

How does
shakespeare present
relationship between
men and women and
how might a m...

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

How does Shakespeare present relationship between Men and Women and how might a modern day audience respond? During the time of Shakespeare women lived in a male dominated society. Women In this period had virtually no legal power and lost all right to own all personal property when they married. Men were expected to be the heads of the households. Once a boy turned eight he no longer was required to obey his mother. The ideal woman was believed to be a virgin and a faithful wife.

Female honour and social respectability were tied so closely to sexuality that death was often presented as preferable to the loss of female chastity. The relationships between Men and Women In this play do reflect the status between them at the time. Hermione would seem to fit in the idyllic woman's criteria, and also seem to be an exception to the sexist views of the Jacobean time. Although Leontes hysterical paranoia would mean that he believes otherwise.

Hermione begins with good standing in court, she is highly respected by Polixenes and this is shown by how he refers to her, " fair queen/my most sacred lady". She is able to talk to men and not been seen as a second class citizen or a suborinate as most women were during the Jacobean period. The loyalty her people have for her is genuine not just a duty because she is the Queen. Also as well as her people Hermione is highly revered by King Leontes as he has trusted in her by giving her the duty to try and make Polixenes stay a little longer.

However Leontes dramatic change of attitude towards her is shocking to any audience. His intense jealousy and derogatory language leads a modern <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-shakespeare-present-relationship-between-men-and-women-and-how-might-a-modern-day-audience-respond-assignment/>

audience to believe he is acting completely irrational and disrespectful to his innocent wife. From calling her " my dearest" to questioning if Mamillius is really his son " Art thou my boy? " Leontes also seems to change his attitudes towards women completely " Women say so, that will say anything" An audience of the time would have see this as an imbalance of the mind which can be reversed.

Where as a modern day audience would be angered by his opposition to there rational mind, they would see it as an abuse of his power. However Jacobeans would think differently as during that period there was something not to trust about women, they were expected to obey men and were used for political success. For example, when Leontes asks Hermione to try and persuade Polixenes to stay longer. Leontes later regrets what he asked of Hermione. His speech patterns are fragmented indicating his jealousy as it almost seems as if he's talking to himself.

Leontes jealousy is shown through his crude language it almost seem he has lost all respect for his wife when begins to insult her " she has been sluiced in's absence". Leontes language is in complete contrast to others when talking about Hermione. As a modern audience has far more equal views they are enlightened in a situation like this, so although a Jacobean audience may be able to relate with this play a modern audience would still be interested in watching the play as they would be intrigued in how different the status of women was and how lunacy it was that Leontes behaviour would just have be accepted because of his royal status.

In Act 1 Scene 2 we see that Leontes plan to have Camillo kill Polixenes establishes not only the extent of Leontes madness, that he now wants his best friend to be killed but Camillo's defiance against King Leontes " I do't not" proves how pure Hermione is and how many people loved her. Leontes and Hermione's relationship is lead into turmoil due to the height and lunacy of Leontes' paranoia. During the court case Hermione remains calm and maintains dignified despite the crude things Leontes calls her " she's A bed-swerver".

A modern day audience would feel sympathetic towards Hermione during the trial because there seems to be no justice throughout it as he publicly humiliates his wife this would annoy and anger a modern audience.

Hermione accepts the charges" I must be patient", Why? She is practical and in contrast to her husband Leontes. Hermione is reasonable and rational; she is proud of her self and confident that she has done no wrong. She trusts in her husband to find the truth, where as Leontes completely irrational jealously shows he has no trust.

This reflect the imbalanced relationship they have although a modern audience would want Hermione to fight for her rights against this hysterical man, we admire her for her dignity. Although Hermione accepts the charges the lords of the courts show that Hermione is true and loyal and they want " the good truth to be known". In contrast to the relationship of Hermione and Leontes rests the relationship of Paulina and Antigonus. Unlike Hermione, Paulina is a strong minded and dominant woman and does not let her husband rule her like Hermione does " He shall not rule me".

<https://assignbuster.com/how-does-shakespeare-present-relationship-between-men-and-women-and-how-might-a-modern-day-audience-respond-assignment/>

Paulina and Antigonus seem to contradict the conventional rules of marriage because at the time of the play it was very unusual for a woman to be in control of the marriage. Although in today's modern society these would be seen as a common normal thing. Therefore a Modern audience would relate more with Paulina and Antigonus and would feel more comfortable watching them. However Leontes expects Antigonus to rule Paulina and control her which reflect the expectations of a Jacobean marriage. A modern audience would be shocked by how forceful Leontes is. "Force her hence". The contrast in the two marriages reflects the contrast between the two men and the two women, and because Paulina is the dominant one just like Leontes she is able to confront and shout at him. As well standing up to a man Paulina defies all behaviour of the time because Leontes is more than just a man he is a king. As Leontes and Paulina have balanced powers so he respects her, this would be far more recognisable to a modern day audience as it is more realistic within there lifestyle.

By act 2 scene 2 there is clearly a growing divide between the Men as Antigonus and Camillo have already stood against Leontes leading there friendships into turmoil. On the other hand there is union of women as all the women have stood united for innocent Hermione. This shows that something good can come out of something bad that the women stand united and the men stand against each other for what is right. Also another example of this is when Perdita is born in prison she is the only good thing come out of all this she represents innocence and a new beginning.

The structure of a Winter's Tale " is considered a tragicomedy because of its two part structure??? the first three acts contain elements of tragedy, while the pastoral fourth and fifth acts contain elements of comedy - John P. Cutts (1968) The 16 year gap of " time", now in bohemia; allows new relationships to develop such as Florizel and Perdita who represent the youth. There now seems to be a divide between the older generation, Leontes and Hermione and the younger generation, Florizel and Perdita. The youth use loving and poetic language " When you speak, sweet, I'd have you do it ever".

Which represents the purity of there relationship and the respect Florizel has for Perdita. Where as in contrast to this relationship is Hermione's and Leontes, as Leontes has no respect for Hermione now and where as the youths relationship is young and fresh the older generations relationship is headed into turmoil due to the dominance of Leontes which was typical of there time. As in the older generation one person has to have control such as Paulina and Leontes. Paulina's and Antigonus' relationship seems far more realistic and normal for a middle age couple.

However a modern audience would admire Florizel's and Perdita's relationship because it is fresh, loving and balanced. The fact Florizel is willing to give up his throne for Perdita reflects his nobility, " from my succession wipe me, father, I Am heir to my affection". Florizel believes whatever will be will be, he doesn't care what happens as long as he is with Perdita " Ourselves to the slaves of chance, and flies Of every wind that blows. " A modern audience would appreciate this love and selflessness.

However King Polixenes does not approve of his son marrying a shepherdess and stands in the way of true love with his older generation views. Camillo advises Florizel to “ make for Sicilia” as he sees “ Leontes opening his free arms and weeping His welcomes forth; asks thee, son forgiveness As’twere I’th’father’s person;” Therefore Florizel and Perdita run away to Sicilia this is significant because this is the land that is left in turmoil. However leontes has changed into the relationship breaker to the relationship builder by creating harmony in allowing Perdita and Florizel to be together.

The loving relationship of Florizel and Perdita restores the balance and harmony in the land that was led into turmoil. The relationship between Leontes and Paulina has also changed Leontes praises “ good Paulina” and trusts in her “ Thou speak’st truth”. Now a profound relationship builder Leontes has realised the error of his ways “ I am ashamed. Does the stone rebuke me for being more stone than it? O royal piece! ” All good is restored when Leontes touches Hermione’s hand and realises she is alive “ O, she’s warm If this be magic”. The restoration of Sicilia is now complete, finally sealed with the marriage of Camillo and Paulina.

In conclusion, Shakespeare uses the relationships between men and women to create the conflict and drama within the play. As well as relationships heading into turmoil, they were also restored and reconciled by the end of the play in the place where they first broke down. The structure of this play begins with happiness then gradually moves to despair due to Hermione’s imprisonment and Mallmillus’s death. Then the gap of time leads to

Bohemia, where the relationship of Perdita and Florizel was founded, and it was this relationship that brought us back to Sicilia and restored happiness.

During the time of Shakespeare women lived in a male dominated society. Women In this period had virtually no legal power and lost all right to own all personal property when they married. Men were expected to be the heads of the households. Once a boy turned eight he no longer was required to obey his mother. The ideal woman was believed to be a virgin and a faithful wife. Female honour and social respectability were tied so closely to sexuality that death was often presented as preferable to the loss of female chastity. The relationships between Men and Women In this play do reflect the status between them at the time.