

# THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

# LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

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## SYNOPSIS

**Act I, Scene 1:** Solinus, the Duke of Ephesus, arrests the aged merchant Egeon of Syracuse, Sicily, and threatens him with a law that bans Syracusians from local markets on pain of death. Egeon relates his family circumstances: after being separated from his wife, infant son, and an infant purchased to be the boy's servant in a shipwreck off Corinth 23 years earlier, one twin son and the boy's servant were all that remained to Egeon. Out of love for the missing son, the remaining twin takes his brother's name, Antipholus. At age 18, he and his servant, named Dromio of Syracuse, set out to search for the lost twin and the servant's twin. After five years passed, Egeon grew fearful for his remaining son, went in search of him in outer Greece and Asia, and arrived in the port of Ephesus on the eastern Mediterranean shore. The Duke takes pity on Egeon and allows him until the end of the day to pay the ransom of 1,000 marks necessary for Syracusians in Ephesus. Since Egeon is worth no more than 100 marks, he is likely to fail and suffer execution. A jailer leads him away.

**Act I, Scene 2:** The missing son, Antipholus of Syracuse, arrives and learns from a merchant that he must conceal his hometown or else go to jail. The merchant returns money he had been keeping for the Syracusian. Antipholus orders his servant, Dromio of Syracuse, to stay at the Centaur Inn and protect their baggage and money until his return for dinner. Antipholus invites the merchant to dine with him, but the man has a business engagement. The merchant promises to return at five o'clock and visit with Antipholus until bedtime. Antipholus decides to spend the time touring Ephesus.

Left alone, Antipholus narrates his five-year search for his mother and lost twin. Meanwhile, shortly after twelve, Dromio of Ephesus spies him, mistakes him for Antipholus of Ephesus, and conveys his mistress's command that Antipholus return to the Phoenix to dine with the mistress and her sister. When Antipholus of Syracuse questions the servant about the 1,000 marks he is guarding, Dromio of Ephesus replies that he knows nothing of the money. The master beats the man he assumes is his servant and reviles the city as a place overrun with sorcerers, witches, cheats, and grifters. Still concerned about the money, Antipholus of Syracuse sets out for the inn.

**Act II, Scene 1:** Meanwhile, at the Phoenix at two o'clock, Adriana and her sister Luciana await Antipholus of Ephesus. Adriana assumes that Luciana remains unmarried because she does not want to come under a man's power. Luciana is more concerned about sexual troubles and puts off marriage. Dromio of Ephesus returns home to complain that his master has beaten him and denied that he has a wife. Adriana sends Dromio to fetch her husband and threatens Dromio if he

refuses to obey. Dromio complains that he feels like a football. Luciana accuses Adriana of being jealous. Adriana complains that her husband promised her a gold chain and, fearing that she is not pretty enough, weeps over her troubled marriage.

**Act II, Scene 2:** When Antipholus of Syracuse encounters his servant a half hour after meeting Dromio of Ephesus, he accuses his servant of foolishly denying knowledge of the gold he was supposed to guard at the Centaur Inn. Dromio of Syracuse, who is ignorant of the master's meeting with Dromio of Ephesus, angers his master. Antipholus is beating and scolding him when Adriana approaches and accuses Antipholus of preferring another woman to his loyal wife. Antipholus of Syracuse, still confused, wonders why so many false accusations have fallen on him since his arrival in Ephesus only two hours before.

Luciana intervenes in Adriana's behalf and claims that Dromio was dispatched to escort him home to dinner. Both men from Syracuse are confused by her words. Adriana takes the arm of Antipholus of Syracuse, who agrees to play the part of husband to find out the cause of the mix-up. Dromio of Syracuse fears he is in fairy land. Adriana insists on leading Antipholus of Syracuse to dinner and posts Dromio as porter at the gate to keep out intruders.

**Act III, Scene 1:** Accompanied by his servant, Antipholus of Ephesus stays too long at the shop of Angelo, the goldsmith, who is making a carcanet (decorative collar) for Adriana to be presented the next day. Acting the part of congenial host, Antipholus invites Angelo and the merchant Balthasar to the Phoenix for dinner. Because Dromio of Syracuse bars their entrance and bandies words with them, Antipholus rages and demands entrance from Adriana and Luce, a servant girl who leans out an upstairs window.

Balthasar proposes that the men dine at the Tiger and that Antipholus return alone to sort out his problems at home. Antipholus storms out to the Porpentine, the house of a pretty wench. Angry at Adriana, he sends Angelo for the gold chain, which he intends to give the courtesan to spite his wife. Angelo promises to meet Antipholus at the Porpentine in an hour.

**Act III, Scene 2:** Luciana scolds the man she assumes is her brother-in-law for marrying Adriana for her money. Luciana urges him to treat his wife more kindly and to conceal his infidelities by making Adriana believe that he loves her. To Luciana's consternation, Antipholus of Syracuse begins wooing her; Dromio of Syracuse reports that he has fallen in love with Nell, a fat, grimy kitchen servant. Fearing sorcery, Antipholus dispatches Dromio to book passage so they can leave Ephesus. Angelo, being late, returns to the Phoenix instead of the Porpentine, hands Antipholus of Syracuse the gold chain, which he has just completed, and promises to return at dinner to receive payment.

**Act IV, Scene 1:** After Antipholus of Ephesus sends his ser-

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vant to buy rope to flog Adriana and her staff for locking him out, Angelo, accompanied by a merchant and officer, returns at five o'clock to collect for the gold chain so that he can pay the merchant for the raw materials. Antiphilus complains that he hasn't received the chain and refuses to pay. The merchant complains that he must hurry to depart by ship for Persia. Angelo pays the officer to arrest Antiphilus. Dromio of Syracuse returns from the harbor after booking passage to Epidamium. Antiphilus of Ephesus, angered by his message, promises to beat him and sends him to Adriana to fetch a bag of ducats from his desk.

**Act IV, Scene 2:** Adriana and Luciana debate Antiphilus's flirtation with Luciana. Even though Adriana thinks her husband unworthy, she is still jealous. Dromio of Syracuse interrupts to fetch the purse from the desk. Adriana dispatches him with the money and commands him to return with her husband.

**Act IV, Scene 3:** Antiphilus of Syracuse is puzzled that strangers greet him on the street. When Dromio of Syracuse presents him the bag of ducats to pay Adam the jailer, Antiphilus is more confused and demands word of a ship. Dromio reports that the *Expedition* is leaving that night and that the boat *Delay* will take him if he misses the ship's departure. The courtesan approaches and asks if Antiphilus has the chain he promised her. Dromio surmises that she is Satan's mother. She suggests that she join Antiphilus for a snack. When he orders her away, she demands the diamond ring she gave him at dinner or the gold chain he promised her. The two men withdraw, leaving the courtesan to ponder their insanity and the forty ducats he owes her for the ring.

**Act IV, Scene 4:** Antiphilus promises the jailer that he will not try to escape and explains that Adriana is in a wayward mood and will probably not send bail money by Dromio. When Dromio of Ephesus arrives with the rope, Antiphilus demands the 500 ducats from his desk. Dromio replies that he spent it for rope. When Adriana arrives, Dromio warns her of the rope. Antiphilus beats Dromio. The courtesan asks Adriana if her husband is insane. Adriana asks Doctor Pinch, the schoolmaster, to restore Antiphilus to sanity. Antiphilus complains of being shut out of his home; Adriana insists that he ate dinner with her. He accuses her of bribing Angelo to have him arrested. Adriana and Luciana vow that Adriana sent the bag of ducats to pay his bail. The argument grows so intense that Adriana demands that Antiphilus be bound and carried away.

Left with the officer, Adriana asks what crime her husband is charged with and learns that he owes Angelo 200 ducats for a chain. The courtesan claims that Antiphilus took her ring and was later seen wearing the chain. When Antiphilus of Syracuse and his servant approach, Luciana fears that the mad husband is loose and armed with a sword. Antiphilus of Syracuse believes she is a witch and longs to depart Ephesus before nightfall.

**Act V, Scene 1:** Angelo and the second merchant return, discussing their dismay that Antiphilus refuses to pay his debt. They spy Antiphilus of Syracuse wearing the chain and accuse him of lying about the transaction. Adriana orders the men to disarm him and bring him home. Antiphilus and his servant escape to a priory. The Abbess asks how long he has been ill; Adriana replies that he has been raging since that afternoon. The Abbess thinks that Adriana should have admonished him, but keeps Antiphilus safe in the sanctuary

of the priory and promises to treat his distemper.

Luciana urges Adriana to complain to the Duke about the Abbess's interference in their domestic turmoil. The Duke approaches with Egeon, whom he intends to behead behind the abbey if no friend posts the ransom of 1,000 marks. Adriana begs for the Duke's intervention. The Duke, who promised to support Antiphilus in token of his service in wartime, agrees to speak to the Abbess.

A messenger interrupts with a warning that Antiphilus has escaped Doctor Pinch. Adriana replies that Antiphilus is in the abbey. The messenger insists that Antiphilus is loose and seeking to maim Adriana. The Duke has his guards hoist their halberds in her defense. Antiphilus of Ephesus and his servant appear; Egeon thinks that he sees the other twin. Antiphilus of Ephesus complains to the Duke of Adriana's behavior at dinner. Antiphilus discloses the events of the afternoon up to the time of his arrest and his escape after chewing through his bonds. The Duke is confounded by conflicting reports.

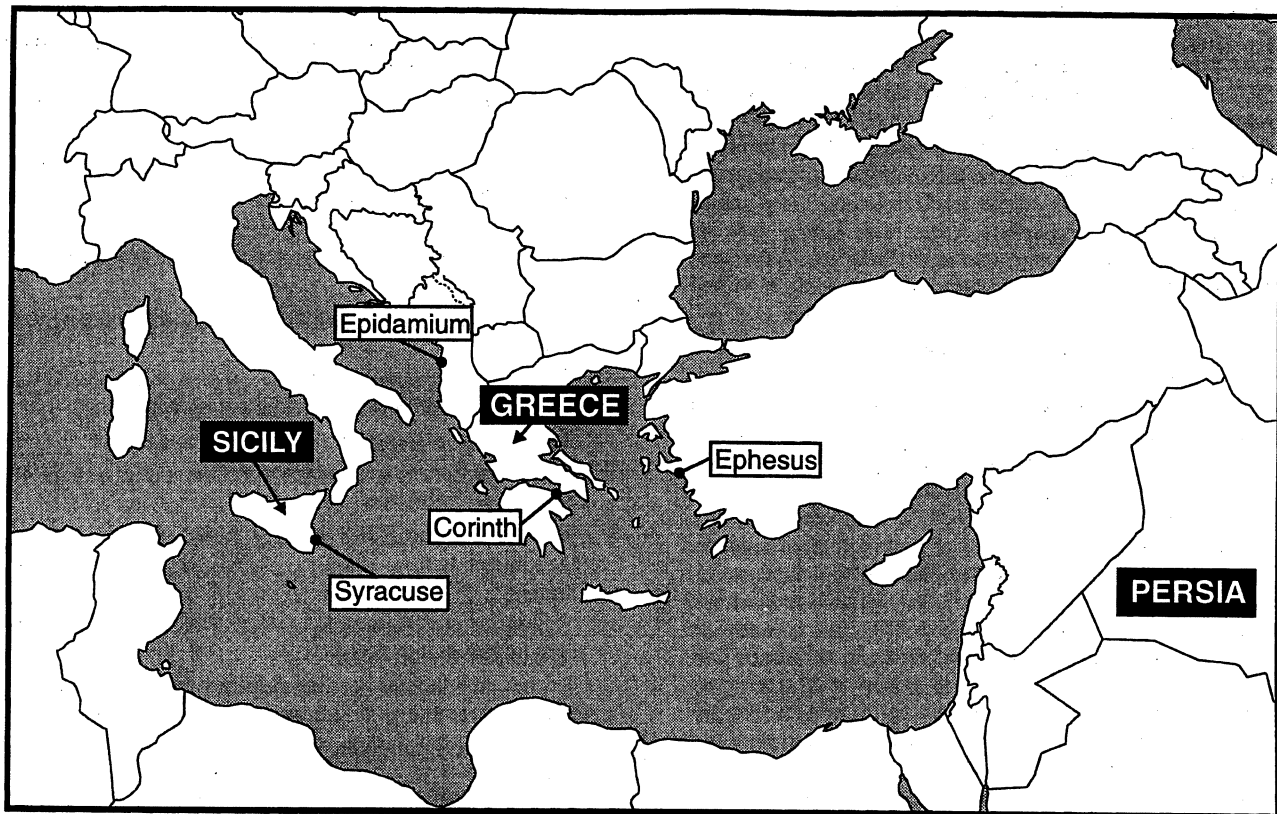
While the Duke sends for the Abbess, Egeon intercedes, but Antiphilus of Ephesus and his servant deny knowing Egeon. The old man claims that Antiphilus is his son. Antiphilus replies that he never saw his father and has never been to Syracuse. The Duke thinks that Egeon is rattled by senility. The Abbess produces Antiphilus and Dromio of Syracuse and looses the bonds. She asks Egeon to tell of his wife Emilia and claims that she is the same Emilia. The Duke begins piecing together the confused identities. Emilia explains how Corinthian fishermen stole her son and the boy's servant.

Antiphilus of Ephesus claims that the warrior Duke Menaphon brought him to town. The twins make amends with Adriana and Luciana. Antiphilus of Syracuse returns the chain and restores the bag of ducats to retire the debt. Antiphilus of Ephesus pays the ducats for Egeon's release. The courtesan reclaims her diamond ring. The Abbess invites them in to complete the reunion at a love feast.

### LIFE AND TIMES OF SHAKESPEARE

- 1558 Elizabeth I becomes queen of England.
- 1564 April 23 Shakespeare is born, the son of John and Mary Shakespeare.
- 1565 John Hawkins introduces tobacco and sweet potatoes to England.
- 1567 Queen Mary of Scotland deposed; she flees to England.
- 1570 Shakespeare attends a Latin grammar school. Japanese open Nagasaki to foreign traders.
- 1571 Titian paints "Christ Crowned With Thorns"
- 1572 Dutch begin War of Independence against Spain. September French Catholics massacre thousands of Protestants.
- 1576 London's first theatre is built. Decimal fractions introduced.
- 1577 John Shakespeare suffers failing finances. Henry of Navarre becomes leader of the French Protestants. Holinshed's *Chronicles* is published.
- 1577-80 Francis Drake sails around the world.
- 1580 Montaigne's *Essays* is published.
- 1582 Nov. 28 Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway of Shotttery.
- 1583 May Susanna Shakespeare is born.

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- 1584 Sir Walter Raleigh claims Virginia for England.
- 1586 **February** The twins, Judith and Hamnet, are born. El Greco paints "The Burial of Count Orgaz."
- 1587 Shakespeare moves to London. Mary, Queen of Scots, is executed.
- 1588 The Spanish Armada is defeated. Henry of Navarre becomes King Henry IV of France. Vatican library is opened.
- 1592 Shakespeare receives critical acclaim.
- 1593 Henry IV becomes a Catholic and enters Paris as king of France.
- 1594 **Dec 28** *Comedy of Errors* performed at Gray's Inn hall.
- 1596 Hamnet dies. Galileo invents the thermometer.
- 1597 Shakespeare builds New Place, a country estate.
- 1598 Edict of Nante grants French Protestants freedom of worship. George Chapman begins translating Homer's *Iliad*. The Globe Theatre is built.
- 1600 Ieyasu Tokugawa becomes shogun in Japan. Population of England and Ireland is estimated at 5.5 million.
- 1603 James VI of Scotland becomes King James I of England.
- 1604 Johann Kepler publishes "Optics." **Christmas** *Comedy of Errors* performed at the court of James I.
- 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. City of Quebec is founded. Galileo builds astronomical telescope.
- 1610 Henry IV of France is assassinated. Rubens paints "Raising of the Cross."
- 1611 Shakespeare retires to Stratford. Chapman finishes translation of the *Iliad*. Galileo discovers the moons of Jupiter.
- 1612 Shakespeare writes *Henry VIII*, his last play. Virginia colonists begin to raise tobacco.
- 1613 The Globe Theatre burns.
- 1614 Christianity banned in Japan.
- 1615 Galileo brought before the Inquisition.
- 1616 **late March** Shakespeare revises his will. **April 23** Shakespeare dies. Roman Catholic Church bans Galileo from scientific research. Manchus invade China, overthrowing Ming dynasty. Richelieu becomes French minister of foreign affairs and war.
- 1623 The First Folio is published.

### BIOGRAPHICAL 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 Shrottery, 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 knowl-

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edge 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 thirty-seven 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 was buried in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

Composed sometime between the late 1580s and 1594, *The Comedy of Errors*, presumably Shakespeare's earliest play and the first of eighteen comedies, demonstrates the purpose of comedy, which is to right wrongs and bring all to a happy conclusion. A boisterous, farcical resetting of Plautus's *Menaechmi* (ca. late third century B.C.), the play contains some of Shakespeare's stock list of mythological allusions and is the only title of his canon to observe the classical unities of time, place, and action. The text either derives from his reading of an English translation of Roman comedy or else may prove that the playwright knew more about Latin than his detractors admitted. *The Comedy of Errors* gives evidence of the playwright's promise, but bears no lengthy poetic passages or speeches of the quality found in his best works. The themes of marital fidelity, loyalty, and redemption ennoble the conclusion, which unites a shattered family and pairs four couples: Antipholus of Syracuse with Luciana, Dromio of Syracuse with the kitchen servant, Egeon with his long-lost wife Emilia, and Antipholus of Ephesus once more with his wife Adriana.

Drawn from the comic mix-ups of Plautus—probably further back to one of the New Comedies of Menander, written in the 4th century B.C. and now lost, *The Comedy of Errors* was also influenced by the tale of Apollonius of Tyre from John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1390). The plot emphasizes absurdity and stresses the absolute control of husbands over wives and masters over servants. In Shakespeare's absence, the play debuted before a rowdy audience—composed primarily of law students from the Inns of Court—for the revels at Gray's Inn hall on Innocents' Day, December 28, 1594. It was again performed at Christmas ten years later at Whitehall for the court of King James I. Similar plots that owe their seed to Shakespeare appeared in numerous eighteenth century stage adaptations and in the 1819 opera by Frederick Reynolds, a theatrical promoter who made no effort to preserve the original text or libretti. Reprised in 1855 by Samuel Phelps, manager of the Sadler's Wells Theatre, the play has remained popular for its comedy, sparkling repartee, and brevity. It was the kernel for a 1938 musical comedy, *The Boys from Syracuse*, by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, which popularized the songs "Fallin in Love with Love" and "This Can't Be Love," and for Trevor Nunn's 1976 film, *The Comedy of Errors*, starring Judi Dench as Adriana. Other renditions include a BBC-TV production starring the Who and a zany Lincoln Center performance featuring the juggling Brothers Karamazov.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To experience and read aloud from a Shakespearean

comedy

2. To identify and explain dramatic conventions, particularly soliloquy and happy resolution of a mix-up
3. To identify and define characters, action, theme, setting, and mood
4. To envision the staging of a witty, zany, complicated play
5. To assess the importance of patriarchy in Shakespeare's England
6. To isolate and explain examples of Elizabethan language in context
7. To set the play in its social, economic, and geographical context
8. To comprehend the power of love and redemption to overcome harsh laws and difficult circumstances
9. To evaluate constraints on the servant class
10. To discuss the roles of religion and law in the settlement of domestic problems

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To determine how Egeon's family was separated and reunited
2. To analyze the importance of the Duke to the establishment of peace and order
3. To explain the mix-up concerning payment to Angelo and the merchant who supplies the gold for the chain
4. To note the importance of coincidence in the rescue of Egeon
5. To discuss the importance of cash, jewelry, and possessions in the play
6. To analyze the Abbess's decision to grant Antipholus sanctuary in the priory
7. To enumerate poetic devices that play a major role in the dialogue, such as pun, personification, parallelism, allusion, simile, metaphor, caesura, alliteration, double entendre, rhymed couplet, quatrain, and prose
8. To contrast the two Dromios, Adriana, Emilia, and Egeon in terms of obedience
9. To list and explain circumstances that extenuate the mix-up between twin masters and twin servants
10. To name characters who display a belief in the supernatural

### LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

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

**blank verse** an unrhymed arrangement of short and long beats into a five-measured line of metrical feet (^ ' / ^ ' / ^ ' / ^ ' /). Shakespeare used blank verse to reflect the natural rhythms of English. In *The Comedy of Errors*, he blends prose, rhymed couplet, quatrain, and blank verse passages, for example, blank verse in Egeon's sad family history in Act I, Scene i, 31-95; rhymed couplets of iambic pentameter in Adriana's discussion of her husband with Luciana in Act II, Scene i, lines 10-43; quatrains of iambic pentameter in Luciana's speech at the beginning of Act III, Scene ii; and prose to serve Dromio of Syracuse in his complaints of witch-ess in Act 4, Scene iii, 52-9 and 73-77.

**comedy** any work that entertains and amuses and ends happily; also, a play that contains elements paralleling tragedy in that characters are overwhelmed by circumstance. Like

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Egeon and his family, protagonists of comedy undergo reversal of fortunes, often of their own making or worsened by stupidity or vulnerability. During the plot resolution, victims experience a change of heart or alteration of behavior and attain sympathy, recognize their weaknesses and faults, and achieve contentment, discipline, forgiveness, reward, or elevation. In William Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, Egeon is driven by sorrow to locate his one remaining son and enters the city of Ephesus inadvisedly. The decision earns him arrest and a penalty of beheading at the end of the day if he doesn't locate 1,000 marks to pay the ransom. Antipholus of Syracuse, his son, makes the same rash decision as his father, but manages to avoid arrest and to locate the missing family members. The resolution brings the entire family together, including the twin servants and Emilia, the one family member they had given up for lost.

**symbol** a concrete object that stands for a complex or abstract idea or relationship. In Act II, Scene 1 of *The Comedy of Errors*, Adriana acknowledges that Antipholus has promised her a chain, which should give proof of his love, but fails to reaffirm to Adriana that he is faithful and true. The use of a chain as the emblem of love signifies the binding, sometimes cankering tether of matrimony. Adriana, who is more than the static figure of wife and helpmeet, intends to guarantee her husband's love, which appears to waver. She proves her devotion to Antipholus by declaring to his pursuers that he should be disarmed and returned home for treatment of his insanity. Adriana's insistence to the Duke that Emilia should discharge Antipholus from the priory is evidence that Adriana is tied to her husband by devotion and loyalty as well as love.

### SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF SETTING

The milieu of *The Comedy of Errors* demonstrates a serious hardship in ancient Mediterranean lands—the separation of people over a far-flung colonial network. Opening on the coastal seaport of Ephesus near modern Izmir, Turkey, the story shows Duke Solinus arresting Egeon, who has traveled east from Syracuse, Sicily, a major city in Magna Graecia, the Greek empire, his searching for his son, lost 23 years earlier in a shipwreck off Corinth, a Greek stronghold on the southwestern end of the isthmus linking the Peloponnesus to the Greek mainland. The interconnected markets of the slave trade take Egeon to outer Greece and Asia, where he halts at Ephesus. The missing son, named Antipholus of Syracuse, arrives and begins a series of mix-ups, which range over homes, streets, the goldsmith's shop, inns, and the busy port, where a ship is set to leave for Persia. The servant books passage for his master to Epidamium, another Mediterranean port currently known as Durrës, Albania. To escape confusion, Antipholus and his servant escape to a priory, the stereotypical sanctuary of the beleaguered. In a fitting conclusion for a comedy of errors, the family reunites in a holy setting.

### THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in William Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* should include these aspects:

#### Themes

- slavery
- deception
- intrigue

- longing
- materialism
- paternal love
- cruelty
- flight

#### Motifs

- separated families
- marital discord
- mix-ups in identity
- harsh laws that force people to desperate measures
- parallel journeys
- a materialistic courtesan and her client
- safe refuge in an abbey

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences from the comedy. Explain the meaning of each. Act, scene, line, and page numbers are provided so that you can re-read the passage from which the item is taken.

1. In Syracuse was I born, and wed  
Unto a woman happy but for me,  
And by me, had not our hap been bad,  
With her I lived in joy. (I, i, 36-39)  
*(Egeon and Emilia live in Syracuse, an influential Mediterranean city founded by Corinthian colonists in 734 B.C. A pivotal location during Mideastern and European wars, the city suffered under tyranny, allied with Rome during the First Punic War against Carthage, and was captured in 211 B.C. by Rome and in A.D. 535 by the Byzantines. The city was also captured by Arabs in 878, by Normans in 1085, and by the Allies in 1943.)*
2. Our wealth increased  
By prosperous voyages I often made  
To Epidamium, till my factor's death  
And the great care of goods at random left  
Drew me from kind embracements of my spouse . . .  
(I, i, 39-43)  
*(Egeon, a merchant, regularly left Syracuse on business journeys to Epidamium. After his agent's death, Egeon wearies of the trips, which separate him from his wife Emilia. Epidamium or Epidamnium was a major port of call renamed Dyrrachium during the Roman Empire. Today, the port city is known as Durrës, Albania, a major trade center for grain, olives, tobacco, rubber, and oil. Plautus exploited the name of Epidamnium in Menaechmi by stressing the third syllable, which echoes damno, the Latin word meaning "I condemn.")*
3. The children thus disposed, my wife and I,  
Fixing our eyes on whom our care was fixed,  
Fastened ourselves at either end the mast  
And, floating straight, obedient to the stream,  
Was carried toward Corinth, as we thought. (I, i, 83-87)  
*(The voyage, which takes Egeon's family south from Epidamium down the west coast of Greece, ends in disaster. He and Emilia expect to be carried by currents through the Gulf of Corinth to the seaport of Corinth, which lies on the narrow strip of land that links the northern half of Greece to the Peloponnesus.)*
4. Five summers have I spent in farthest Greece,  
Roaming clean through the bounds of Asia,  
And, coasting homeward, came to Ephesus,  
Hopeless to find, yet loath to leave unsought

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Or that or any place that harbors men. (I, i, 132-136)  
*(Egeon's wanderings have taken him far from Sicily as he combs the far reaches of Greece and continues eastward to Turkey. Ephesus, a port city halfway down Turkey's west coast, was built by Ionian Greeks in the 11th century B.C. It is well known for its connections with Alexander the Great, who liberated it, and with the apostle Paul, who established a Christian church there in the 1st century A.D. and corresponded through epistles to the Ephesians.)*

5. Go bear it to the Centaur, where we host,  
And stay there, Dromio, till I come to thee. (I, ii, 9-10)  
*(A mythical creature with the body of a horse and the torso, arms, and head of a man, the centaur demonstrates the preliterate world's use of easily identified symbols to mark an inn or pub. The picture outside the door could be deciphered by illiterate clients. A frequent figure in myth, folklore, ancient pottery and mosaic, and scripture, the centaur is most frequently identified with Chiron, the wise tutor.)*
6. My charge was but to fetch you from the mart  
Home to your house, the Phoenix, sir, to dinner.  
(I, ii, 75-76)  
*(A second fantasy motif from ancient lore is the Phoenix, a fabulous and richly feathered bird that exists alone in nature until it is consumed by fire and reborn from its ashes. The symbol is a hopeful sign in the comedy in that it foretokens Egeon's rescue, the reunion of Egeon's family, and the settlement of Adriana's domestic squabbles and suspicions of adultery.)*
7. Am I so round with you as you with me,  
That like a football you do spurn me thus? (II, i, 87-88)  
*(Dromio of Ephesus is caught in the give and take of his master and mistress. A hapless victim in the battle for marital equality, Dromio envisions himself as an inanimate ball and pictures himself tossed back and forth, helplessly battered in a face-off that doesn't concern him personally. Trapped, he mutters, "You spurn me hence, and he will spurn me hither. If I last in this service, you must case me in leather.")*
8. Keep then fair league and truce with thy true bed,  
I live distained, thou undishonored. (II, ii, 156-157)  
*(When Adriana learns that her husband has disclaimed her to Dromio, she frets that she has been the faithful member of the couple and that Antipholus has turned false. Shakespeare explores the numerous meanings and implications of words in a series of puns, which are the dominant rhetorical figure of the play. The "fair league" means both covenant and measure of distance. The term "distained" sounds like "disdained," a slight to Adriana that wounds her sense of marital fairness.)*
9. This is a fairy land. O spite of spites!  
We talk with goblins, owls, and sprites. (II, ii, 200-201)  
*(A feature of fairy stories is the displacement or kidnapping of human characters, often newborn babies called changelings, who may be removed to fairyland and replaced by supernatural imitators. The image replicates the frequent misidentification of characters who bear the same facial features and voice as their twins. The main difference between fairy stories and the play is that the displacement of characters was caused by a shipwreck*

*rather than by supernatural agents.)*

10. But soft! My door is locked. Go, bid them let us in.  
(III, i, 40-41)

*(The use of a barrier is significant to a story that must keep apart two sets of twins on stage through repeated mix-ups until the confrontation, twin with twin, in the last scene. Both the door to the Phoenix and the priory keep apart brothers from brothers, who never guess that a look-alike may be causing all the confusion.)*

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

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

#### Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. What does the opening scene of Act I reveal about the enmity between Ephesus and Syracuse?  
*(On the opening lines of Act I, Scene i, Egeon accedes to arrest and to the Duke's insistence on applying Ephesus's laws fairly. The Duke claims that the "enmity and discord" between the rival cities of Ephesus and Syracuse is recent and that it was caused by the "rancorous outrage of [Syracuse's] duke to merchants." Syracuse's duke has held the intrusive merchants for ransom and had them executed if they failed to raise the appropriate number of guilders to buy their freedom. Both cities determined to "admit no traffic to our adverse towns" on pain of death to violators of the mutual law against trade with citizens of the enemy town. In addition to beheading, Ephesus's victims had to forfeit their goods if they could not raise a thousand marks "to quit the penalty.")*
2. Why did Egeon risk beheading?  
*(Egeon, who had already traveled across Greece and beyond to Asia, had come to Ephesus in search of his son Antipholus, who had left Syracuse five years before to find his long-lost mother and twin brother. Antipholus had been lost at sea when the family was sailing aboard a ship that was about to sink. Lost with the family was a servant boy, Dromio, whose twin accompanied Antipholus of Syracuse on the search. After five years, Egeon was too lonely and grief-stricken to tolerate his misery at home in Syracuse. He set out to find his family and traveled to port cities in Asia, and finally, made his way down the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea to Ephesus.)*
3. What objects heighten the humor of the play?  
*(The goings and comings of the two sets of twins turn on the value of several objects. Antiochus of Syracuse sends Dromio to guard his baggage and money at the Centaur Inn. Meanwhile, Antiochus of Ephesus is negotiating the purchase of a gold chain for his wife and must repay Angelo, the goldsmith, who in turn owes money to the gold merchant for the raw materials. Another sum of money that is crucial to the plot is the bag of 500 ducats in the desk at the Phoenix that Antiochus of Ephesus needs to bail himself out of jail. Contributing to the hubbub over Antiochus's arrest is the outcry of the courtesan, who gave him a diamond ring worth 200 ducats. When the wrong Dromio returns to Antiochus of Ephesus, he presents his master with a rope and claims*

## THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

to have given the master's money to the ropemaker. Antiochus of Ephesus is astounded that a servant could pay 500 ducats for a rope. Antiochus of Syracuse arrives on the scene wearing the gold chain and admitting that he willingly accepted it from Angelo. The confusion is at a peak when the two sets of twins see each other for the first time.)

4. How do the parents' actions lead to the separation of the two sets of twins?

(When the ship began to sink, Emilia took charge of one son and secured him to a mast with one of the servant boys. Egeon did the same with the other son and the other twin servant. The separation of the two parents at opposite ends of the foundering vessel foreshadows the separation of the family for 23 years: Emilia's twin and his servant in Ephesus and Egeon, Antipholus of Syracuse, and Dromio of Syracuse in Sicily. Adding to the events that fracture the family is Emilia's separation from the boys and her arrival at the priory.)

5. What is the setting for the comedy's resolution?

(After Antiochus of Syracuse appears wearing the missing gold chain, Angelo and the second merchant catch sight of him and give pursuit. Antiochus flees to the priory to elude them. Adriana insists that he is mad and orders the men to take away his sword and return him to the Phoenix. The Abbess's concern for a raving man leads her to intervene and promise to treat his illness, which is more significant to her than any squabble over payment for a necklace.

The closed doors of the priory keep the two sets of twins apart until the Duke brings Egeon to the place of execution. The entire cast assembles and the Abbess and Egeon supply the missing details to end the family's separation. Emilia, who has suffered exile in a distant city and the absence of her entire family, orders all to "go to a gossips' feast and go with me, after so long grief, such festivity." The religious nature of the priory wrests the play from a disagreement over commerce to the sanctity of family. Shakespeare swells the theme of reconciliation with the twin Dromios' decision to draw lots to determine which is the elder. Dromio of Ephesus concludes with a graceful suggestion: "We came into the world like brother and brother, and now let's go hand in hand, not one before another.")

### Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. How does Shakespeare take a pitiful family situation and turn it into comedy?

(Although Egeon's grief is heavy in Act I, the reunion of Egeon's family is imminent from the beginning of the play. The audience is immediately aware that the two pairs of twins are bumbling about Ephesus and that they will eventually learn the cause of their mutual confusions of identity. To heighten the comedy, Shakespeare adds the theme of jealousy after Antipholus of Ephesus fails to come home to dinner and promises the gold chain to a courtesan rather than to his wife Adriana. The repeated mix-ups of masters and servants downplay the crisis of Egeon, who is to be executed at the end of the day. By the time that the two sets of twins settle differences with the officer, Angelo, the gold merchant, Luciana, and Adriana, the rescue of Egeon and his reunion with Emilia is an added reward to the play's resolution, which brings

all characters into harmony at a feast in the priory.)

7. How does Shakespeare apply the concept of sanctuary to the denouement?

(The Comedy of Errors is filled with adversity. There is much anguish and drubbing of servants in the play, along with a potential beheading of an elderly merchant and the troubled domestic relationship between Adriana and her husband. After Antipholus of Syracuse seeks sanctuary in the priory, he activates a rule by which religion supercedes law. Emilia, a saintly woman who has lost her family and homeland and spent the past 23 years learning to care for the unfortunate, refuses to give in to worldly squabbles over repayment of debt. It is more important to her to treat the unfortunate who flees the worldly life and seek shelter on religious grounds. She declares to Adriana, "He took this place for sanctuary, and it shall privilege him from your hands till I have brought him to his wits again or lose my labor in assaying it." Emilia describes her method of treatment as "approved means . . . with wholesome syrups, drugs, and holy prayers, to make of him a formal man again.")

The concept of sanctuary is vital to the play's resolution. It not only rescues Antipholus of Syracuse from false accusation, but also releases Antipholus of Ephesus from false arrest for nonpayment of debt and Egeon from beheading for trespassing in Ephesus. Surpassing the Duke in importance, the Abbess represents the redemption of Christianity, which overrules temporal law, but makes no attempt to trammel the Duke's authority. With grace and justice, she invites the Duke into the priory and promises, "Keep us company, and we shall make full satisfaction.")

8. How does Shakespeare draw on commedia dell'arte for his humor?

(Elizabethan theater differs from commedia dell'arte in the use of a script for comedy. The Italian street theater developed the stereotypes of the sweet young heroine, wily servant, knowledgeable doctor, and boasting soldier, all roles that stayed within tight confines. Impromptu action among these characters required the use of lazzi or patterned comic exchanges to repeat ad-lib where appropriate in their spontaneous performances. Shakespeare applies the lively interchange and vigorous, Italian-style repartee in Act II, Scene i, where Adriana questions Dromio of Ephesus about her master. The servant plays both parts as he acts out the recent meeting with his master. By repetitions of "quoth he," Dromio of Ephesus builds to the master's rejection of Adriana. Because Dromio omits the final "quoth he" from the pattern, Luciana fills in with a "Quoth who?," which pushes Dromio to the end of his message. The comic irony in the scene is that Dromio is hard-pressed by his master's vagary, but his mistress sends him once more into the fray to fetch the master home. Dromio, wearied by it all, describes himself as a football and suggests, "you must case me in leather.")

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. How does Shakespeare enlarge on the theme of domination in marriage?

(The Comedy of Errors is the first of a series of plays in which Shakespeare considers the antipathies of dominating husbands and dominated wives. In the rising

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action, Adriana is concerned that her husband no longer loves or respects her, even in the matter of coming home on time to dinner. When she takes the arm of Antipholus of Syracuse and urges him into the Phoenix, her actions belie the sweet words that proclaim her a vine clinging to the stronger elm. Continuing the image, she denounces anything that draws her husband from home as "dross, usurping ivy, brier, or idle moss" and declares that "intrusion infect thy sap." The irony of the iron-tough wife is not lost on Antipholus. A bachelor, he describes Adriana's pushy ways as the actions of a rider on an ass. He mutters, "She rides me, and I long for grass," an image of escape from too confining a domestication. In due course, the pathetic female vine not only leads the look-alike husband to dinner, but also posts the look-alike servant at the door to keep out intruders. Antipholus, who is unused to such domination, speaks aside, "Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?" Adriana interrupts his reverie with a threat to break Dromio's head if he disobeys her.)

10. What evidence of future greatness does Shakespeare display in the text?

(Already adept at wordsmithy, Shakespeare presents a simple, straightforward comedy about mistaken identity with the dexterity of a skilled poet. In Act III, Scene i, he breaks from blank verse with a series of rhymed couplets. Dromio of Ephesus, who has reason to complain of ill treatment, testifies of a beating in the mart. The first sets of paired lines rhyme know/show, ink/think. The rhyming continues as Antipholus of Ephesus and Balthasar take up the style, which provokes an echo from within from Dromio of Syracuse, who grouses, "Mome, malt-horse, capon, coxcomb, idiot, patch! Either get thee from the door or sit down at the hatch." The combination of saucy words and witty rhyme with a servant's rebellion is worthy of laughter from the audience.

Blended into the scene are the play's aphorisms—"A table full of welcome makes scarce one dainty dish" and "Small cheer and great welcome makes a merry feast." The rhetoric grows more entwined as Dromio of Ephesus makes a pun on "patch," a synonym for "clown." The protracted rhymed repartee continues with the addition of Luce and Adriana. The humor of the twin Dromios' exchange of words reaches its height with the inner Dromio promising to open the door "when fowls have no feathers and fish have no fin." Antipholus of Ephesus ends the lingual sporting by calling for a crowbar, which spins off the previous bird imagery. Such skill with words recurs in the play, for example, in Act III, Scene ii, when Luciana introduces quatrains. The effect is like the composer's use of aria in opera, which develops into duet, trio, and so forth as more voices join the scene.)

### Questions 11-13 Creative Level

11. List and explain each act of violence that occurs before and during the play. Name victims and abusers. Explain the dangers of violence to a marriage or to a master/servant relationship. Discuss the death penalty and its use as a deterrent to Syracusan merchants conducting business in Ephesus.
12. Compare the love match in *The Comedy of Errors* with those in other Shakespeare plays, for example, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *As You Like It*. What is Shakespeare's vision of a happy marriage?

What do historians and critics say about his marriage to Anne Hathaway?

13. Discuss the causes of distress to Egeon, Antipholus of Syracuse, Adriana, Emilia, and Antipholus of Ephesus. Explain how the feast at the priory will reconcile and reunite all parties. How would a marriage between Antipholus of Syracuse and Luciana strengthen the reunion?

## ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

### Math and Economics

1. Create a coordinated map and time line to show the placement of members of Egeon's family over the past 23 years and at the time of their reunion.
2. Use historical data to determine the height, width, and depth of the original Globe Theater, including the upper acting area where Luce would view Dromio at the front gate of the Phoenix. Include figures on how many people could stand or sit to view a play. Contrast these figures with copies of the Globe, particularly the Elizabethan stage in the Folger Library, Washington, D. C., and the new Globe Theatre in London.
3. Explain the meaning of ell, league, and carat and the values of a guilder, ducat, mark, and angel. Comment on the amount of ransom demanded for Egeon's violation of Ephesian law as compared to the value of a gold collar and a diamond ring. How does the Duke determine that Egeon is worth no more than 100 marks?
4. Explain how the harbor of Ephesus dominates the story. Name and locate on a map other vital harbor cities in the Eastern Mediterranean. Determine which ones figure in Shakespeare's plays.

### Social Studies

1. Compose a list of Shakespeare's plays and long poems and their settings, as with *The Tempest* in Bermuda, *Othello* in Venice, *As You Like It* in Arden Forest, *Macbeth* in Scotland, and *Hamlet* in Denmark. Note whether the places are real or imaginary, particularly Syracuse, Ephesus, Persia, and Epidamium. Locate the settings of Plautus's *Menaechmi*.
2. Propose alternatives to the use of stocks as a punishment for minor infractions and for the death sentence upon Syracusan merchants who break the law by entering markets in Ephesus. Explain why Solinus should end the enmity that keeps two cities at odds and welcome outsiders to trade.
3. Present an illustrated lecture on the danger of pirates and kidnappers at sea. Use as a model the damage done to Egeon's family during an unforeseen shipwreck. Determine why the damage to the twin Dromios' family is ignored.
4. Compose an oral report on the treatment of slaves, indentured servants, and house staff members in Elizabethan England. Include Dromio's complaint that he feels like a football.
5. Make an illustrated scrapbook on military history during Shakespeare's time. Describe the period in which the English military used the mace, halberd, and morris-pike. Discuss how gunpowder altered the use of these weapons.

### Psychology

1. Discuss with a small group the psychological effect of



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patriarchy on an intelligent, loyal wife like Adriana. Suggest how the easing of patriarchal control might encourage women like Luciana to marry. Comment on the pun on *vestals* and on the symbolism of the husband's choice of a gold chain to be worn around the wife's neck.

- Using the play as a model, explain how real people can be victimized by false identification, harsh debtor's laws, cruel treatment for the insane, unscrupulous lovers and masters, and brigands at sea.
- Lead a group discussion of the yearning that twin Antipholus has for his long-lost brother. Discuss whether all siblings feel a tie with brothers and sisters or whether the link between twins is a unique example of closeness. Account for the fact that the two Dromios experience no yearning for a reunion.

### Religion

- Account for the honor and dignity of the role of abbess. Sketch the types of religious houses common to Catholicism. Add information about the priory and its value as a sanctuary to the ill, insane, destitute, or politically oppressed.
- Comment on the use of the ecclesiastical calendar as a payment schedule for debts. Why does the role of the church seem more pronounced in Shakespeare's day than in current times?
- Explain how the reference to Noah's flood degenerates into a ribald pun on *buttocks* and *bogs*.
- What images from religion and mythology does Shakespeare blend to form *tartar limbo*?

### Cinema

- Make a list of dramatic scenes that would adapt better to film or video than to stage, particularly the booking of passage on the *Expedition*, Luciana's private discussions with her sister, Emilia's kindness to Antipholus, and Antipholus's visit to the Porpentine.
- Describe movie and television versions of Shakespeare's plays that capture the sense of time, place, fashion, and historical events along with his poetry and character studies. Choose from these titles: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. What does each film warn about courtship, failed love, warring couples, and domestic discontent? Why does the image of the horned cuckold recur in Elizabethan drama?

### Science and Health

List, define, and illustrate references to nature and health, especially porpentine, choleric, bald pate, vine, elm, brier, chalky cliffs, salt rheum, wind and tide, balsamum, and lapwing. What is effect of aqua vitae or balsamum on health, personal hygiene, and digestion? Why would the items be listed among supplies for a sea journey?

### Language Arts

- Choose a series of lines from the play to illustrate the playwright's skill with wit, word play, aphorism, and punning, as with "they say every why hath a wherefore," "small cheer and great welcome makes a merry feast," "there is something in the wind," "why is Time such a niggard of hair," "the plainer dealer, the sooner lost," and

"the venom clamors of a jealous woman poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth." If you have questions about terms that have changed or retreated from common use since the English Renaissance, particularly mome, patch, capon, and coxcomb, refer to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

- List and explain mythological, literary, religious, linguistic, and historical allusions in the play. Refer to comments about Circe's cup, Sirens, centaur, phoenix, Pentecost, Noah's flood, Adam, the Prodigal, humours, mermaids, devil's dam, Satan, vestal, peacock, fairy land, sprites, owls, the ass's long ears, *respice finem*, and Perdie.

### Art and Music

- Use desktop publishing or other artistic forms to create a handbill that will catch the eye of prospective audiences. Choose an illustration that intrigues the illiterate reader to see the comedy and learn how it ends. Emphasize action and contrast in your drawing, for example by depicting Egeon's arrest, a woman and children on a sinking ship, Dromio guarding the door of the Phoenix, Antipholus biting through the ropes on his hands, the courtesan demanding return of her diamond ring, and the Abbess's role in settling the comic mix-ups.
- Select music to delineate the contrast between wooing, fighting, traveling, discussing family losses, conferring with the Duke and Abbess, escorting Egeon to his execution, booking passage on the *Expedition*, dining with a courtesan, and other somber, disturbing, intriguing, pleasurable, or vigorous activities and events.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

- Set up an act-by-act bulletin board display contrasting the social roles of the Abbess/Emilia, Adriana the wife, Luciana the unmarried sister-in-law, the courtesan, and Luce/Nell, the grimy kitchen servant. Explain how each fits into a male-dominated society.
- Write a report on a performance of Plautus's *Menaechmi*. Contrast physical presentation of comedy in Rome with that of Menander's stage in Greece and Shakespeare's Globe. List methods of presenting scenery and music in each setting.
- Write a diary entry describing a presentation of *The Comedy of Errors* as seen from the point of view of an orange-seller, royalty, law student, groundling, actor, rival comic playwright, or visitor from Ephesus or Syracuse. Stress the parts of the play that would impress a poorly educated but thoroughly experienced playgoer, especially domestic fights, arguments with servants, hiding in a priory, a family reunion, arrest of a debtor, and the restoration of order.
- Compose a scene in which the two Dromios compare their lives since parting during the shipwreck. Contrast the two Antipholuses as masters and the suffering of Egeon after his remaining son left Syracuse in search of his mother and lost twin. Comment on the dangers of commerce among such hostile cities as Ephesus and Syracuse.
- Write a paragraph in which you summarize Shakespeare's idea of the nature and purpose of comedy. Contrast his methods with those of modern animated cartoons,

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movies, videos, variety shows, puppetry, advertisements, and television sitcoms.

6. Compose a short congratulatory telegram to Shakespeare from Ben Jonson, James I, or Queen Elizabeth I upon the success of *The Comedy of Errors*. Suggest ways that Shakespeare can improve his use of humor on the Elizabethan stage, for example, with more romance and less violence.
7. Write an invitation to Queen Elizabeth I or a member of court to the royal box on opening night of *The Comedy of Errors*. Narrate the highlights of the plot, especially the sufferings of Egeon's family, the Duke's dignity and sympathy, and the hilarious consequences of two sets of twins passing unaware on the streets of Ephesus.
8. Compose an extended definition of drama in which you explain the following aspects: character, setting, plot, theme, tone, mood, aside, soliloquy, monologue, crisis, complication, climax, dilemma, literary foils, comic relief, motivation, slapstick, farce, satire, and denouement.
9. Read aloud Luciana's speech in II, i, 15-25. Contrast Shakespeare's vision of man's rule over woman with the standard marriage ceremony and with the biblical passages in Genesis 1: 26-28, Ruth 1:16-17, Psalm 8:4-8, and Ephesians 5:22-23. Explain why patience is a worthy character trait in Luciana and why she chooses to remain single.
10. Select minor characters to interview about the major figures in the comedy. For example, ask Luce what kind of employer Adriana is or question Angelo about business dealings with Antipholus of Ephesus. Extend the activity with questions to Adam the jailer, the captain of the *Expedition*, Dr. Pinch, the merchant who supplies Angelo with gold, and the messenger.

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List in chronological order and describe significant events connected with the play. Mention the purchase of twin boys, the merchant's need to depart for Persia, Dromio's post at the door of the Phoenix, the courtesan's demand that she get her ring back, Angelo's return to his shop for the chain, Emilia's concern for a man seeking sanctuary, the Duke's promise that Egeon may have a day to raise 1,000 guilders, Antipholus of Syracuse's search for his mother and brother, Dromio's return with the rope's end, Antipholus of Ephesus's dinner at the Tiger, the sailors' theft of the infant boys, and Egeon's arrest for breaking an Ephesian law.
2. Make a list of scenes from the play that express strong attitudes toward obedience, kinship, loss, grief, love, fidelity, deception, mercy, confusion, separation, treachery, and guilt. Support each theme with lines from the play.
3. Compose a brief definition of comedy as it applies to *The Comedy of Errors*. What changes in the story would turn it into a tragedy, fantasy, or history play? What additions would emphasize romance?
4. Summarize scenes that depict women's role in society, particularly Emilia's work at the priory, Adriana's discussions of marriage with Luciana, Dromio of Syracuse's descriptions of Luce, and Adriana's insistence that Antipholus of Syracuse eat dinner at the Phoenix.

## SHAKESPEARE'S OTHER WORKS

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

### RELATED READING

- Mary Chase's *Harvey*  
Nikolai Gogol's *The Inspector General*  
Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda*  
George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart's *You Can't Take It With You*  
Moliere's *The Physician in Spite of Himself*  
Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart's *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*  
Neil Simon's *The Last of the Red-Hot Lovers*  
Diane Stanley and Peter Vennema's *Bard of Avon*  
Brandon Thomas's *Charley's Aunt*  
Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*  
Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

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### Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about the play, Greek colonies, slavery, and the new Globe Theatre, consult these sources:

John Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas: Their Early Colonies and Trade*

R. Russ Holloway, *The Archeology of Ancient Sicily*

Robert S. Miola, ed., *The Comedy of Errors: Critical Essays*

J. R. Mulryne, *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt*

Wolfgang Riehle, *Shakespeare, Plautus, and the Humanist Tradition*

Also, consult these websites for additional background data on Syracuse, slavery in ancient times, the text of the play, and the Globe Theatre:

"The Ancient World of Greece and Rome,"

<http://www.valley.net/~MrDz/ancient.htm>.

"Dark Age Greece,"

<http://plato.acadiau.ca/courses/clas/provncal/1113/www/dark.htm>.

"The Globe Theatre,"

<http://home.earthlink.net/~feiffor/bard/content/globe.html>

"Search Shakespeare," [http://the-tech.mit.edu/](http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/search.html)

[Shakespeare/search.html](http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/search.html).

"The Temple of Athena at Syracuse in Sicily,"

<http://www.bowdoin.edu/dept/clas/arch102/magnagrecia/syracusa.duomo.html>.

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**VOCABULARY TEST**

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

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. dispersed those vapors

A. by chance

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. methinks they are

B. mother

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. haply I see

C. accusation

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. quoth I

D. clouds

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. avaunt, thou witch

E. but

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. dark and dankish vault

F. elder

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. an if

G. said

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. forswore it

H. cheerful

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. intricate impeach

I. denied

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. In a sportive humor

J. it seems

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. your maw

K. wet

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. gossips' feast

L. captured

\_\_\_\_\_ 13. for the signior

M. stomach

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. devil's dam

N. go away

\_\_\_\_\_ 15. have ta'en you

O. godparents'

\_\_\_\_\_ 16. break that merry sconce

P. crowbar

\_\_\_\_\_ 17. dry basting

Q. chain

\_\_\_\_\_ 18. there is a bark of Epidamnum

R. head

\_\_\_\_\_ 19. carcanet

S. ship

\_\_\_\_\_ 20. iron crow

T. beating

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### COMPREHENSION TEST A

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

Complete each of the following lines with a setting. Choose from the list below. You will have answers left over when you finish.

abbey	desk	Expedition	mast	shop
Centaur	Ephesus	gate	Persia	Syracusa
Corinth	Epidamium	harbor	Phoenix	Tiger
Delay	Epidaurus	hatch	Porpentine	

1. I did not see you since you sent me hence,  
Home to the \_\_\_\_\_ with the gold you gave me.
2. Merchant of \_\_\_\_\_, plead no more.  
I am not partial to infringe our laws.
3. Anon, I'm sure, the Duke himself in person  
Comes this way to the melancholy vale,  
The place of death and sorry execution  
Behind the ditches of the \_\_\_\_\_ here.
4. I am bound \_\_\_\_\_  
To \_\_\_\_\_ and want guilders for my voyage.
5. My charge was but to fetch you from the mart  
Home to your house, the \_\_\_\_\_, sir, to dinner.
6. Five summers have I spent in farthest Greece,  
Roaming clean through the bounds of Asia,  
And, coasting homeward, came to \_\_\_\_\_.
7. My wife is shrewish when I keep not hours.  
Say that I lingered with you at your \_\_\_\_\_  
To see the making of her carcanet.
8. Depart in patience,  
And let us to the \_\_\_\_\_ all to dinner,  
And about evening come yourself alone  
To know the reasons of this strange restraint.
9. We discoverèd  
Two ships from far, making amain to us,  
Of \_\_\_\_\_ that, of Epidaurus this.
10. Get you home  
And fetch the chain; by this, I know, 'tis made.  
Bring it, I pray you, to the \_\_\_\_\_.

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

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

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The Duke has known Emilia ever since she came to the priory 23 years before.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Emilia chooses to give sanctuary to a man she believes needs treatment for mental illness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The poor woman sold her twin sons to Egeon to pay her passage to Epidamium.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Antipholus of Syracuse does not conceal the diamond ring or the gold chain from his accusers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Dromio of Syracuse believes that his master must take the *Expedition* if he misses the departure of the *Delay*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The play ends with a reunion of Egeon's family and a feast at the priory.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The Duke believes that Egeon is not worth a tenth of the ransom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Antipholus of Ephesus gladly pays 200 guilders so Angelo can make a business trip to Persia.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Beheadings are performed in the ditches behind the priory.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Antipholus of Syracuse takes his brother's name.

**THE COMEDY OF ERRORS**

**Part III: Quotations (40 points)**

Name the speaker (a) and the person (b) addressed by each line below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) 1. If you did wed my sister for her wealth,  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) Then for her wealth's sake use her with more kindness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) 2. Sir, I must have that diamond from you.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) 3. These ducats pawn I for my father here.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) 4. That is the chain, sir, which you had of me.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) 5. By men of Epidamium he and I  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) And the twin Dromio all were taken up.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) 6. But perhaps, my son,  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) Thou sham'st to acknowledge me in misery.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) 7. I never saw you in my life till now.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) 8. He cries for you and vows, if he can take you,  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) To scorch your face and to disfigure you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) 9. O husband, God doth know you dined at home.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) 10. Beware the rope's end.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b)

**Part IV: Essay (20 points)**

In a paragraph, discuss the significance of two of the following passages.

- 1. My wife, more careful for the latter-born,  
Had fastened him unto a small spare mast,  
Such as seafaring men provide for storms.  
To him one of the other twins was bound,  
Whilst I had been like heedful of the other.
- 2. Ah, Luciana, did he tempt thee so?  
Might'st thou perceive austerely in his eye  
That he did plead in earnest, yea or no?  
Looked he or red or pale, or sad or merrily?  
What observation mad'st thou in this case  
Of his heart's meteors tilting in his face?
- 3. Hold, hurt him not, for God's sake. He is mad.

**THE COMEDY OF ERRORS**

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Identifying Quotations (20 points)**

Name the persons described in these lines:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. a woman happy but for me,  
And by me, had not our hap been bad.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. At eighteen years became inquisitive  
After his brother
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Doomed to die
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Of very reverent reputation, sir,  
Of credit infinite, highly beloved,  
Second to none that lives here in the city.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I [am] a vine,  
Whose weakness, married to thy stronger state,  
Makes me with thy strength to communicate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Sing, Siren, for thyself . . .  
Spread o'er the silver waves thy golden hair.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The kitchen wench, and all grease.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A wench of excellent discourse,  
Pretty and witty, wild and yet, too, gentle.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. How now? A mad man? Why, thou peevish sheep.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A reverend Syracusian merchant,  
Who put unluckily into this bay  
Against the laws and statutes of this town.

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

Supply a word or phrase in answer to these questions.

1. How much does Antipholus of Ephesus owe Angelo?
2. How much ransom will free Egeon from custody?
3. On what object does Emilia tie the infants?
4. Where was Balthasar originally invited?
5. Who warns Antipholus of Syracuse about the death penalty?
6. What form of execution awaits Egeon?
7. Who is skilled in the prayers and treatment of the insane?
8. Who waits two hours for Dromio to bring Antipholus of Ephesus to dinner?
9. Who pays a fee to the arresting officer?
10. Who is known for patience?

## THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

### Part III: Completion (30 points)

Supply a word or phrase to complete each of the following. Place your response in the blanks provided.

1. Along with them  
They brought one \_\_\_\_\_, a hungry, lean-faced villain.
2. Lo, here's the \_\_\_\_\_.  
I thought to have ta'en you at the Porpentine.
3. Methinks you are my glass, and not my \_\_\_\_\_.  
I see by you I am a sweet-faced youth.
4. And you, the calendars of their nativity,  
Go to a gossips' \_\_\_\_\_, and go with me.
5. This purse of \_\_\_\_\_ I received from you,  
And Dromio my man did bring them me.
6. I came from Corinth, my most gracious lord . . .  
Brought to this town by that most famous warrior  
Duke \_\_\_\_\_, your most renownèd uncle.
7. By men of Epidamium he and I  
And the twin Dromio all were taken up;  
But by and by rude fishermen of \_\_\_\_\_  
By force took Dromio and my son from them  
And me they left with those of Epidamium.
8. If I dream not, thou art \_\_\_\_\_.  
If thou art she, tell me, where is that son  
That floated with thee on the fatal raft?
9. And here the \_\_\_\_\_ shuts the gates on us  
And will not suffer us to fetch him out,  
Nor send him forth that we may bear him hence.
10. Justice, most sacred \_\_\_\_\_, against the Abbess.
11. He took this place for \_\_\_\_\_,  
And it shall privilege him from your hands  
Till I have brought him to his wits again.
12. Take his \_\_\_\_\_ away.  
Bind Dromio too, and bear them to my house!
13. God and the rope-maker bear me witness  
That I was sent for nothing but a \_\_\_\_\_.
14. The bark *Expedition* put forth tonight, and then were you hindered by the sergeant to tarry for the hoy  
\_\_\_\_\_.
15. Not that Adam that kept the Paradise, but that Adam that keeps the \_\_\_\_\_.

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain the roles of Luce, Luciana, Dr. Pinch, and the captain of the *Expedition*.
2. Discuss evidence that Adriana loves her husband.
3. Discuss the sequence of events that ends the confusion of twins.
4. Apply the definition of comedy to scenes from the play.



## THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

### ANSWER KEY

#### VOCABULARY TEST

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

#### COMPREHENSION TEST A

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

- |             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1. Centaur  | 6. Ephesus     |
| 2. Syracuse | 7. shop        |
| 3. abbey    | 8. Tiger       |
| 4. Persia   | 9. Corinth     |
| 5. Phoenix  | 10. Porpentine |

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

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

##### Part III: Quotations (40 points)

- (a) Luciana  
(b) Antipholus of Syracuse
- (a) courtesan  
(b) Antipholus of Ephesus
- (a) Antipholus of Ephesus  
(b) Egeon
- (a) Angelo  
(b) Antipholus of Syracuse
- (a) Emilia  
(b) Duke
- (a) Egeon  
(b) Antipholus of Ephesus
- (a) Antipholus of Ephesus  
(b) Egeon
- (a) servant  
(b) Adriana
- (a) Adriana  
(b) Antipholus of Ephesus
- (a) Dromio of Ephesus  
(b) Adriana

##### Part IV: Essay (20 points)

Answers will vary.

#### COMPREHENSION TEST B

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

- Emilia
- Antipholus of Syracuse
- Egeon
- Antipholus of Ephesus
- Adriana
- Luciana
- Luce/Nell
- courtesan
- Dromio of Syracuse
- Egeon

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

- 200 ducats
- 1,000 guilders
- mast
- to dinner at the Phoenix
- Ephesian merchant
- beheading
- Emilia
- Adriana
- Angelo
- Luciana

##### Part III: Completion (30 points)

- |             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. Pinch    | 9. Abbess     |
| 2. chain    | 10. Duke      |
| 3. brother  | 11. sanctuary |
| 4. feast    | 12. sword     |
| 5. ducats   | 13. rope      |
| 6. Menaphon | 14. Delay     |
| 7. Corinth  | 15. prison    |
| 8. Emilia   |               |

##### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

**THE COMEDY OF ERRORS**

**TEACHER'S NOTES**

**THE COMEDY OF ERRORS**

**TEACHER'S NOTES**

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