

William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale

6b-1) With close attention to language and action, discuss Shakespeare's presentation of Leontes at this point in the play.

HERMIONE                                If you would seek us,  
We are yours i' th' garden. Shall 's attend you there?

LEONTES  
To your own bents dispose you. You'll be found,  
Be you beneath the sky. *['Aside.']* I am angling now,                                225  
Though you perceive me not how I give line.  
Go to, go to!  
How she holds up the neb, the bill to him,  
And arms her with the boldness of a wife  
To her allowing husband!    230  
*['Exit Hermione, Polixenes, and Attendants.']*  
Gone already.  
Inch thick, knee-deep, o'er head and ears a forked  
one!—  
Go play, boy, play. Thy mother plays, and I  
Will hiss me to my grave. Contempt and clamor  
Will be my knell. Go play, boy, play.—There have  
been,  
Or I am much deceived, cuckolds ere now;  
And many a man there is, even at this present,    240  
Now while I speak this, holds his wife by th' arm,  
That little thinks she has been sluiced in 's absence,  
And his pond fished by his next neighbor, by  
Sir Smile, his neighbor. Nay, there's comfort in 't  
Whiles other men have gates and those gates    245  
opened,  
As mine, against their will. Should all despair  
That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind  
Would hang themselves. Physic for 't there's none.  
It is a bawdy planet, that will strike    250  
Where 'tis predominant; and 'tis powerful, think it,  
From east, west, north, and south. Be it concluded,  
No barricado for a belly. Know 't,  
It will let in and out the enemy  
With bag and baggage. Many thousand on 's    255  
Have the disease and feel 't not.—How now, boy?

MAMILLIUS  
I am like you, *['they']* say.

LEONTES    Why, that's some comfort.—  
What, Camillo there?

CAMILLO, *['coming forward']*                                Ay, my good lord.    260

LEONTES  
Go play, Mamillius. Thou 'rt an honest man.  
*['Mamillius exits.']*  
Camillo, this great sir will yet stay longer.

CAMILLO  
You had much ado to make his anchor hold.  
When you cast out, it still came home.

LEONTES    Didst note it?    265

CAMILLO  
 He would not stay at your petitions, made  
 His business more material.

LEONTES Didst perceive it?  
 [*Aside.*] They're here with me already, whisp'ring,  
 rounding: 270  
 "Sicilia is a so-forth." 'Tis far gone  
 When I shall gust it last.—How came 't, Camillo,  
 That he did stay?

CAMILLO At the good queen's entreaty.

LEONTES "At the queen's" be 't. "Good" should be pertinent, 275  
 But so it is, it is not. Was this taken  
 By any understanding pate but thine?  
 For thy conceit is soaking, will draw in  
 More than the common blocks. Not noted, is 't,  
 But of the finer natures, by some severals 280  
 Of headpiece extraordinary? Lower messes  
 Perchance are to this business purblind? Say.

CAMILLO  
 Business, my lord? I think most understand  
 Bohemia stays here longer.

LEONTES Ha? 285

CAMILLO Stays here longer.

LEONTES Ay, but why?

CAMILLO  
 To satisfy your Highness and the entreaties  
 Of our most gracious mistress.

LEONTES Satisfy? 290  
 Th' entreaties of your mistress? Satisfy?  
 Let that suffice. I have trusted thee, Camillo,  
 With all the nearest things to my heart, as well  
 My chamber-counsels, wherein, priestlike, thou  
 Hast cleansed my bosom; I from thee departed 295  
 Thy penitent reformed. But we have been

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6 b - 2) With close attention to language and action, discuss Shakespeare's presentation of Leontes at this point in the play.

LEONTES, *['to the Ladies']*  
 Bear the boy hence. He shall not come about her.  
 Away with him, and let her sport herself 75

With that she's big with, (*['to Hermione']*) for 'tis  
 Polixenes  
 Has made thee swell thus.  
*['A Lady exits with Mamillius.']*

HERMIONE But I'd say he had not,  
 And I'll be sworn you would believe my saying, 80  
 Howe'er you lean to th' nayward.

LEONTES You, my lords,  
 Look on her, mark her well. Be but about  
 To say "She is a goodly lady," and  
 The justice of your hearts will thereto add 85  
 "'Tis pity she's not honest, honorable."  
 Praise her but for this her without-door form,  
 Which on my faith deserves high speech, and  
 straight  
 The shrug, the "hum," or "ha," these petty brands 90  
 That calumny doth use—O, I am out,  
 That mercy does, for calumny will sear  
 Virtue itself—these shrugs, these "hum"s and "ha"s,  
 When you have said she's goodly, come between  
 Ere you can say she's honest. But be 't known, 95  
 From him that has most cause to grieve it should be,  
 She's an adult'ress.

HERMIONE Should a villain say so,  
 The most replenished villain in the world,  
 He were as much more villain. You, my lord, 100  
 Do but mistake.

LEONTES You have mistook, my lady,  
 Polixenes for Leontes. O thou thing,  
 Which I'll not call a creature of thy place  
 Lest barbarism, making me the precedent, 105  
 Should a like language use to all degrees,  
 And mannerly distinguishment leave out  
 Betwixt the prince and beggar.—I have said  
 She's an adult'ress; I have said with whom.  
 More, she's a traitor, and Camillo is 110  
 A federary with her, and one that knows  
 What she should shame to know herself  
 But with her most vile principal: that she's  
 A bed-swerger, even as bad as those  
 That vulgars give bold'st titles; ay, and privy 115  
 To this their late escape.

HERMIONE No, by my life,  
 Privy to none of this. How will this grieve you,  
 When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that  
 You thus have published me! Gentle my lord, 120  
 You scarce can right me throughly then to say  
 You did mistake.

LEONTES                    No. If I mistake  
 In those foundations which I build upon,  
 The center is not big enough to bear                    125  
 A schoolboy's top.—Away with her to prison.  
 He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty  
 But that he speaks.

HERMIONE                    There's some ill planet reigns.  
 I must be patient till the heavens look                    130  
 With an aspect more favorable. Good my lords,  
 I am not prone to weeping, as our sex  
 Commonly are, the want of which vain dew  
 Perchance shall dry your pities. But I have  
 That honorable grief lodged here which burns                    135  
 Worse than tears drown. Beseech you all, my lords,  
 With thoughts so qualified as your charities  
 Shall best instruct you, measure me; and so  
 The King's will be performed.

LEONTES                    Shall I be heard?                    140

HERMIONE  
 Who is 't that goes with me? Beseech your Highness  
 My women may be with me, for you see  
 My plight requires it.—Do not weep, good fools;  
 There is no cause. When you shall know your  
     mistress                    145  
 Has deserved prison, then abound in tears  
 As I come out. This action I now go on

Is for my better grace.—Adieu, my lord.  
 I never wished to see you sorry; now  
 I trust I shall.—My women, come; you have leave.                    150

LEONTES    Go, do our bidding. Hence!  
     *[Hermione exits, under guard, with her Ladies.]*

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LORD  
 Beseech your Highness, call the Queen again.

ANTIGONUS  
 Be certain what you do, sir, lest your justice  
 Prove violence, in the which three great ones suffer:  
 Yourself, your queen, your son. 155

LORD For her, my lord,  
 I dare my life lay down—and will do 't, sir,  
 Please you t' accept it—that the Queen is spotless  
 I' th' eyes of heaven, and to you—I mean  
 In this which you accuse her. 160

ANTIGONUS If it prove  
 She's otherwise, I'll keep my stables where  
 I lodge my wife. I'll go in couples with her;  
 Than when I feel and see her, no farther trust her.  
 For every inch of woman in the world, 165  
 Ay, every dram of woman's flesh, is false,  
 If she be.

LEONTES Hold your peaces.

LORD Good my lord—

ANTIGONUS  
 It is for you we speak, not for ourselves. 170  
 You are abused, and by some putter-on  
 That will be damned for 't. Would I knew the  
 villain!

(Act 2, scene 1)