

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

Character Notes

FALSTAFF

A dishonourable knight; often a scoundrel and occasionally a thief. He is boisterous, fat, funny and mischievous, and has the trust or friendship of no other character in the play. Falstaff sees no problem with attempting to seduce other men's wives, and does so in order to gain access to their money. Unfortunately, he is far less able to mastermind a plan than the other inhabitants of Windsor and the targets of his affections, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, are easily able to outwit and fool him. He is buried in dirty laundry, thrown in the Thames, dressed up as a 'Fat Aunt' and beaten, before finally realising his foolishness at the end of the play.

MISTRESS FORD

Married to Ford and best friend of Mistress Page. Feels oppressed by her husband's jealousy and seeks to prove her honesty and faithfulness to him. She receives a seductive letter from Falstaff and she takes great pleasure in plotting to humiliate him.

MISTRESS PAGE

Married to Master Page and friend of Mistress Ford. She receives an identical love letter from Falstaff and plots his downfall with her friend. She disagrees with her husband about the future of her daughter, Anne, believing she should marry Doctor Caius. Mistress Page is eventually happy to see her child settle with a man she loves.

FORD

Married to Mistress Ford and very jealous and mistrusting of his wife. When he finds out the seduction attempt on her, he expects her to fall in love with Falstaff and bring shame upon him. He is angry and paranoid, disguises himself as a man named Brooke, and befriends Falstaff in order to find out his plans for seduction and his wife's response to them. Over the course of the play, he must learn to control his tendency for jealous rage, which he manages to do upon finding out his wife's true feelings and, finally, schemes with her to complete Falstaff's humiliation.

MASTER PAGE

Married to Mistress Page and friend of Ford. He is not jealous of his wife, and consequently finds Ford's own emotions slightly irrational. But the subject of his daughter's marriage dominates his feelings, and he is unable to see the man she really loves, Fenton, as a potential suitor – a problem he must overcome if Anne is to be happy.

ANNE PAGE

Daughter of Master and Mistress Page. She is young and under pressure from her parents and from the several men she has courting her. However, she remains very single-minded and, in love with Fenton, she spurns the advances of the men her parents think would make more suitable husbands, Caius and Slender. Anne is very independent, and arranges to elope with Fenton, returning at the end of the play, triumphantly married, and proving to her parents that her desires were not whimsical.

SIR HUGH EVANS

A local clergyman, but originally from Wales. His Welsh accent is strange and amusing to the English characters in the play and he is constantly mocked for the way he talks.

DOCTOR CAIUS

The local doctor, master of Mistress Quickly. He is French and, consequently, is mocked like Evans for his accent and misunderstanding of the English language. He hopes to marry Anne Page, and her mother would prefer him to her daughter's other suitors. Unfortunately, Anne does not feel the same about him.

FENTON

A young, handsome country gentleman. He is born into some nobility but is not particularly wealthy, which is why Anne Page's parents deem him unworthy, expecting he is just after their daughter's fortune. He was, in fact, but getting to know her he falls in love, and arranges for a priest to marry them secretly at midnight.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

The housekeeper of Doctor Caius, she acts as everyone's messenger. She visits Falstaff at the request of Mistress Page and Mistress Ford, and she delivers messages to Anne Page on behalf of all three of her suitors. Even though her employer is one of those chasing Anne, she prefers Fenton, and her support for him shows she has more of a respect for romantic love than others in Windsor.

SLENDOR

The third man after Anne Page's hand in marriage. He is encouraged by his uncle, Justice Shallow, but is unable to speak to Anne, his words coming out as nonsense. While her father, Master Page, favours Slendor to marry his daughter, she is not interested and he misses his chance.

SHALLOW

A local member of the law, but largely untrustworthy and foolish. He encourages his nephew, Slendor, to seduce Anne Page and is so desperate for the success of the relationship, at times he can't control himself speaking for him.

NYM, BARDOLPH AND PISTOL

Falstaff's followers. Bardolph is more raucous and untrustworthy, but Nym and Pistol try to remain honest. They refuse to deliver Falstaff's letters to Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, and decide to let their husbands know of Falstaff's money-grabbing plan.

HOST

The innkeeper at the Garter Inn, a popular watering-hole in boisterous Windsor. He constantly ridicules the accents of Caius and Evans and becomes the target of their pranks.

SIMPLE

Slender's servant.

RUGBY

Dr Caius' servant.

ROBIN

A boy servant.