PHIZZICAL IN ASSOCIATION WITH
BELGRADE THEATRE COVENTRY PRESENT

A COMIC, ROMANTIC AND MAGICAL PLAY BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
RE-IMAGINED BY SAMIR BHAMRA

EDUCATION PACK
The focus of the material in this workpack is on Phizzical’s version of the text, however, it may also prove beneficial to anyone reading or studying Shakespeare’s Cymbeline, either in the context of English courses or drama and theatre studies.

The content is divided into different chapters in order to allow you to dip in and out of the pack and easily identify materials and topics which are particularly relevant to your current area of study.

By seeing the play and using the tools provided in this workpack, you can engage fully in discussions and exercises, while playing with your own ideas. We hope you enjoy the production and have fun exploring the play.
INTRODUCTION

This workpack is designed not only for those who have attended, or plan to attend Phizical’s production of Cymbeline during its 2013 UK tour, but for anyone interested in Shakespeare and bringing his world to life.

According to Richard Danson Brown and David Johnson in 'Shakespeare 1609: Cymbeline and the Sonnets' (p.4), ‘A precise dating of the first ever performance of Cymbeline has proved difficult, but most editors of the text now agree that it is likely to have been premiered at some time between the autumn of 1609, when the theatres reopened after an outbreak of the plague, and the summer of 1610’.

What we do know is that since its first performance, it has been performed hundreds of times across the world in many languages, including recently during the Royal Shakespeare Company’s World Shakespeare Festival 2012: in Japanese in Yukio Ninagawa’s production at London’s Barbican (29 May – 2 June 2012) and in Juba Arabic by the South Sudan Theatre Company as part of Globe to Globe at Shakespeare’s Globe (2 – 3 May 2012).

In fact, in India in the 1870’s, Cymbeline was one of the three most frequently performed plays, together with A Midsummer Night’s Dream and The Winter’s Tale. Based on Shakespeare’s original play, this version, which is adapted and directed by Samir Bhamra, is set in a South Asian cultural backdrop. It is inspired by the traditions, colour and mystique of an exotic part of the world.

No setting of the play is right or wrong, be it in a South Asian setting or in modern day South Sudan. Each one encourages an audience to watch the play in a certain way and helps emphasise certain aspects of the play.

The themes of political upheaval, jealousy, a questionable monarchy, parent / child relationships and the obstacles of lovers are all common themes throughout many of Shakespeare’s plays, and Cymbeline is no exception. For example, Innogen and Juliet have forbidden lovers in common and King Lear suffers similar feelings of hurt and then remorse towards his daughter Cordelia, as Cymbeline does towards Innogen. These themes resonate fully in contemporary culture and this is what makes Shakespeare’s works relevant for all times. “Shakespeare endures through history. He illuminates later times as well as his own. He helps us understand the human condition” (RSC edition of Cymbeline, edited by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, p.17).

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Cymbeline is suitable for study at Key Stage 3 and 4 including teaching across the national curriculum in:

English & Theatre Studies
Critical Understanding: Engaging with ideas and texts, understanding and responding to the main issues. Assessing the validity and significance of information and ideas from different sources. Analysing and evaluating spoken and written language to appreciate how meaning is shaped. Exploring the conflict between male and female relationships through poetry and drama.

Music
Understanding musical traditions and the part music plays in global culture. Exploring how ideas, experiences and emotions are conveyed in a range of music from different times and cultures. Exploring ways music can be combined with other art forms. Exploring how thoughts, feelings, ideas and emotions can be expressed through music.

Citizenship
Range and Content: Political, Legal and Human rights, responsibilities of citizens. How economic decisions are made including where public money comes from and who decides how it is spent. How actions that individuals, groups and organisations can take to influence decisions affecting communities and the environment.

Religious Studies
Awareness of aspects of other cultures such as everyday life, social customs, and events. Making comparisons to their own culture and society. Recognising that languages differ but may share common expressions.
William Shakespeare wrote 37 plays, as well as sonnets and full-length poems; but very little is actually known about him. That there was someone called William Shakespeare is certain, and what we know about his life comes from registrar records, court records, wills, marriage certificates and his tombstone. There are also contemporary anecdotes and criticisms made by his rivals that speak of the famous playwright and suggest that he was indeed a playwright, poet and an actor.

The earliest record we have of his life is of his baptism, which took place on Wednesday 26 April 1564. Traditionally it is supposed that he was, as was common practice, baptised three days after his birth, making his birthday fall on 23 April 1564 – St George’s Day. There is, however, no proof of this at all.

William’s father was a John Shakespeare, a local businessman who was involved in tanning and leatherwork. John also dealt in grain and sometimes was described as a glover by trade. John was also a prominent man in Stratford. By 1560, he was one of the fourteen burgesses who made up the town council. William’s mother was Mary Arden who married John Shakespeare in 1557. They had eight children, of whom William was the third. It is assumed that William grew up with them in Stratford, one hundred miles from London.

Very little is known about Shakespeare’s education. We know that the King’s New Grammar School taught boys basic reading and writing. We assume William attended this school since it existed to educate the sons of Stratford but we have no definite proof. There is also no evidence to suggest that William attended university.

On 28 November 1582, an eighteen-year-old William married the twenty-six-year-old Anne Hathaway. Seven months later, they had their first daughter, Susanna. Anne never left Stratford, living there her entire life. Baptism records reveal that twins Hamnet and Judith were born in February 1592. Hamnet, the only son died in 1596, just eleven years old.

At some point, Shakespeare joined the Burbage company in London as an actor, and was their principal writer. He wrote for them at the Theatre in Shoreditch where Richard III may first have been performed, and by 1594 he was a sharer, or shareholder in the company. It was through being a sharer in the profits of the company that William made his money and in 1597 he was able to purchase a large house in Stratford. The company moved to the newly-built Globe Theatre in 1599. In 1613, the Globe Theatre caught fire during a performance of Henry VIII, one of Shakespeare’s last plays, written with John Fletcher, and William retired to Stratford where he died on 23 April 1616.
DIRECTOR’S VISION

_Cymbeline_ is a bizarre and amusing play. Written by William Shakespeare, it marries some of his best devices from his previous works and therefore gives us a fantastic introduction into his world.

When I began to work on this play, I wondered if Shakespeare wanted to recreate the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet through a romance in _Cymbeline_. Do past mistakes ever prepare us for current challenges and lead us to a new and magnificent future?

The quest to find an answer led to several staging possibilities. I could describe _Cymbeline_ by watching an episode of _The Apprentice_: a series of challenges that drive the players towards a major disaster; just when it cannot get any worse, you realise that every problem was necessary in order to win the task. I could create an epic version of the play by setting it in Shakespeare’s time in India looking at the tension between the Mughal emperor Akbar and the Rajput Maharana Pratab. Equally, I could present it in a version full of colour, vigour and melodrama by taking inspiration from the 1970s Bollywood films by Manmohan Desai.

Ben Johnson’s statement “Shakespeare was not of an age, but for all time” made me wonder what would _Cymbeline_ set in the richness of South Asian culture look like today. I looked around and found the answer in my parents. The wounds of the Indian partition were still raw in 1975 when my parents eloped. My grandparents did not accept my father because of age, religion and status. Years later, when my sister wanted to marry, my father found it difficult to accept her decision. In his mind, it was his parental duty to protect his little princess from making a mistake. Like _Cymbeline_, he could have made better choices, but if everything went well, we wouldn’t have this fantastic, tragic, and romantic story that is still relevant over 400 years later.

In _Cymbeline_, we have a father being manipulated by a wicked queen and her son, his two sons have been kidnapped and presumed dead (but very much alive) and the classic rich girl marries poor boy much to the chagrin of her father. It is a family at the end of the day - a kind of family that we could all relate with (especially anyone who has a wide extended family). We love each other but we can’t stand being in the same room sometimes. Often it takes a great tragedy to bring us all together. In _Cymbeline_, the plot feels like there is a huge tragedy being built up only it’s a clever device for all the characters to come together at the end for a huge happy resolution.

This sounded much like a Bollywood film and to give it a touch of reality, I wanted to look at the lives of the people in the film industry. Audiences are voyeurs who want to know about the way celebrities live. These prominent stars have pressures from external factors that threaten to ruin their lives. So, _Cymbeline_ enables us to look beyond the veneer of their smile.

Ultimately, I aim to honour Shakespeare’s imagination with a sense of adventure using contemporary South Asian influences. How this happens remains to be seen because there is a truth in _Cymbeline_ that says “fortune brings in some boats that are not steered”.

Samir Bhamra
Director
**Aim:** to check our understanding of the narrative structure of the play and explain the key significant incidents therein.

This chapter contains a series of discussion points, exercises and group activities which are designed to highlight the plots and subplots in *Cymbeline*. It will allow you to explore key moments and have fun speaking Shakespeare’s words aloud in the classroom.

**Summary:**
- Write a summary of the play in ten sentences.
- Taking a selection of the responses to this task; read them aloud and compare them with other versions. Make a note of any significant differences.
- Now create the definitive 10 sentence summary.
- Highlight the key plot lines and subplot lines (if any) in the summary.

**Perform:**
- Using classroom objects and items of stationary (pens, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, dusters etc) to represent characters, create a miniature table-top performance piece to tell the story and highlight the major plot lines.
- This can be a collaborative exercise: divide into groups and allocate a character / object to each member of the group. Each group can now re-enact its own miniature performance of the play.

**Discuss:**
Do you think this is a classic tale of love and deception? Can you think of any modern-day, gossip-magazine stories that remind you of the love story of Innogen and Posthumus Leonatus (Posthumus)?

What other Shakespeare plays come to mind?

**Techniques of storytelling and dramatic devices:**
- Discuss the role of the Soothsayer as narrator in the play.
- In his writings, Shakespeare regularly uses devices such as soliloquies and asides as a means of revealing to the audience what is in the mind of a character.

**Definitions:**
A soliloquy is addressed by a character, alone on stage, directly to the audience. An aside is a remark or speech directed at the audience unheard by the other characters on stage at the time, and usually quite short.

What does the aside below reveal and why do you think it is used at this particular moment in the story (Act 1, Scene 5)?

**CORNELIUS**

[ASIDE] “I do not like her. She doth think she has Strange lingering poisons: I do know her spirit, And will not trust one of her malice with A drug of such damned nature. Those she has Will stupefy and dull the sense awhile; Which first, perchance, she’ll prove on cats and dogs, Then afterward up higher: but there is No danger in what show of death it makes, More than the locking-up the spirits a time, To be more fresh, reviving. She is fool’d With a most false effect: and I the truer, So to be false with her”.

Read aloud the Queen's soliloquy below (Act 3, Scene 5).

**QUEEN**

“Proceed by swallowing that, for he believes It is a thing most precious. But for her, Where is she gone? Haply, despair hath seized her, Or, wing’d with fervor of her love, she’s flown To her desired Posthumus: gone she is To death or to dishonour; and my end Can make good use of either: she is being down, I have the placing of the British crown.”

- What do we learn about the Queen’s intentions in this passage?
- Discuss the connections between these two passages (Cornelius’ aside and Queen’s soliloquy). How do they help to advance elements of the plot?
- Pick out other examples of asides and soliloquies in *Cymbeline*. What do they reveal and why are they important?
Key Scenes:
The object of this exercise is to provide an opportunity to speak the words and perform the key scenes in the play while consolidating our knowledge of the narrative and identifying major shifts in the play’s plotline.

Perform:
● Before commencing the discussion around these key scenes, divide into groups and allocate a scene to each group to work on.
● Allow a brief period for discussion within the group in order to become familiar with the scene and its characters.
● Now cast the actors and rehearse the scene within the group before performing it.
● When each group has performed its scene, the following questions can be used to continue the discussion.

1. The Opening (Act 1, Scene 1):
   ● Why do you think this version of the play opens with the wedding?
   ● What does the Soothsayer tell us about the state of the kingdom? Use these quotations from the scene to support the answer:
     “While the King rages, the court does smile […]”
     “Succession is confused”.
   ● What do you learn about the characters of Posthumus, Innogen, Cymbeline and Cloten? Use quotations and your own words to support your answer.

2. The Wager (Act 1, Scene 4):
   ● What do you think of the director’s decision to set this scene in this way?
   ● What is Philario’s role in this scene?
   ● What does the following line reveal about Iachimo’s opinion of women?
     “If you buy ladies’ flesh at a million a dram, you cannot preserve it from tainting”
   ● Throughout the play, characters make various assertions about the untrustworthy nature of women. The false charge that Iachimo makes against Innogen’s virtue leads Posthumus to quote in (Act 2, Scene 4):
     “Is there no way for men to be but women
     Must be half-workers? We are all bastards;
     And the most venerable man which I
     Did call my father, was I know not where
     When I was stamp’d; some coiner with his tools
     Made me a counterfeit: yet my mother seem’d
     The Dian of that time so doth my wife
     The nonpareil of this”.
   ● Discuss the wager scene in the context of Posthumus’ character. In your opinion, is he wrong to make the bet with Iachimo?
   ● Later on in Act 2 when he learns of Innogen’s supposed infidelity, Posthumus’ response is explosive. What do you think of his reaction?

Discuss:
The character of Innogen has been described as “an appealing portrait of obedient femininity”. It has also been said that her character “convincingly displays certain qualities of the resourceful, independent woman” [Richard Danson Brown and David Johnson: ‘Shakespeare 1609: Cymbeline and the Sonnets’, p.16].

From your knowledge of the play, do you think Innogen is more a strong female character or the female victim subdued by masculine authority?

How does she compare with other female characters that you know in Shakespeare’s works?

3. Innogen’s Bedchamber: A trunk (Act 2, Scene 2)
   ● What does this scene reveal about the character of Iachimo?
   ● Discuss the premise of this scene: do you think this ruse of “Iachimo in a trunk” works in the context of the overall play?
   ● Iachimo’s language in this scene is poetic, full of symbolism and metaphor. Examine his language in greater detail and pick out some of the colours and symbols that Iachimo refers to. Describe what impressions they make and what they refer to?
   Do you think they are effective?
   [Examples: “[…] fresh lily, And whiter than the sheets” / “[…] white and azure laced with blue of heaven’s own tinct” / “[…] like the crimson drops I’ the bottom of a cowslip”]
   ● What do the following metaphors represent: “The crickets sing” / “Rubies unparagon’d” / “a heavenly angel”?
   ● Using the colours, images and metaphors in this scene as inspiration, create your own piece of writing; it can be a short story, a song or poem using a single word from the scene or several words as a springboard for ideas.

4. The Resolution (Act 5, Scene 4):
   ● Examine the scene in detail. How many revelations are there?
   ● Is there any problem left unresolved after this final scene?
   ● Britain has won the war and yet the King agrees to pay the tribute to the Roman Empire. Why do you think he does this?
   ● Is this a satisfactory ending in your opinion?
   Cymbeline: “[…] Never was a war did cease,
   Ere bloody hands were wash’d, with such a peace.”
   ● How have each of the following characters evolved in the course of the play? Does this final scene alter your opinion of any of them; Iachimo, Cymbeline, Innogen, Posthumus?
   ● Comment on the following exchange between Innogen and Cymbeline: What does it reveal about their characters?
   Cymbeline: “O Innogen, Thou hast lost by this a kingdom” Innogen: “No, my lord; I have got two worlds by ‘t.”
Aim: to complete a character analysis of primary and secondary characters in *Cymbeline* and to discuss and evaluate their relationships with each other.

Character outline:
❤ Identify the main characters and secondary characters in the play.
❤ Discuss any differences of opinion that arise in the process of separating characters into these two categories.
❤ Carry out the same exercise but, this time, identify heroes as opposed to villains.
❤ Do a quick survey to discover which is the preferred character from the play, and why?

Character analysis:
Now work in groups of 4 or 5 to explore a character of choice. The first step is to make a list of words that describes the character, using language from the play or your own words.

Here are some of the key factors to consider when analysing character:
- Physical Appearance
- Motivation
- Personality
- Relationships
- Background
- Conflict
- Does the character change?

Example: Posthumus Leonatus
What do we learn about the character of Posthumus from the descriptions of him by other characters in the play?

Soothsayer: “the best of men” (Act 1, Scene 1),
Innogen: “this jewel in the world” (Act 1, Scene 1),
Philario: “a noble friend” (Act 1, Scene 4), and
Iachimo: “He sits ’mongst men like a descended god: He hath a kind of honour sets him off [...]” (Act 1, Scene 6)

❤ Considering Posthumus’ actions throughout the play, do you think he lives up to the lavish praise that is bestowed upon him at various times?
❤ Examine Posthumus’ motivations in the following situations: a) his decision to write to Pisanio ordering Innogen’s murder and b) his decision to fight on the side of the British army.

Relationships and status:
Next step is to consider how your character of choice relates to others in the play and how he / she reacts to challenges or adversity. Can you establish what is the main motivation of your character?

Example: Relationship King Cymbeline and Innogen
❤ Analyze the character of Cymbeline. How is he portrayed as a King? What purposes does he serve?
❤ What kind of relationship do you think exists between King Cymbeline and his daughter, Innogen? Support your answer with reference to these extracts:

Innogen: “I something fear my father’s wrath; but nothing – His rage can do on me”

Cymbeline: “Nay, let her languish
A drop of blood a day; and, being aged
Die of this folly!” (Act 1, Scene 1)

Draw:
Draw a diagram representing the connections between the various characters. Here’s an example taking Innogen as the pivotal character:

Innogen
+ Cymbeline [her father, the King]
+ Posthumus Leonatus [her husband]
+ Cloten [her betrothed, jilted step-brother]
+ Pisanio [her loyal servant, previously Posthumus’s servant]
+ Iachimo [her seducer]
+ The Queen [her evil step-mother]
+ Arviragus and Guiderius [her long lost brothers]
+ Fidele [her disguised self]
+ Caius Lucius [Roman Commander who takes Fidele as his page]

❤ A variation of this exercise is to create a family tree to represent relationships between characters.
❤ Re-order your diagram to demonstrate the status of each character in the overall structure. Where does Posthumus fit into your structure?

Discuss:
Title of the play: Why do you think Shakespeare’s original play is called Cymbeline and not Princess Innogen? If you were adapting this play, what would you call it?

For fun:
● Create a personal profile for the characters of Innogen, Posthumus, Cloten and Iachimo for Facebook.
● Divide into groups of four and allocate one of the above characters to each member of the group.
● Now create an imaginary news feed among the four characters on the day Iachimo returns to Italy to break the news, albeit lies, to Posthumus that Innogen has been unfaithful to him.
● This game can be varied by adding the character of Pisanio and removing Cloten to alter the dynamic.
Aim: to clarify the key themes in *Cymbeline*.

As in Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, Phizzical’s production delves into the themes of power, love, treachery, loyalty and revenge, set in a South Asian context. These themes appear again and again throughout Shakespeare’s plays along with mistaken identity, cross-dressing, feuding families and torn lovers.

In the words of Jonathan Bate and Will Sharpe in the RSC Shakespeare edition of *Cymbeline*: “In a manner analogous to the wittily extreme variations on classical motifs in Baroque art, both the narrative arc and the characterisation revisit and revise, in a highly self-conscious manner, an array of favourite Shakespearean motifs: the cross-dressed heroine, the move from court to country, obsessive sexual jealousy, malicious Machiavellian plotting, then interrogation of Roman values. For Shakespeare, the material provided the opportunity to reach back to some of his earlier work”. (p.1)

**Key Themes**

- In groups of 4 or 5, discuss the key themes and decide which three are the most prominent and important in this play.
- Which other Shakespearean plays come to mind in relation to the themes you’ve chosen?
- In *Cymbeline*, which characters are most closely associated with and manifest each theme e.g. Queen = Deception, Pisanio = Loyalty, Innogen and Posthumus = Love etc.

**Language and Theme**

Take these five key themes and set out thematic dualities, such as in the example below:

- Honour - Dishonour
- Loyalty - Betrayal
- Truth - Falsehood
- Love - Hate
- Good - Evil
- Power - Lowliness
- Appearance - Reality

Prepare strings of connected vocabulary to use in discussions around these themes, for example:

- Loyalty - Trust - Fidelity - Good
- Love - Passion - Lust - Romance
- Betrayal - Jealousy - Treachery - Deception

Create a flow chart showing cause and effect to illustrate the development of any one theme, e.g. Jealousy (leads to) → Betrayal → Disloyalty → Evil…
Exploring Key Themes

Theme: Love and romance

Posthumus and Innogen appear in only two scenes together, the first (Act 1, Scene 1) and the last (Act 5, Scene 4). Do you think this is deliberate?

Reread Act 1 Scene 1. Examining the language and the action of the lovers in this scene alone, how would you expect their love to unfold in the following scenes? You may wish to take symbols into account (the exchanged diamond ring and mangalsutra).

In your opinion is Cymbeline a romantic play? List three reasons for your answer.

Discuss:
In A Midsummer Night’s Dream, the character Lysander says, “The course of true love never did run smooth”. Discuss how this quote can also be applied to the relationship between Posthumus and Innogen.

How might the quote be applied to any other Shakespearean play of your choice?

Perform:
- Divide participants into two groups: one group consisting of Innogens, the other of Posthumuses (you can mix genders in the groups to lend diversity to responses).
- Ask them to examine Posthumus’ soliloquies in Act 2, Scene 4 and Act 5, Scene 1 from the perspective of their respective characters, comparing language, state of mind and the emotions that he expresses in both speeches.
- Chose two participants playing Posthumus to read the soliloquies aloud. Imagine this is in preparation for an audition. Use props if desired.
- Now take two of the participants playing Innogen and ask them to imagine that they have somehow overheard Posthumus’ soliloquies, and improvise how they might react and how this makes them feel.
- You can further this improvisation by asking those participants playing Posthumus to respond to Innogen’s words, challenges, accusations or laments.
Theme: Appearance versus Reality

Appearance versus reality is an ever-present theme in many of Shakespeare’s plays. Nothing is as it seems and actions are often driven by deceptions; e.g. potions which are intended to be poisons and characters disguising themselves in another’s clothes.

❤ Make a list of the actions in Cymbeline which apply to this theme.

❤ Which characters in the play embody the theme? These characters may seem to be well-meaning and good, but we discover through their actions or words that this is an act and the old adage applies, ‘looks can be deceiving’.

❤ The passage below spoken by Pisano in Act 4, Scene 3 reveals his struggle to come to terms with his part in the plot to fake Innogen’s death. Discuss this passage in the context of the theme of appearance versus reality.

“I heard no letter from my master since I wrote him Innogen was slain: ’tis strange: Nor hear I from my mistress who did promise To yield me often tidings: neither know I What is betid to Cloten; but remain Perplex’d in all. The heavens still must work. Wherein I am false I am honest; not true, to be true.”

❤ Discuss the theme of appearance versus reality in any other Shakespearean play of your choice.

Dressing in another’s garments:

❤ “How fit his garments serve me”, says Cloten (Act 4, Scene 1) referring to Posthumus’ clothes which the faithful servant Pisanio has given to Cloten at his request. Examine Cloten’s speech, how does he align himself with the character of Posthumus? What change of status does he perceive in wearing Posthumus’ clothes?

❤ “I’ll disrobe me of these Italian weeds and suit myself as does a Briton peasant”, says Posthumus (Act 5, Scene 1) when he decides to desert the Italian side and go into battle secretly dressed as a Briton. What effect does this have on Posthumus’s status?

❤ What is the purpose of Innogen’s cross-dressing - does it serve any advantage when she dons male attire and takes on the role of Fidele? Which characters are most affected or fooled by Innogen’s cross-dressing?

Discuss:

Clothing is often used by Shakespeare to drive insight into character or explore a theme:

“Why do you dress me in borrowed robes” quotes Macbeth upon hearing that he is to be called Thane of Cawdor when he believes the Thane of Cawdor still lives, and King Lear has the following lines to highlight that poor men’s sins are much more noticeable than rich men’s: “Through tattered clothes great vices do appear / Robes and furred gowns hide all”.

Discuss this idea in relation to any other of Shakespeare’s plays with which you are familiar.
Theme: Treachery and betrayal
From the opening scene of the play where Cymbeline is seen to banish Posthumus from the court for secretly marrying Innogen; to the Queen’s treachery in plotting to poison anyone who might threaten her right to the throne and Iachimo’s wager to challenge Innogen’s fidelity, themes of betrayal and treachery abound in Cymbeline.

♥ What devices are used to highlight treachery and deception in the play? Consider the written letters that exchange hands at various moments in the play, dramatic techniques such as asides, soliloquies and use of colour symbolism (black/white, night/day, light/dark etc) in your answer.
♥ Which characters do you most associate with these themes and why?
♥ In your opinion which character suffers the greatest betrayal at the hands of another character in the play?
♥ How does truth triumph over falsehood in the end?
♥ Can you apply this theme to another Shakespearean play which you have studied?

Discuss:

Ghosts and the Supernatural: There a many supernatural elements in Cymbeline, for example in Act 5, Scene 3 where Jupiter and the ghosts of Posthumus’ dead family come to visit him and offer him advice. What do these elements contribute to the themes and to the plot of the play?

Other Shakespearean plays also use the convention of a ghost or a spectre e.g. the ghost of Banquo in Macbeth and the ghost of old King Hamlet in Hamlet. Try to imagine these plays without a spectral presence. How would the overall dramatic and theatrical experience be altered?

Theme: Which of the themes explored in this play resonate most strongly in our modern minds for contemporary audiences?

Genre: There is much debate and discussion in academic circles as to why Cymbeline was originally included among Shakespeare’s tragedies in the First Folio of his works, published in 1623. Many issues are neatly resolved in the final scene and the only two deaths in the play are those of the villainous characters, Cloten and the Queen. Today, it is generally regarded as a Comedy. For this reason, it is known as one of Shakespeare’s “problem plays”.

The conventions of Comedy include: disguise, often involving cross-dressing; thwarted love; mistaken identity; marital and romantic misunderstandings. Comedies end in multiple marriage [and feasts or parties].

The conventions of Tragedy include: a single heroic main character (the protagonist); some dreadful dilemma or wrong decision; conspiracy; fighting; (often) madness; many deaths at the end.

[Sean McEvoy: ‘Shakespeare, the Basics’, p. 122-123]

Using the examples provided in the above definitions, answer the following questions:
♥ What does Cymbeline have in common with the tragedies? What makes it different?
♥ What does Cymbeline have in common with the comedies? What makes it different?
Aim: to explore elements of the language in Cymbeline and consider how themes and characters are revealed through language.

In Shakespeare’s words lie all the clues to character and situation that any reader or actor needs.

It is important to note that Shakespeare, just like all the other playwrights of his time working in the London playhouses, did not write with readers in mind. He wrote lines for actors to speak which had to be understood as soon as they were heard by the audience. [...] It is also worth noting that he would often have an actor in mind when writing a character and this actor would perform his lines in a crowded, bustling, open-air theatre surrounded by bear-puts and brothels. [taken from Sean McEvoy: ‘Shakespeare, the Basics’, p. 13]

Name and status:
“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet?” (Romeo and Juliet Act 2, Scene 2). As with Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, Juliet knows that the blood feud prevents her from openly loving a Montague (Romeo). Innogen knows that by marrying Posthumus, she is marrying below her rank and thus going against the wishes of her father, the King.

Think about Innogen’s name and how it resonates with the word “innocence”? How do you think this might be relevant in the context of Innogen’s role in Cymbeline?

Later in the play, in the guise of Fidele, Caius Lucius tells Innogen “Thy name well fits thy faith, thy faith thy name” (Act 4, Scene 2)

What do you think he means by this?

Examine the names of the other characters in the play and explore their meanings. Below are some examples to begin the discussion:

Leonatus – the Lion’s Whelp (Act 5, Scene 4)
Cloten – “like a cock” (Act 2, Scene 1)
Innogen – “the Arabian bird” (Act 1, Scene 6) and a “fresh lily” (Act 2, Scene 2)

For fun:

Fridge magnet quotations

• Find the insults in the play. Which of these insults is the worst in your opinion? Here are some examples:
  “Thou’rt poison to my blood” (Act 1, Scene 1)
  “A whoreson jackanapes” (Act 2, Scene 1)
  “This imperceiverant thing” (Act 4, Scene 1)

• You can repeat this exercise by finding colourful descriptions of people and places or expressions of love and affection from the text.

• Now ask the class to create their own insults and compliments, Shakespeare-style!

Language and Character

Compare the language used by Innogen’s two seducers (Iachimo and Cloten) in these two segments of speech. Describe the language. What does it tell you about these men?

IACHIMO:
“O Venus, How bravely thou becomest thy bed, fresh lily, And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch! But kiss; one kiss! Rubies unparagon’d, How dearly they do’t! ’Tis her breathing that Perfumes the chamber thus: the flame o’ the taper Bows towards her, and would under-peep her lids, To see the enclosed lights, now canopied Under these windows, white and azure laced With blue of heaven’s own tinct.” (Act 2, Scene 2) […]

CLOTEN:
“Come on; I am advised to give her music o’ mornings; they say it will penetrate. Enter musicians If you can penetrate her with your fingering; so; we’ll try with tongue too: if none will do, let her remain; but I’ll never give o’er. First, a very excellent good-conceited thing; After, a wonderful sweet air, with admirable rich Words to it: and then let.” (Act 2, Scene 3)

Compare the quotations below. Comment on the impressions they create of women and men as outlined by Innogen and Posthumus respectively:
Innogen: “Men’s Vows are women’s traitors” (Act 3, Scene 4), and Posthumus: “The vows of women of no bondage be, to where they are made, than they are to their virtues; which is nothing. O, above measure false!” (Act 2, Scene 4)
CRITICAL RESPONSES

**Aim:** to develop our understanding and appreciation of the production by examining performances, as well as its direction and design.

**Discuss:**
Divide into groups and discuss your responses and reactions to the production. Each group should choose a representative to report back key discussion points and criticisms.

**For fun:**
Imagine that you are a blogger on an arts website. Write your own review of the production, using the following guidelines:

- Give details about the play you saw (which theatre, who directed it, what genre etc)
- What was your general response to the production (enjoyment factor, accessibility and ease of understanding, relevance to modern audiences etc)
- Talk about direction and design elements (which director’s choices worked / didn’t work? What were the sets, costumes and lightening designs?)
- How was the acting? Which performances did you particularly admire and say why.
- Conclude with anything that you particularly admired about the production, something that made it stand out or memorable / meaningful for you.
STAGING CYMBELINE

Aim: to focus on staging a production of Cymbeline and to encourage involvement and engagement in the creative process, from designing the set and costumes, to casting it, making directorial choices and performing the play.

Director’s notebook
Imagine that you are directing a production of this play:
❤ Decide where you will set it and in which era.
❤ Would you envisage performing it in a conventional theatre setting (proscenium arch, thrust stage, in the round) or in a more unusual venue (in a disused building, in a forest, in a tent)?
❤ Cast it: the world is your oyster and money is not an object, which actors would you chose to perform the key roles in the play?

Activity:
For these exercises below, you may wish to consider the following elements: tone of voice, gesture, facial expression, body language, pace of speech, movements, positions or grouping of characters on stage and the order of their entrances and exits.

● Explain how you would highlight the drama in the key scenes discussed earlier in this pack (The Play / Narrative, p. 5).
● Act out these key scenes again, bearing all these elements in mind and consider how your performance might improve an audience’s understanding of the text.
● As director, how would you advise an actor to perform their parts and bring their characters to life during the following scenes in the play:
  - Innogen in the scene where she dresses up as Fidele,
  - Iachimo in the bedchamber scene, and
  - Posthumus in the scene where Iachimo reveals that Innogen has been unfaithful.
● Think about the relationships with other characters in these scenes. Can these relationships be emphasised by their positioning in relation to the main character on the stage?

Design detail
Talk to your set, costume and lighting designer about your ideas for this production. These visual elements will immediately reveal to an audience the historical period of the play and what kind of characters to expect. Bear in mind that there are two very different locations built into the play: at court and in the woods — and you will have to manage this scene change in your production.

❤ What set-design ideas have you in mind?
❤ What costumes would best convey the style, era, effect you are aiming for? Remember that costume can also indicate personality and status, so you can use your costume designs to reveal something about a character’s personality and his / her role in the play.
❤ Think about lighting effects. What type of lighting would best suggest time and place and so build up the right atmosphere? (It is not necessary to be technical: a general description will suffice.)
❤ Describe what props you would need for the production.

Activity:
● Cut out pictures from magazines or newspapers that you could use as inspiration for set and costume design ideas for your production.
● Using Act 2, Scene 2 (the bedroom scene) and (Act 2, Scene 4) (Iachimo’s description of the room to Posthumus) as inspiration, create a sketch or design notes about how you would conceive the décor and props for this scene.
● Which elements of Phizzical’s production did you most enjoy from a design perspective?

Music and Sound Effects
In Phizzical’s production, music is used throughout to create atmosphere and highlight the Indian setting and make cultural references. Can you think of appropriate music or sound effects for your production?

Which scenes, transitions or moments in the play require music or sound elements to describe the action?

References and further resources:
Richard Danson Brown and David Johnson in ‘Shakespeare 1609: Cymbeline and the Sonnets’.
Sean McEvoy, ‘Shakespeare, the Basics’.
Cymbeline in Juba Arabic by South Sudan Theatre Company, a film produced for ‘The Space’ project, 2012: http://thespace.org/items/e000060s?t=cgvsj