillion to perpetuate a union based on technicalities, *Cyrano* dies at the moment he reveals his sincere unrequited love to Roxane. Helen has a chance to gain Bertram's affection; Roxane loses both her husband and their devoted go-between, the man she fails to identify as the writer of Christian's passionate wartime love letters.)

### Language

10. How does Helen express her gentility and poise?

(Throughout the play, Shakespeare depicts Helen through words and actions as sensible and well brought-up. In her opening speech, she weeps for both the old count and her own father, Gerard de Narbon. Of Bertram's instruction that she care for the countess, Helen knows that such a life will be difficult if she must conceal her love for "a bright particular star," whom she wants to wed. To Parolles, she promises to be all things to Bertram but lover. She names her parallel roles as mother, mistress, friend, phoenix, captain, enemy, guide, goddess, sovereign, counselor, traitress, and dear.

Helen's behaviors bear grace and modesty. She ingratiate herself to the grieving countess by kneeling to confess her love for Bertram. Of the countess, Helen asks, "give pity to her whose state is such that cannot choose but lend and give where she is sure to lose." In Paris, where Helen makes the grand gesture of healing the king, she recalls how her father left "the dearest issue of his practice," a medicine she treasures. When the king recovers, Helen modestly murmurs, "Heaven hath through me restored the King to health."

The creation of Helen's character requires additional relationships with Diana and the widow Capilet. In persuading the widow to condone sexual trickery of Bertram, Helen sees the plot as sinless since it involves man and wife. When the ruse works, Helen expresses her gratitude by promising to provide Diana's dowry. A plain-spoken wife and soon-to-be mother, Helen looks Bertram in the face in the last moments of the play and asks without guile or trickery, "Will you be mine now you are doubly won?"

### HOW LANGUAGE WORKS

Shakespeare models clever composition by creating monologues from a variety of sentence types and rhetorical patterns. The resulting texture of language keeps the playgoer's mind alert to shifts in thought and subtle nuance. Note the styles of the king's commentary in the final scene:

1. We lost a jewel of her, and our esteem

Was made much poorer by it. (V, iii, 57-58)

(The king uses a balanced statement to express his sorrow in losing Helen, his beloved healer whom he believes dead.)

2. Let him not ask our pardon. (V, iii, 26)

(The king becomes imperious, stating his intentions in one sentence with a first person plural pronoun as he speaks for all France and not just himself.)

3. The main consents are had, and here we'll stay

To see our widower's second marriage day. (V, iii, 78-79)

(The king issues another command in first-person plural and in the form of balanced clauses as he prepares to



## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

*give Bertram in marriage to Maudlin.)*

- 'Twas mine, 'twas Helen's,  
Whoever gave it you. (V, iii, 121-122)  
*(As he investigates the matter of Helen's ring and how it came into Bertram's possession, the king returns to first person singular as he expresses personal outrage at his ward that Helen no longer has the ring.)*
- Come hither, count. Do you know these women?  
(V, iii, 187)  
*(When the inquiry continues, the king reduces his commentary to a judge's simple command and simple question devoid of his displeasure in Bertram's flimsy lies.)*
- Is't real that I see? (V, iii, 348)  
*(The king's emotions take charge of his language as he welcomes Helen back to the living.)*
- Thou kept'st a wife herself, thyself a maid. (V, iii, 375)  
*(The king returns to balanced statements as he characterizes Diana's contribution to the ruse that made Bertram a true husband to Helen without sacrificing Diana's virginity.)*

### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

#### Art, Costume Design, and Music

- Create a series of costumes to differentiate the roles of Diana/Helen, the countess/Diana's mother, Parolles/Lavatch, Lafew/the king of France, soldiers/pilgrims, and Bertram/French lords. Suggest period touches to characterize Helen as a healer and of Bertram as an adventurer.
- Sketch backdrops to transform a stage or decorate program notes. Consider palmers on their way to St. James's shrine, French and Italian soldiers gathering in Florence, family members mourning the dead count, Parolles in captivity, Bertram singing outside Diana's window, and Diana and the widow Capilet traveling with Helen.

#### Cinema

- Make a list of dramatic scenes from the play that would require intense use of lighting, costume, makeup, music, props, and stunts. Suggest ways of turning the play into a film.
- Describe movie and television versions of Shakespeare's plays that capture the sense of time, place, fashion, and historical events along with Elizabethan poetry and character studies, notably *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, *As You Like It*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. What does each warn about arranged marriage, unrequited love, mismatched couples, discontent, spousal abuse, and wedlock?

#### Drama and Speech

- Make a detailed differentiation between comedy and farce. Explain other elements of stage humor. Include a brief history of the *miles gloriosus*, a standard character in Roman comedy and the *commedia del arte*. Explain how the boastful soldier influences the comments and behaviors of Bertram. Compare Parolles to Sir John Falstaff, Shakespeare's most famous coward.
- Write a report on Shakespeare's method of enhancing drama. Include the use of different stage levels and special effects, such as cannon fire, ghostly apparitions, and thunder. Comment on his casting of young men to play the role of female characters. Explain the purpose of the

flag on top of the theater. Discuss how the producer would compensate for lack of huge casts of extras, curtains, sound systems, printed programs, and sophisticated lighting devices.

- Compose an extended definition of drama in which you explain the following aspects: character, setting, plot, theme, tone, mood, aside, catastrophe, soliloquy, monologue, repartee, climax, chorus or prologue, dilemma, conflict, literary foils, motivation, and denouement.
- Using lines from focal speeches, debate whether Helen or Bertram has the more substantial basis on which to build a lasting relationship. Discuss the value of a loving and supportive mother-in-law like the countess.

#### Education

Write a prescription for bringing up a polite Renaissance maiden like Helen. Explain how she has learned anatomy and medicine from living with a physician and observing how to examine the sick and to apply his tools and medicines. Suggest skills she might learn from the countess, including embroidery, flower drying and arranging, herbalism, cooking, music, letter writing, or poetry.

#### History and Social Studies

- Create a composite map of Shakespeare's plays and long poems and their settings. Note whether the places and events are real or imaginary. Locate real settings on a map along with the names of the plays. Place a star on Shakespeare's birthplace.
- List countries in the world where patriarchy governs arranged marriages. Explain the king's logic in giving his own ring as a nuptial pledge and Bertram's reason for parting with an heirloom ring to Diana. How does the recognition of the two rings serve Shakespeare's denouement and resolution?
- Explain with an historical time line the reason for Shakespeare's wry comments on Papists and Puritans. How did religious tension of the Elizabethan era influence the lives of actors, playwrights, stage producers, and audiences?
- Prepare a mural detailing the location and site of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, where pilgrims continue to visit to renew their faith.

#### Language Arts

- Write a diary entry describing a presentation of *All's Well That Ends Well* as seen from the point of view of a flute-player, groundling, actor, rival playwright, soldier of fortune, pilgrim, physician, royalty, or visitor from Florence. Stress the parts of the play that would impress a poorly educated but thoroughly experienced playgoer.
- Compose a scene in which the king sends Bertram again to war, leaving Helen behind to give birth at the countess's home at Rossillion. Account for the courage of both women during adversity. Compose a letter from Helen assuring her husband that all is well.
- Write an updated epilogue to the play. Comment through the words of Diana, the king, or Lafew on the settlement of wedlock on Bertram and his discovery that Helen is a beautiful, intelligent, and worthy wife.
- Compose a short message to Shakespeare from Ben Jonson, Anne Hathaway, John Fletcher, James I, Richard Burbage, Thomas Middleton, Queen Elizabeth I,

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

or Christopher Marlowe upon the success of this play.

5. Write a note to Queen Elizabeth I in which you invite her to the opening night of *All's Well That Ends Well*. Narrate the highlights of the plot. Emphasize the ironic conclusion. Why would she enjoy seeing a cynical depiction of marriage customs?
6. Choose a series of lines from the play to illustrate the playwright's skill with poetry and dialogue, such as "He must needs go that the devil drives" and "Cold wisdom waiting on superfluous folly." Post the phrases on the bulletin board and lead a discussion of their significance. If you have questions about such words which have changed or fallen out of common use since the English Renaissance, refer to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.
7. List and explain mythological, literary, biblical, and historical allusions in the play.
8. Compare the lyricism of *Romeo and Juliet* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the more straightforward text of *All's Well That Ends Well*. Propose reasons why Shakespeare was so generous with metaphors and imagery in some plays, but not in others.

### Law

1. How did the laws of Shakespeare's day protect widows like the countess and Diana's mother and fatherless children like Helen and Bertram? Why does Bertram require a guardian?
2. Differentiate between knave, caitiff, and villain. Decide whether Parolles could be arrested for divulging the strength of French forces and for slandering Captain Dumaine, Dumaine's brother, and Bertram. Do the nobles violate law by taking Parolles into custody, blindfolding him, and submitting him to questioning?

### Math and Economics

1. Use historical data to determine the height, width, and depth of the Globe Theater. Include figures on how many people could stand or sit to view a play. Contrast these figures to copies of the Globe, particularly the Elizabethan stage in the Folger Library, Washington, D. C.
2. Draw itineraries from the play, particularly from Paris to Florence, Florence to Marseilles, Marseilles to Rossillion, and Rossillion to Santiago Compostela, Spain. Estimate the length of the journeys Helen and Bertram make. Propose the safest routes for Helen, the widow, and Diana to take while the area is thronged with rowdy, lustful soldiers like Parolles and Bertram.
3. Compare the value of a cardecu and a crown. Estimate how much Helen is willing to risk to convince the widow and Diana to join her in tricking Bertram.
4. Locate examples of dowries from the Renaissance. Chart the value of cash, property, valuables, and titles.

### Psychology

1. Contrast the humor of the play with newspaper reports of absentee husbands. Explain how the marriage of Helen and Bertram violates modern wedding vows and concepts of commitment. Suggest alternate methods of settling Bertram's abandonment of Helen and relieving her of guilt that she forced him to go to war.
2. Using Bertram and Helen as models, explain how loss of a parent changes the behaviors and attitudes of dependent children. Discuss why Shakespeare makes both the

countess and Diana's mother independent widows.

3. Define torture as it applies to the binding and blindfolding of Parolles and threats to decapitate him. Explain how he is able to excuse his disloyalty and multiple slanders as the result of a plot to fool him.

### Science and Health

1. Explain the Elizabethan physician's role in society. Contrast the work of a court physician with that of a midwife, hospice attendant, herbalist, apothecary, alchemist, or barber. Summarize the sources of prejudice against such famous female healers as Hildegard of Bingen, Jacoba Felice, Sarah of St. Gilles, and Louyse Bourgeois.
2. Give an oral report on external and internal fistulas. How does this ailment threaten the life of the French king?
3. List, define, and illustrate references to nature. In what way is the comparison of Helen to marjoram a compliment?
4. Contrast the Elizabethan attitude toward scars with current thought. Why do soldiers in the Italian wars consider facial scars an "emblem of war"? Why would the presence of such a result of combat impress a shallow man like Parolles?"

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List in chronological order and describe significant events connected with the play.
2. Make a list of scenes from the play that express strong attitudes toward kingship, love, chastity, deception, courage, obedience, reputation, social status, treachery, forgiveness, widowhood, and wedlock. Indicate what you think is Shakespeare's personal philosophy on each subject.
3. Compose brief definitions of irony and comedy as they apply to *All's Well That Ends Well*. What changes in the story would turn it into a romance, history play, or tragedy?
4. Summarize scenes that depict conflict.

**ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL**

**VOCABULARY TEST**

Match the underlined words in each phrase at left with a synonym from the list at right. Place the letter of your response in the blank.

- |                                                  |                     |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| _____ 1. on his <u>sinister</u> cheek            | A. allow            |
| _____ 2. an <u>idle</u> lord                     | B. rind             |
| _____ 3. <u>suffer</u> her poor knight surprised | C. dizziness        |
| _____ 4. his <u>diurnal</u> ring                 | D. frivolous        |
| _____ 5. a <u>dropsied</u> honor                 | E. more delicate    |
| _____ 6. and <u>wants</u> nothing                | F. needs            |
| _____ 7. <u>commend</u> the paper                | G. reduce           |
| _____ 8. thou art too <u>fine</u>                | H. manage           |
| _____ 9. <u>nicer</u> needs                      | I. utters           |
| _____ 10. will not <u>bate</u> thee              | J. picky            |
| _____ 11. go not <u>about</u>                    | K. assistance       |
| _____ 12. do as we <u>may</u>                    | L. virgin           |
| _____ 13. to the very <u>paring</u>              | M. unwell           |
| _____ 14. it is not <u>politic</u>               | N. deliver          |
| _____ 15. blinking Cupid <u>gossips</u>          | O. get to the point |
| _____ 16. what is <u>infirm</u>                  | P. bloated          |
| _____ 17. learned and <u>authentic</u>           | Q. part             |
| _____ 18. <u>debile</u> minister                 | R. left             |
| _____ 19. into the <u>staggers</u>               | S. authorized       |
| _____ 20. on my <u>particular</u>                | T. daily            |
| _____ 21. if it end so <u>meet</u>               | U. advisable        |
| _____ 22. without your <u>remedy</u>             | V. weak             |
| _____ 23. to know her <u>estimation</u>          | W. appropriate      |
| _____ 24. the time is <u>fair</u>                | X. appropriately    |
| _____ 25. live and die a <u>maid</u>             | Y. worth            |

**ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL**

**COMPREHENSION TEST A**

**Part I: Identification (20 points)**

Identify the following characters.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. glad to acquire a daughter
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. neutral in war
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. a well-known healer
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. loser of a drum
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. donor of a potential bride
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. cautious about deceit
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. boastful of a conquest
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. pledged to a widower
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. object of flirtation
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. saint

**Part II: Short Answer (20 points)**

Answer the following questions about the characters:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. When does the assignation end?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. With whom does Florence go to war?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What ails the king?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Who believes that Helen would never part with her ring except in bed?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Who died six months before the play begins?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Who feels the need to ask forgiveness?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Whom does a lord grudgingly accept into service?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. How much does Helen pledge to Diana after the assignation?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What part of the play declares it a mere entertainment?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What is Bertram's relationship with the king?

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

### Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Parolles correctly identifies the Muscovite dialect.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The countess urges Bertram to come home from the war.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Helen pretends to have a physician's skill.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The king fears that Bertram's wife is dead.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Helen treats Diana and her mother to dinner in Florence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Before he gains release, Parolles slanders Bertram and the Dumaine brothers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Helen insists on a wedding the night that the king recovers his health.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Bertram realizes that he must please the king or be sent to the battlefield.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. When the soldiers march by, no one recognizes Bertram.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. After traveling day and night, Helen realizes that the king has left Marseilles.

### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Compare two characters who share character flaws.
- 2. List the good qualities of Helen as healer, friend, daughter-in-law, and wife.
- 3. Compare Diana's mother and the countess as role models.
- 4. Express the play's attitude toward loyalty.
- 5. Describe the bedding of Helen.

**ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL**

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)**

Select an answer from the list below to complete each of the following statements.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Helen offers
  - A. the king medicines that Gerard of Narbon compounded.
  - B. a purse of gold to the widow Capilet.
  - C. no reason for her sudden departure.
  - D. Parolles an opportunity to earn 3,000 crowns.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The countess is aware
  - A. that Helen needs a mother.
  - B. of Bertram's bravery in combat.
  - C. that Helen conceals her love for Bertram.
  - D. of the loss of nobility that widows face.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The king gives Bertram no opportunity to
  - A. avoid taking sides against Siena.
  - B. refuse Helen.
  - C. identify his ring.
  - D. propose Maudlin as a future bride.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Parolles acquires
  - A. Lafew's grudging acceptance.
  - B. details from his captors about troop strength.
  - C. the regard of the Dumaine brothers.
  - D. his drum after he removes the blindfold.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The king considers
  - A. the situation well ended.
  - B. Bertram a boy in need of a father and of battlefield training.
  - C. Florence worthy of his support.
  - D. marriage a fitting reward for a woman as witty and beautiful as Helen.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Under Diana's stipulations,
  - A. she will toss a ring wrapped in paper out the casement.
  - B. Bertram must leave by midnight.
  - C. Helen must bear Bertram's child without revealing its parentage.
  - D. she will not speak to Bertram.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The king regrets
  - A. that French nobles fight in Florence.
  - B. having to leave Marseilles without meeting Helen.
  - C. that Helen risks her life by traveling in disguise.
  - D. Gerard's death.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Helen blames herself for
  - A. falling in love with a soldier.
  - B. depriving the countess of her only child.
  - C. making Bertram risk his life.
  - D. deceiving Bertram in Diana's chamber.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Both Helen and Bertram
  - A. grieve for their fathers.
  - B. agree that they must have children for their marriage to succeed.
  - C. accept their rings as tokens of loyalty.
  - D. send letters to the countess explaining their long absence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Bertram
  - A. suffers regret after bedding Diana.
  - B. defends the Dumaine brothers from slander.
  - C. only pretends to obey the king.
  - D. rescues Parolles from his captors.

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

### Part II: Matching (20 points)

Match the following actions with places and names from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- |                    |                                          |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------|
| A. Paris           | F. Rossillion                            |
| B. Diana's chamber | G. Capilet house                         |
| C. convent         | H. pilgrimage                            |
| D. citadel         | I. Marseilles                            |
| E. Tuscany         | J. window at a noble's house in Florence |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Helen strikes a deal for a husband.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The king prepares to arrest Diana.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Parolles loses the regimental drum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Helen wears a disguise.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Helen passes a ring to Bertram.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The visit to the king comes too late.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A noble woman supposedly tossed a paper with her name on it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Parolles claims to have leaped thirty fathoms.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. A French count takes the enemy's greatest commander and kills the duke's brother.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Helen pays for dinner.

### Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

Fill in the following statements with names or details:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ conceals affection for Bertram because he is of \_\_\_\_\_ status.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is amazed that the king recovers from a \_\_\_\_\_ in two days.
3. \_\_\_\_\_, Bertram's companion, informs Helen that Bertram is leaving for \_\_\_\_\_ that night.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ considers \_\_\_\_\_ rash and undisciplined.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ warns Diana that \_\_\_\_\_ and Bertram are foul seducers.

### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain Helen's purpose in coming to Paris.
2. Compare the fool and Mariana as minor characters.
3. Contrast Bertram's abrupt departure with Helen's.
4. Describe the state of Rossillion at the beginning of the play.
5. Characterize Helen's relationships with other women.

**ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL**

**ANSWER KEY**

**VOCABULARY TEST**

- |      |       |       |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. R | 6. F  | 11. O | 16. M | 21. X |
| 2. D | 7. N  | 12. H | 17. S | 22. K |
| 3. A | 8. J  | 13. B | 18. V | 23. Y |
| 4. T | 9. E  | 14. U | 19. C | 24. W |
| 5. P | 10. G | 15. I | 20. Q | 25. L |

**COMPREHENSION TEST A**

**Part I: Identification (20 points)**

- |                     |                           |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. the countess     | 6. Diana's mother         |
| 2. king of France   | 7. Bertram                |
| 3. Gerard of Narbon | 8. Maudlin                |
| 4. Parolles         | 9. Diana                  |
| 5. Lafew            | 10. Saint Jaques le Grand |

**Part II: Short Answer (20 points)**

- |                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. 1:00 A. M.       | 6. Helen        |
| 2. Siena            | 7. Parolles     |
| 3. fistula          | 8. 3,000 crowns |
| 4. the king         | 9. epilogue     |
| 5. Gerard of Narbon | 10. ward        |

**Part III: True/False (20 points)**

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T  |
| 2. T | 7. F  |
| 3. F | 8. F  |
| 4. T | 9. F  |
| 5. T | 10. T |

**Part IV: Essay (40 points)**

Answers will vary.

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)**

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. D  |
| 2. C | 7. D  |
| 3. B | 8. C  |
| 4. A | 9. A  |
| 5. A | 10. C |

**Part II: Matching (20 points)**

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. A | 6. I  |
| 2. F | 7. J  |
| 3. E | 8. D  |
| 4. H | 9. E  |
| 5. B | 10. G |

**Part III: Fill-In (20 points)**

- Helen, higher
- Lefew, fistula
- Parolles, Tuscany
- the countess, Bertram
- Mariana, Parolles

**Part IV: Essay (40 points)**

Answers will vary.



**THE STRONGEST BOOKS YOU CAN BUY**

PERMA-BOUND BOOKS • 617 East Vandalia Road • Jacksonville, Illinois 62650

Toll Free 1-800-637-6581 • Fax 1-800-551-1169

E-mail: [books@perma-bound.com](mailto:books@perma-bound.com)

PERMA-BOUND CANADA • Box 517, Station A • Willowdale, Ontario M2N 5T1

Toll Free 1-800-461-1999 • Fax 1-888-250-3811

E-mail: [perma-bound.ca@sympatico.ca](mailto:perma-bound.ca@sympatico.ca)

VISIT OUR WEB SITE: <http://www.perma-bound.com>