

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL  
BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE  
DIRECTED BY SCOTT WENTWORTH

### GRADE RECOMMENDATION

Grades 7 and up.

### CONTENT ADVISORY

Explores mature themes and contains some sexual innuendo.

### STUDENT MATINÉE DATES

May 15, 19, 21, 25; June 16; September 15, 29; October 2, 7, 13.

### FUN FACT!

This is one of Shakespeare's so-called "problem" plays. It isn't really a comedy, nor is it a tragedy but rather it is closer to satire or black comedy with an ambiguous ending.

### SYNOPSIS

Helena, orphan daughter of a famous physician, has been brought up in the house of the Countess of Rossillion. She falls in love with Bertram, the son of the Countess.

At the French court, on his way to war, Bertram finds the King of France dangerously ill of a supposedly incurable disease. Helena, hearing of his illness, comes to court and offers to cure him with one of her father's remedies on condition that, when cured, he will give her in marriage to the man of her choice. The King accepts her conditions; she cures him and chooses Bertram as her husband.

As the King's ward, Bertram must obey, but he accepts grudgingly. Immediately after the marriage, he and his boastful follower Parolles set off for Italy to enlist in the service of the Duke of Florence. Helena receives a letter with a cruel message: "When thou canst get the ring upon my finger which never shall come off, and show me a child begotten of thy body that I am father to, then call me husband."

Withdrawing secretly from the Countess's house and coming to Florence disguised as a pilgrim, Helena discovers Bertram engaged in dalliance with Diana, the daughter of her hostess. She arranges to replace Diana in bed on Bertram's next visit. Taking a ring from him, she gives in exchange a ring given her by the King of France. When the war is over, Bertram, hearing that Helena is dead, returns to France, still wearing the ring. The King sees it and, as Bertram cannot explain how he came to have it, accuses him of having killed Helena. Helena arrives and confronts Bertram with another ring, given her by him in Florence. Pregnant by Bertram, she asks that he accept her as his wife now that the conditions of his letter have been met, and he agrees to do so.



### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

#### GLOBAL COMPETENCIES:

- Creativity
- Learning to Learn/Self-Awareness
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Critical Thinking

#### GRADES 7–8:

- The Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts, Media Arts and Multimedia Technology).
- Language (Oral Communication, Reading, Writing, Media Literacy).
- Health and Physical Education (Understanding Healthy Concepts, Making Healthy Choices, Making Connections for Healthy Living).

#### GRADES 9–12:

- The Arts (Dance, Drama, Integrated Arts, Media Arts, Music, Visual Arts).
- Language (Oral Communication, Reading and Literature Studies, Writing, Media Studies).
- Health and Physical Education (Understanding Healthy Concepts, Making Healthy Choices, Making Connections for Healthy Living).

#### GRADES 11–12:

- Canadian and World Studies (World History since the 15th Century).
- Social Sciences and Humanities (Dynamics of Human Relationships, Equity, Diversity and Social Justice, Gender Studies, Human Development Throughout the Lifespan, Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology).

## THEMES

- Gender roles and stereotypes
- Sex and sexuality
- Society and class
- Love and hate
- Forgiveness
- Friendship
- Marriage
- Death
- Family
- Old age and youth
- Lies, deceit, manipulation and betrayal
- Remedy and resolution
- Character and judgement
- Coming of age
- Military and war
- Travel

## THREE KEY FIGURES TO LOOK FOR IN *ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL*

CHARACTERS	Helena	Bertram	The Countess of Rossillion
ADJECTIVES	Resourceful	Unprincipled	Wise

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: A MOTHER'S BLESSING TO HER SON (ACT 1, SCENE 1)

1 class (approx. 60 minutes)

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will read the Countess of Rossillion's blessing to her departing son to discover the nature of their relationship and determine why her advice may seem like stern warnings.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Teachers will need to copy the Act 1, scene 1, excerpt for each student. Divide the class into small groups.

**RESOURCES:** Copies of excerpt from Act 1, scene 1, of *All's Well That Ends Well* (see attached separate page), notebooks, pens, pencils.

1. Ask the students to discuss the following questions in their groups:
  - a) What is advice? What is the best advice you ever received? Why?
  - b) What is the worst advice you ever received? Why?
  - c) If you were to give the perfect piece of advice, what would you try to do or include?
2. Each group will read together the Countess's speech in Act 1, scene 1.
3. Next, have each group circle those sections they think are advice and discuss why they think the Countess said it to her son.
4. Then have them brainstorm with their group and write in their own words what each piece of advice is about.
5. Have each group read aloud what they have written, each person taking a section.
6. Now have each group go back to Shakespeare's original text and read it aloud, with each person taking a section.
7. Once they are comfortable with the text, have the groups stand in a small circle and read their section of Shakespeare's text to the group. Encourage them to make eye contact with someone in the circle as if giving them advice.
8. After the exercise, have all the groups come together to debrief and discuss the following:
  - a. What did you discover about the relationship between the Countess and Bertram?
  - b. Do you think the Countess trusts her son? Why or why not?
  - c. Do you think the Countess is fair? Why or why not?
  - d. What impression do you have about Bertram?
  - e. Can you predict what may happen once Bertram goes away to France?

## POSSIBLE ESSAY QUESTIONS, REFLECTIONS OR CLASS DISCUSSION

Have each student write a letter in the voice of Bertram to a friend, describing his feelings about his mother's parting blessings and whether or not he intends to listen to her advice.

## EDUCATION ENRICHMENT

Study Guide available at [stratfordfestival.ca/studyguides](http://stratfordfestival.ca/studyguides).

Workshops and post-show chats may be arranged by calling the Education Department at 519.271.4040, ext. 2354.

Festival Theatre, Costume and Props Warehouse, Archives and Set Changeover tours may be arranged by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

## THEATRE ETIQUETTE AND THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

Live theatre is a magical experience shared and respected by all: both by audience members and performers. The actors feed off your energy and your response to their work on stage.

Here are a few things to help everyone maximize their enjoyment of the performance:

- If you leave the auditorium, you will be re-seated at an appropriate time during the performance.
- Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices during the performance.
- Please refrain from talking or eating during the performance.
- Please do respond to the performance through laughter, tears or captivated smiles.

Here's some more information on [theatre etiquette](#).

## BOOKING INFORMATION

**Online:** [www.stratfordfestival.ca/schools](http://www.stratfordfestival.ca/schools)

**Email:** [groups@stratfordfestival.ca](mailto:groups@stratfordfestival.ca)

**Phone:** 1.800.567.1600 or 519.273.1600

**Mail:**

Stratford Festival  
Attn: Groups and Schools  
P.O. Box 520  
Stratford, ON N5A 6V2

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# ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

## ACT 1, SCENE 1 (EXCERPT)

*The Countess of Rossillion bids farewell to her son, Bertram, who is leaving for the court of the King of France. She gives him parting advice before he goes.*

### COUNTESS

Be thou blest, Bertram, and succeed thy father  
In manners<sup>1</sup>, as in shape! Thy blood and virtue<sup>2</sup>  
Contend for empire<sup>3</sup> in thee, and thy goodness  
Share<sup>4</sup> with thy birthright! Love<sup>5</sup> all, trust a few,  
Do wrong to none. Be able<sup>6</sup> for thine enemy  
Rather in power<sup>7</sup> than use, and keep thy friend  
Under thy own life's key<sup>8</sup>. Be check'd<sup>9</sup> for silence,  
But never tax'd for speech<sup>10</sup>. What heaven more will,  
That thee may furnish<sup>11</sup> and my prayers pluck<sup>12</sup> down,  
Fall on thy head!



<sup>1</sup>behaviour, moral conduct

<sup>2</sup> inherited and acquired good qualities

<sup>3</sup> vie for rule

<sup>4</sup> divide the rule

<sup>5</sup> behave in a friendly manner

<sup>6</sup> competent to deal with

<sup>7</sup> in capability

<sup>8</sup> safeguard your friend's life as you safeguard your own

<sup>9</sup> rebuked

<sup>10</sup> taken to task for talking too much or saying the wrong thing

<sup>11</sup> supply advantageously

<sup>12</sup> draw