2020
PRIMARY CARNIVAL SYNOPSES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How To	page 3
A Midsummer Night's Dream	page 4
As You Like It	page 6
Hamlet	page 8
Henry IV	page 10
Julius Caesar	page 11
King Lear	page 13
Macbeth	page 14
Much Ado About Nothing	page 15
Othello	page 16
Romeo and Juliet	page 18
The Tempest	page 20
Twelfth Night	page 22

HOW TO USE A SYNOPSIS

FOR THE PRIMARY CARNIVAL!

The synopsis is an easy way for you to get your head around the story and can really enrich your understanding of the play when you read the play and help you work with your students and clarify character's relationships.

You can also read the synopsis to your class to help them understand the story, but better still…

The synopsis can also be the basis for a **'Statue Story'** which is a great exercise for helping your students understand the story from which their performance if drawn.

On our page there are some documents to help with this exercise:

1. **Statue Story Explained** – tells you how to use the synopsis to get your whole class engaged in the story
2. An example of a statue story for **Macbeth**
3. An example of a statue story for **A Midsummer Night's Dream**

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

PLOT SUMMARY

Theseus, Duke of Athens, and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons are to be married and great celebrations are planned.

Egeus brings his rebellious daughter Hermia in front of the Duke. Egeus wants her to marry Demetrius but Hermia refuses, because she's in love with Lysander. The Duke orders Hermia to obey her father or, according to Athenian law, she must face a death penalty or enter a convent. Hermia and Lysander decide to elope that night. They confide in their friend Helena, yet she is secretly in love with Demetrius so, hoping to win his affection, she tells him of Hermia's plan. That night, all four lovers set out into the forest.

Meanwhile, a group of Athenian tradesmen (known as the Mechanicals), led by Peter Quince, are planning to perform a play in celebration of the Duke's wedding. They rehearse The Tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe in the same forest.

Elsewhere in the forest, the fairy king and queen, Oberon and Titania, argue over Titania's refusal to give up her page-boy to Oberon. He sends his servant Puck to find a magic plant to cast a spell on Titania. The juice of the plant, when squeezed onto the eyes of someone asleep, causes them to fall in love with the first creature they see when they wake up. Oberon uses the juice on Titania as she sleeps in her bower.

Puck overhears the tradesmen rehearsing and magically transforms Bottom's head into that of an ass. The other men are terrified and flee the forest. When Titania wakes, the first creature she sees is Bottom and she falls rapturously in love with him.

Helena chases Demetrius in the forest and their fighting disturbs Oberon. He tells Puck to use the magic plant on Demetrius too, so that he will fall in love with Helena. However Puck muddles up the two Athenian men and uses it on Lysander instead, who promptly falls in love with Helena. Oberon tries to rectify the situation by enchanting Demetrius to show his true affection to the one he loves…Helena. Now both Lysander and Demetrius are in love with Helena, which Puck thinks is great sport. Both women are confused and Hermia furiously attacks her friend.

Eventually, Oberon and Puck lift all the enchantments (except the one on Demetrius) and they put the humans to sleep. Titania is horrified that she's been enamoured of an ass and is reconciled with Oberon. On waking, the lovers decide the night's events must have all been a dream. Lysander and Hermia are back to normal, and Demetrius admits he does love Helena after all. Bottom wakes up and recounts his 'strange dream'.

The wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta becomes a triple celebration as the other human couples marry too. Quince and Bottom's troupe amuses the couples with their amateur performance of the play.

As the couples retire, Oberon, Titania and the fairies perform a blessing, and Puck asks the audience to applaud if they enjoyed the performance.

AS YOU LIKE IT

PLOT SUMMARY

Orlando, the youngest son of the recently-deceased Sir Roland de Boys, is treated harshly by his eldest brother, Oliver. Bitter and angry, Orlando challenges the court wrestler, Charles, to a fight. When Oliver learns of the fight, he tells Charles to injure Orlando if possible.

Duke Frederick has recently deposed his brother, Duke Senior, as head of the court. But he allows Senior's daughter, Rosalind, to remain, and she and Celia, the new Duke's daughter, watch the wrestling competition. During the match, Rosalind falls in love with Orlando, who beats Charles. Rosalind gives Orlando a chain to wear; in turn, he is overcome with love.

Shortly after, Orlando is warned of his brother's plot against him and seeks refuge in the Forest of Arden. At the same time, Duke Frederick banishes Rosalind. She decides to seek shelter in the Forest of Arden with Celia. They both disguise themselves: Rosalind as the young man Ganymede and Celia as his shepherdess sister Aliena.

In the Forest of Arden, the weary cousins happen upon Silvius, a lovesick shepherd. Silvius was in the act of declaring his feelings for Phoebe, a scornful shepherdess. Ganymede buys the lease to the property of an old shepherd who needs someone to manage his estate. Ganymede and Aliena set up home in the forest. Not far away, and unaware of the newcomers, Duke Senior is living a simple outdoor life with his fellow exiled courtiers and huntsmen. Their merriment is interrupted by the arrival of Orlando, who seeks nourishment for himself and his servant. The two men are welcomed by the outlaw courtiers.

Ganymede and Aliena find verses addressed to Rosalind hung on the forest branches by Orlando. Ganymede finds Orlando and proposes to cure him of his love. To do this, Orlando will woo Ganymede as if he were Rosalind (even though "he" really is Rosalind). Orlando consents and visits Ganymede/Rosalind every day for his lessons. In the meantime, the shepherdess Phoebe – still pursued by the shepherd Silvius – has fallen for Ganymede.

When Duke Frederick hears that Orlando disappeared at the same time as Rosalind and Celia, he orders Oliver to the forest to seek his brother. In the forest, Orlando saves Oliver's life, injuring his arm in the process. Oliver runs into Ganymede and Aliena in the forest and relates this news. Rosalind (disguised as Ganymede) is overcome with her feelings for Orlando. Celia (disguised as Aliena) and Oliver quickly fall in love with one another. Rosalind decides that it is time to end her game with Orlando and devises a plan in which everyone will get married.

As Ganymede, Rosalind promises Phoebe that she will marry her if ever she marries a woman, Celia will marry Oliver, and Orlando will marry Rosalind. She makes Phoebe promise that if, for some reason, they don't get married, Phoebe will marry Silvius instead.

On the day of the wedding, and with the help of the god Hymen, Rosalind reappears in her female clothes. Reunited with his daughter, Duke Senior gives Rosalind away to Orlando, while Phoebe accepts Silvius. Orlando's other older brother returns from college with the news that Celia's father, Duke Ferdinand, has left court to become a hermit. The play ends with a joyful dance to celebrate the four marriages.

HAMLET

PLOT SUMMARY

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, returns home to mourn the death of his father, King Hamlet, who had died two months earlier. Hamlet is disgusted by the marriage of his newly widowed mother, Queen Gertrude, to his Uncle, King Hamlet's brother, Claudius, who now has the throne. Shortly thereafter, a ghost appears. Hamlet's good friend, Horatio, thinks the spirit has a likeness to the former King Hamlet. Since the ghost will not speak to Horatio, Horatio asks Hamlet to wait for the ghost and see if it will speak to him. The ghost of his father beckons Hamlet to follow him and reveals that his brother Claudius poisoned him in the ear. Hamlet vows to avenge his father's murder. He claims he will pretend to be mad in the court in order to learn more.

Meanwhile, Laertes, son to the King's advisor Polonius is set to return to France. Before he leaves, he tells his sister Ophelia to be wary of Hamlet's affections towards her. Polonius orders Ophelia to stay away from Hamlet. Everyone begins to question Hamlet's sanity. Polonius suggests it is Ophelia's rejection of his advances that is making him mad. Claudius employs two of Hamlet's childhood friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to spy on him.
Hamlet uses a troupe of travelling actors to determine the means of his father's death. He has them perform the very act of murder – killing a king through poison in the ear, as the ghost claimed. Hamlet asks Horatio to watch Claudius' reaction throughout the play; the King is enraged and leaves the play, convincing Hamlet that he was indeed the murderer.

Hamlet finds Claudius praying in the chapel and considers killing him there and then, but since he is mid-prayer and will therefore go to heaven if he dies, Hamlet decides to wait until Claudius is sinning, so that he will go to hell. Hamlet has a heated argument with his mother Gertrude. When he hears Polonius, who is hiding behind the curtain, shout for help, he stabs him thinking it is Claudius. The ghost reappears to Hamlet to refocus him on the task of killing Claudius.

Fortinbras, Prince of Norway, whose father's lands were seized by the late King Hamlet, arrives in Denmark. Claudius demands that Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern depart for England. Claudius has sent a letter with them, ordering Hamlet's execution during the trip, yet Hamlet learns of his planned murder and orders the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet returns to Denmark.

Meanwhile, Ophelia has gone mad with grief. Laertes returns from France and learns that Hamlet killed his father Polonius. Claudius suggests that Laertes duel with Hamlet, and poisons the tip of Laertes' foil for a fatal blow. If Laertes loses the duel, Claudius will put poison into a drink for Hamlet. Gertrude enters and announces that Ophelia has drowned. When the processional arrives with Ophelia's corpse, Laertes and Hamlet argue, and a duel is scheduled.

During the fight, Gertrude accidentally drinks from the poisoned chalice and dies. Hamlet is wounded with the poisoned sword, but in a scuffle, the foils are switched and Laertes is also wounded with the poisoned foil. As he dies, Laertes confesses Claudius' plot to kill Hamlet. Hamlet stabs Claudius and Hamlet dies, asking Horatio to tell his story. The Norwegian forces arrive and Prince Fortinbras seizes control of Denmark.

HENRY IV | PART ONE

PLOT SUMMARY

Henry Bolingbroke has succeeded to the throne of England as King Henry IV. During his ascension, he was partially implicated in the murder of his cousin, Richard II, in prison. To atone for Richard's death, Henry IV resolves to lead a crusade to Jerusalem. But his departure is prevented by news of disloyalty and civil unrest. His cousin, Edmund Mortimer, has been captured by Owen Glyndwr, a Welsh rebel. There is also fighting in the north between the Earl of Douglas and Harry Hotspur, the warlike son of one of Henry's former allies. King Henry regrets that his own eldest son, Henry (known as Hal) spends most of his time in the taverns of London with vagabonds and ne'er-do-wells. The King demands Hotspur's allegiance and help against the Welsh. But Hotspur feels that the King has not been sufficiently grateful to Hotspur's family for helping him in the past.

Meanwhile, Prince Hal, at the Boar's Head Tavern, jokes with his friend, the elderly and penniless Sir John Falstaff. Falstaff seeks to get money (seemingly by any means possible) to pay for his drinking habits. He plots to rob a group of travellers. Together with his friends Bardolph and Nym, Falstaff carries out the robbery. At the same time, in disguise, Hal and his companion Poins attack Falstaff and capture the gold for themselves. Back at the tavern, they reveal to Falstaff that they tricked him and were the ones who robbed him. Hal is called back to court in the midst of civil war. Hal and Falstaff roleplay the imminent conversation between the stern King Henry and wayward Hal. Hal's pointed comments about his own troubled friends disconcert Falstaff. Hal protects Falstaff from the law and restores the stolen money to its owners.

The civil wars become more serious as Hotspur joins his father in making an alliance with the King's other enemies. All of them are jealous of King Henry's growing power. Hotspur sets out to Shrewsbury to meet his father's troops.

Hal returns to his father to make peace with him, and the King gives him a command in the army setting out to meet Hotspur. On the way, Hal encounters Falstaff with a few ragged men. Falstaff has enlisted these soldiers by taking bribes rather than enrolling more able men.

The King offers to pardon and free Hotspur if he will withdraw his opposition to the throne. The northern troops have been unable to reach Hotspur and Worcester, one of Hotspur's fellow rebels. Hotspur is advised by his ally, the Archbishop of York, not to fight. Worcester, Hotspur's ally, keeps the knowledge of the King's offer of freedom from Hotspur, and the battle of Shrewsbury ensues.

Falstaff fears for his death in battle and wonders about the wisdom in pursuing honour in exchange only for injury or death. Hal fights valiantly in the battle, saving his father from harm in combat with Douglas, another rebel. He even kills Hotspur. Falstaff, having feigned death to avoid injury, claims he was Hotspur's vanquisher. The King's forces win the day, and Worcester is condemned to death. Hal frees Douglas, and Henry IV divides his forces to continue battling the rebellion.

JULIUS CAESAR

PLOT SUMMARY

The tribunes of Rome, Marullus and Flavius, break up a gathering of citizens who want to celebrate Julius Caesar's triumphant return from war. The victory is marked by public games in which Caesar's protégé, Mark Antony, takes part. On his way to the arena, Caesar is stopped by a stranger who warns him that he should 'Beware the Ides [15th] of March.'

Fellow senators, Caius Cassius and Marcus Brutus, are suspicious of Caesar's reactions to the power he holds in the Republic. They fear he will accept offers to become Emperor. He has been gaining a lot of power recently and people treat him like a god. Cassius, a successful general himself, dislikes and is jealous of Caesar. Brutus has a more balanced view of the political position. The conspirator Casca enters and tells Brutus of a ceremony held by the plebeians. They offered Caesar a crown three times, and he refused it every time. But the conspirators are still wary of his aspirations.

Cassius, Casca, and their allies plant false documents to manipulate Brutus to join their cause to remove Caesar. After doing so, they visit Brutus at night in his home to persuade him of their views. There they plan Caesar's death. Brutus is troubled but refuses to confide in his devoted wife, Portia. On 15 March, Caesar's wife, Calpurnia, urges him not to go to the Senate. She has had visionary dreams and fears the portents of the overnight storms.
Caesar is nevertheless persuaded by flattery to go to the Capitol. At the Capitol, he is stabbed by each conspirator in turn. As Brutus gives the final blow, Caesar utters the famous phrase: "Et tu Brute?" (And you, Brutus?)

Against Cassius's advice, Brutus allows Mark Antony to speak a funeral oration for Caesar in the market place. He is allowed under the condition that first Brutus must address the people to explain the conspirators' reasons and their fears for Caesar's ambition. After Brutus speaks, the crowd becomes calm and supports his cause. However, Antony, in his speech, questions the motives of the conspirators and reminds the crowd of Caesar's benevolent actions and of his refusal to accept the crown. He also reads them Caesar's will, in which Caesar leaves public land and money to each Roman citizen. Antony's speech stirs the crowd into a murderous riot, and the conspirators are forced to flee from the city.

Brutus and Cassius gather an army in Northern Greece and prepare to fight the forces led by Mark Antony. Antony has joined with Caesar's great-nephew, Octavius, and with a man called Lepidus. Away from Rome, Brutus and Cassius are filled with doubts about the future and quarrel over funds for their soldiers' pay. After making amends, they prepare to engage Antony's army at Philippi, despite Cassius' misgivings about the site. Brutus stoically receives news of his wife's suicide in Rome. He then sees Caesar's ghost as he tries to rest and is unable to sleep on the eve of the conflict.

In the battle, the Republicans (led by Brutus) appear to be winning at first. But when Cassius' messenger's horse seems to be overtaken by the enemy, Cassius fears the worst and gets his servant to help him to a quick death. After finding Cassius's body, Brutus commits suicide. He believes this to be the only honourable option left to him. Antony, triumphant on the battlefield, praises Brutus as 'the noblest Roman of them all' and orders a formal funeral before he and Octavius return to rule in Rome.

KING LEAR

PLOT SUMMARY

The elderly King Lear has decided to give up his power and divide his realm amongst his three daughters, Cordelia, Regan, and Goneril. Lear's plan is to give the largest piece of his kingdom to the child who professes to love him the most, certain that his favourite daughter, Cordelia, will win the challenge. Goneril and Regan, corrupt and eager for the land, make sappy and excessive declarations of affection to their father. Cordelia, however, refuses to engage in Lear's game, and replies simply that she loves him as a daughter should. Her lacklustre retort, despite its sincerity, enrages Lear, and he disowns Cordelia completely. When Lear's dear friend, the Earl of Kent, tries to speak on Cordelia's behalf, Lear banishes him from the kingdom.

Meanwhile, the King of France, present at court and overwhelmed by Cordelia's honesty and virtue, asks for her hand in marriage, despite her loss of a sizable dowry. Cordelia accepts the King of France's proposal, and reluctantly leaves Lear with her two cunning sisters. Kent, although banished by Lear, remains to try to protect the unwitting King from the evils of his two remaining children. He disguises himself and takes a job as Lear's servant. Now that Lear has turned over all his wealth and land to Regan and Goneril, their true natures surface at once. Lear and his few companions, including some knights, a fool, and the disguised Kent, go to live with Goneril, but she reveals that she plans to treat him like the old man he is while he is under her roof. Lear decides to stay instead with his other daughter, and he sends Kent ahead to deliver a letter to Regan, preparing her for his arrival. However, when Lear arrives at Regan's castle, he is horrified to see that Kent has been placed in stocks. Kent is soon set free, but before Lear can uncover who placed his servant in the stocks, Goneril arrives, and Lear realises that Regan is conspiring with her sister against him.

Gloucester arrives back at Regan's castle in time to hear that the two sisters are planning to murder the King. He rushes away immediately to warn Kent to send Lear to Dover, where they will find protection. Kent, Lear, and the Fool leave at once, while Edgar remains behind in the shadows. Regan and Goneril discover Gloucester has warned Lear of their plot, and Cornwall, Regan's husband, gouges out Gloucester's eyes. A servant tries to help Gloucester and attacks Cornwall with a sword – a blow later to prove fatal.

News arrives that Cordelia has raised an army of French troops that have landed at Dover. Regan and Goneril ready their troops to fight and they head to Dover. Meanwhile, Kent has heard the news of Cordelia's return, and sets off with Lear hoping that father and daughter can be reunited. Gloucester too tries to make his way to Dover, and on the way, finds his own lost son, Edgar.

Tired from his ordeal, Lear sleeps through the battle between Cordelia and her sisters. When Lear awakes he is told that Cordelia has been defeated. Lear takes the news well, thinking that he will be jailed with his beloved Cordelia – away from his evil offspring. However, the orders have come, not for Cordelia's imprisonment, but for her death. Heartbroken, Lear dies.

MACBETH

PLOT SUMMARY

On a bleak Scottish moorland, Macbeth and Banquo, two of King Duncan's generals encounter three weird sisters. They prophesise that Macbeth will be promoted twice: to Thane of Cawdor, and King of Scotland. Banquo is told that his descendants will become kings. Almost immediately afterwards, Macbeth receives a message from King Duncan that awards him the title Thane of Cawdor, acknowledging his success in recent battles. The King however, names his own son Malcolm as heir to the crown. The King plans to visit Macbeth at his castle that night, and Lady Macbeth vows to help Macbeth become King by whatever means are necessary.

The Macbeths plot together to kill Duncan. When everyone is asleep, Lady Macbeth gives the guards drugged wine so Macbeth can enter the King's bedroom and kill him. He regrets the deed almost immediately, but his wife reassures him. When Macduff discovers the murder, Macbeth kills the drunken guards in a show of rage. Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, flee, fearing for their own lives, but are nevertheless blamed for the murder.

Macbeth becomes King of Scotland but is plagued by feelings of insecurity. He remembers the prophecy that Banquo's descendants will inherit the throne and arranges for Banquo and his son Fleance to be killed. In the darkness, Banquo is murdered, but his son escapes the assassins. At his state banquet that night, Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo and worries the courtiers with his mad response. Lady Macbeth dismisses the court and unsuccessfully tries to calm her husband.

Macbeth seeks out the weird sisters who say that he will be safe until a local wood, Birnam Wood, marches into battle against him. He also need not fear anyone born of woman. They also prophesise that the Scottish succession will still come from Banquo's son. Macbeth embarks on a reign of terror, slaughtering many, including Macduff's family. Macduff goes to seek Duncan's son Malcolm at the court of the English king to persuade him to lead an army against Macbeth.

Macbeth feels safe in his remote castle at Dunsinane until he is told that Birnam Wood is moving towards him. Malcolm's army is carrying branches from the forest as camouflage for their assault on Macbeth's stronghold. Meanwhile, a guilty and conscience-ridden Lady Macbeth walks in her sleep and tells her secrets to her doctor. She commits suicide. As the final battle commences, Macbeth hears of Lady Macbeth's death and mourns.

In the midst of a losing battle, Macduff challenges Macbeth. Macbeth learns Macduff is the child of a caesarean birth, realises he is doomed, but goes down fighting. Macduff triumphs and brings the head of the traitor Macbeth to Malcolm. Malcolm declares peace and goes to Scone to be crowned king.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

PLOT SUMMARY

Leonato lives in Messina with his daughter, Hero, and her cousin and companion, the Lady Beatrice. Leonato receives word that his friend, the Duke Don Pedro has returned from war and plans to visit with some of his fellow soldiers. Among the party is Claudio, who quickly falls in love with Hero. Benedick, a bachelor who has sworn off love and marriage, also comes, and he enjoys speaking his mind in witty argument with Beatrice.
Leonato holds a masked ball to celebrate the end of the war. While at the ball, the engagement of Claudio and Hero is arranged. At the same time, Don Pedro's bitter and petty brother, Don John, seeks a way to spoil the general happiness. Don John plots with the soldiers, Borachio and Conrad, to deceive Claudio into believing Hero has cheated on him.

That night, Hero's maid, Margaret, talks with Borachio from Hero's bedroom window. Claudio and the Duke watch secretly from a distance and think that the girl at the window is Hero. Meanwhile, Hero, Claudius and Don Pedro decide Benedick and Beatrice are ideal partners, despite (or because of) their bickering. They make a plot to allow Benedick to overhear them discussing Beatrice's love for him and vice versa. After a series of overheard conversations, Benedick and Beatrice realise they do indeed love one another.

At Hero's wedding, Claudio is still deceived into thinking Hero cheated on him. He denounces her and leaves her apparently dead from shock. With the help of the priest, Leonato, Beatrice, and Benedick decide to pretend that Hero is actually dead until her name can be cleared. Later, the watchmen—managed by the bumbling village constable Dogberry–overhear Borachio and Conrad brag about the trick that they played on Claudio and Don Pedro. They arrest the pair.

Dogberry's incriminating information is, after some difficulty, given to Leonato and Don Pedro. As penance for causing Hero's death, Claudio agrees to accept Leonato's "niece" in her place. The "niece" turns out to be Hero. The lovers are reunited, and Benedick and Beatrice announce that they will share the wedding day. Don John has been captured while trying to escape and is left for future trial, while the play ends with a merry dance.

OTHELLO

PLOT SUMMARY

Roderigo, who has been pursuing a Venetian noblewoman, Desdemona, hears from his soldier friend, Iago, that Desdemona has secretly married his General, the Moorish Othello. Iago bears a grudge against Othello for overlooking him for a lieutenant position in favour of Michael Cassio. Iago urges Roderigo to continue his pursuit of Desdemona. He knows Desdemona's father, Senator Brabantio, will dislike having Othello as a son-in-law. When they inform him of the news, Brabantio angrily summons the militia to arrest Othello. Yet Brabantio is summoned to an urgent meeting of the Senate, due to fears of the imminent threat of a Turkish invasion fleet on Cyprus. Full of fury, Brabantio goes to the council, claiming vengeance against Othello, who has just been put in command of the forces to repel the Turks. Othello explains how his stories of military prowess have helped him earn Desdemona's love, a tale which Desdemona defends. Following this, her father disowns her, and she chooses to go with Othello on his campaign. She plans to travel in the care of Lieutenant Cassio and with Emilia, Iago's wife.

In Cyprus, the governor of Cyprus, Montano, and his soldiers greet Cassio, Iago, Desdemona, and Emilia as they disembark. Othello soon arrives with news that storms have dispersed the Turkish fleet. A night of celebration is proclaimed. Roderigo confesses doubts about his potential to woo Desdemona, but Iago assures him that there is hope. He urges Roderigo to challenge Cassio to a duel that night, since – he says - Desdemona is actually falling in love with him. When the night comes, Iago gets Cassio drunk and Roderigo incites his anger. Montano, the governor, is stabbed during his attempt to contain Cassio. Othello is angered by the fight and blames Cassio, stripping him of his recently conferred officer status.

The next day, Iago convinces Cassio to ask Desdemona for help in regaining his post, to which she innocently agrees. Meanwhile, Iago has sown seeds of jealousy in Othello's mind, suggesting that Desdemona is overfond of Cassio. He begins to watch his wife, becoming angry when Desdemona cannot find the first gift he had ever given her, a handkerchief. But Desdemona had not lost the handkerchief; Iago had instructed Emilia, his wife, to take it. Iago then hid the handkerchief where Cassio would find it. When Desdemona urges her husband to reconsider Cassio's demotion, Othello gets jealous and suspects her of infidelity.

Iago continues to inflame this jealousy. He encourages Othello to listen in on, and misinterpret, part of a conversation between Cassio and his mistress, Bianca, in which they discuss the handkerchief. Othello orders Iago to kill Cassio. Desdemona cannot understand Othello's change of attitude towards her; he even strikes her in the presence of her relative, Lodovico. She talks with Emilia about the distress she feels at losing Othello's trust.

Meanwhile, Roderigo has begun to suspect Iago is not quite the friend he seems. Iago persuades him to attack Cassio that night - again, to be able to court Desdemona. In the fight that ensues,

Iago goes undetected and wounds Cassio. He then enters again as himself to accuse and kill Roderigo for the act of wounding Cassio. Othello comes to his sleeping wife's bedroom to murder her as punishment for her supposed adultery. He smothers her with a pillow as she asserts her innocence. Emilia alerts the household, bringing Iago and others to the scene. Othello defends himself, mentioning the handkerchief as evidence. Emilia realises what has happened and betrays Iago’s plots against Othello. Iago stabs and kills Emilia, and is arrested. Othello, facing the inevitability of his own trial, uses a hidden weapon to commit suicide. Cassio is reinstated and placed in command as Governor of Cyprus.

ROMEO AND JULIET

PLOT SUMMARY

The two feuding families of Verona are introduced: the Capulets and the Montagues. On a hot summer's day, the young men of each faction fight until the Prince of Verona intervenes and threatens to banish them. Soon after, the head of the Capulet family plans a feast. His goal is to introduce his daughter Juliet to a potential suitor, a Count named Paris, who is related to the Prince.

Montague's son Romeo and his friends Benvolio and Mercutio, hear of the party and resolve to go in disguise. Romeo hopes to see his beloved Rosaline at the party. Instead, while there, he meets Juliet and falls instantly in love with her. Juliet's cousin Tybalt recognises the Montague boys which forces them to leave just as Romeo and Juliet discover one another.

Romeo lingers near the Capulet house to talk with Juliet, when she appears in her window. The pair declare their love for one another and intend to marry the next day. With the help of Juliet's Nurse, the lovers arrange to marry when Juliet goes for confession at the cell of Friar Laurence. There, they are secretly married.

Meanwhile, Juliet's cousin Tybalt sends a challenge to Romeo. Following his secret marriage, Romeo refuses to fight, which angers his friend Mercutio who then fights with Tybalt himself. Mercutio is accidentally killed as Romeo intervenes to stop the fight. In anger, Romeo pursues Tybalt, kills him, and is banished by the Prince.

Juliet is anxious when Romeo is late to meet her and learns of the brawl, Tybalt's death, and Romeo's banishment. Friar Laurence arranges for Romeo to spend the night with Juliet before he leaves for exile in Mantua. Meanwhile, the Capulet family grieves for Tybalt, so Lord Capulet moves Juliet's marriage to Paris to the next day. Juliet’s parents are angry when Juliet doesn't want to marry Paris, but they don't know about her secret marriage to Romeo.

Friar Laurence helps Juliet by providing a sleeping draught that will make her seem dead. When the wedding party arrives to greet Juliet the next day, they believe she is dead. The Friar sends a messenger to warn Romeo of Juliet's plan and bids him to come to the Capulet family monument to rescue his sleeping wife.

The vital message to Romeo doesn't arrive in time because the plague is in town and the messenger cannot leave Verona. Hearing from his servant that Juliet is dead, Romeo buys poison from an Apothecary in Mantua. He returns to Verona and goes to the tomb where he surprises and kills the mourning Paris. Romeo takes his poison and dies, just as Juliet awakens from her drugged coma. She learns what has happened from Friar Laurence, but she refuses to leave the tomb and stabs herself.

The Friar returns with the Prince, the Capulets, and Romeo's lately widowed father. The deaths of their children lead the families to make peace, and they promise to erect a monument in Romeo and Juliet's memory.

THE TEMPEST

PLOT SUMMARY

Close to a Mediterranean island, a storm overcomes a ship that carries King Alonso of Naples, his son Ferdinand, and his brother Sebastian. They were on their way home to Italy from his daughter's wedding in Tunis when the storm hit and sinks their ship. Shipwrecked with them are the courtier, Gonzalo, and the Duke of Milan, Antonio.

From the island, Prospero, the former Duke of Milan, and his fifteen-year-old daughter, Miranda, watch the storm and shipwreck. Miranda fears for the ship's crew, but Prospero assures her that they are safe. He decides to tell her about their past, how twelve years previously, his brother Antonio had deposed him in a coup. With the aid of Gonzalo, Prospero had escaped in a boat with his child Miranda and his books of magic. They travelled to the island, made it their home, and enslaved the only native islander, Caliban. The only other inhabitants of the island are the spirits, including Ariel, whom Prospero had rescued from imprisonment in a tree. Since Antonio was on the boat that is now shipwrecked, Prospero hopes finally to rectify his past. As Miranda sleeps, Prospero discusses his role in the shipwreck with Ariel. They plot about what to do with the men now that they are on the shore.

The courtiers from the ship are cast ashore unharmed. But the King is near despair, believing that Ferdinand, his son, drowned. Ferdinand has actually arrived safely on a different part of the island where he meets Miranda and they instantly fall in love. Prospero, protective of his daughter, captures Ferdinand and forces him to carry wood. In the meantime, Ariel seeks his freedom. Prospero promises that he will liberate Ariel from servitude following the completion of just a few more tasks.

Ariel uses music to lead the courtiers astray on the island. Sebastian and Antonio plot to kill the King while he is asleep, but their attempt is foiled by Ariel. All the people from the ship become ever more confused and lost. In another part of the island, the court fool, Trinculo, has come ashore and discovered Caliban. Trinculo hides beside Caliban from an approaching storm, and the ship's drunken butler, Stephano, finds them.

At Caliban's suggestion, he, Stephano and Trinculo plan to kill Prospero and make Stephano lord of the island. They all get very drunk before setting off to Prospero's cell with the intent to kill him. Ariel, who saw the whole thing in his invisible state, reports this to his master. Meanwhile, Prospero has relented and given his blessing for Ferdinand and Miranda's marriage (which he had secretly hoped for all along, to secure his legacy). He entertains them with a masque of goddesses and dancing reapers before he recalling Caliban's wicked plots.

Prospero and Ariel set a trap for the three plotters. Stephano and Trinculo immediately fall for it, distracted by gaudy clothes hung out for them. After they touch the clothing, they are chased away by spirits disguised as dogs.

Ariel brings all the courtiers to the cell where Prospero, renouncing his magic, reveals himself. Instead of enacting his revenge, he forgives them and accepts the return of his dukedom. Ferdinand and Miranda are betrothed. Sailors come to announce that the ship is found safe and repaired. Prospero fulfils his promise and frees Ariel while Caliban and the drunken servants are rebuked. The play ends as all go to celebrate their reunions, and Prospero asks the audience to release him from the play.

TWELFTH NIGHT

PLOT SUMMARY

Viola has been shipwrecked in a violent storm off the coast of Illyria, during which she lost her twin brother, Sebastian. She disguises herself as a boy and assumes the name Cesario for protection. Thus disguised, Viola becomes a page in the service of Duke Orsino. It seems that Orsino is having little luck courting a beautiful rich Countess, Olivia, who is in mourning for the deaths of her father and brother. As Orsino's proxy, Viola is sent to Olivia with love letters. In loyalty to Orsino, Viola refuses to budge until she is allowed in to see Olivia. After their first meeting, Olivia is intrigued by the impudent young "boy," and contrives to get "Cesario" to return by sending her steward, Malvolio, after her with one of Olivia's rings. Viola realises to her dismay that Olivia has fallen for her Cesario rather than Duke Orsino—further complicated by the fact that Viola has feelings herself for Orsino.

Sebastian - Viola's twin, presumed dead - comes ashore in Illyria thinking that Viola has drowned in the shipwreck. A man named Antonio rescued him from the surf, and continues to aid him—at some risk to himself, as Antonio fought against the Duke at one time. Meanwhile, in Olivia's house, Sir Toby Belch – her uncle - has hoodwinked a vain Sir Andrew Aguecheek into supporting him (and financing his drinking habits and excess) by convincing him that he could be a suitor to Olivia. There is an on-going feud between Malvolio and Belch. With the help of Maria, Olivia's maid, and Feste, the fool, Belch plots to make a buffoon of the steward. Maria composes a love letter that will make Malvolio think that Olivia has fallen for him.

Malvolio falls entirely for the sport, which eventually leads to his confinement as a madman. All the while, Belch is coaxing Sir Andrew into a duel with Viola's "Cesario" character as she departs from Olivia. Olivia is now entirely smitten with Cesario, even though Viola continues to press Orsino's cause. As Viola and Sir Andrew prepare for a duel that neither one wants, Antonio happens upon the scene. Believing Viola to be Sebastian, he intervenes to defend him and is arrested. Viola, of course, does not recognize Antonio. Later, Belch and Sir Andrew encounter Sebastian, who doesn't back down from Aguecheek when challenged and resoundingly beats him. Olivia intervenes in the matter, and—mistaking Sebastian for Viola/Cesario—asks to marry him. A bemused Sebastian agrees.

Antonio is brought before the Duke for questioning, and Viola relates the events of the duel. Antonio tells everyone how he dragged "this man" from the surf, saving his life. Then Olivia enters, searching for her new husband—which she thinks is Viola (as Cesario). Adding to this confusion, Belch and Aguecheek enter claiming that Viola/Cesario has violently assaulted them. In the midst of Viola's denials, Sebastian appears. The brother and sister recognise one another and are reunited. Sebastian helps to clear the confusion as to who fought and married who. At the end, Orsino realises he actually loves Viola and the two pledge their love; Olivia and Sebastian will remain satisfactorily wed, and Olivia rebukes Belch and Maria for their abuse of Malvolio, who vows his

revenge upon the whole lot of them. Belch has already wed Maria to thank her for her entertaining prank on Malvolio, and all—except the disgruntled Malvolio—will apparently live happily ever after.