
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Shakespeare Speaks

Forever and a day



Narrator

It was a rainy day in July. William Shakespeare and his actor friend Robert Harley are rehearsing his comedy *The Taming of the Shrew*. Will's daughter is watching the rehearsal.

Robert Harley

Will, I do like your plays when everybody pretends to be somebody else!

Will

Thank you, Robert. The audience likes it too – that's why it's in the play.

Daughter

Father, I'm confused... Who is the young man in the teacher's costume?

Will

That is Lucentio, daughter. He is pretending to be a tutor so that he can be near to Bianca, whom he wants to marry.

Daughter

So the man wearing Lucentio's clothes isn't the real Lucentio?

Will

No, he's Lucentio's servant. He's pretending to be Lucentio so that the real Lucentio can pretend to be a tutor.

Daughter

Ohhh! That's so romantic, isn't it, Robert?!

Robert Harley

Well it's very clever Will, but... I can't help thinking that Lucentio should just be a man about it: take the woman to the church and marry her.

Daughter

Ohhhhh...

Will

Well, Robert, that is exactly what happens. Lucentio's other servant, Biondello, tells him to stop playing games and to just marry Bianca, because otherwise he risks losing her – not just forever, but forever and a day. Let us rehearse.

Robert Harley as Biondello

To th' church take the priest, clerk, and some sufficient honest witnesses. If this be not that you look for, I have no more to say, But bid Bianca farewell forever and a day.

Daughter

Forever and a day – that's a long time to live without your true love...

Narrator

We'll leave them there for now. Putting characters in disguise was one of Shakespeare's favourite devices: not only because his audiences loved it, but also because it gave him opportunities to explore themes of class, status and love as he swapped the roles of rich and poor, old and young, and male and female characters. The phrase **forever and a day** means the same as it did in Shakespeare's day: something – either good or bad – will last indefinitely, or for a very, very long time. In his love song *Forever and a Day*, Lionel Richie sings...

Clip 1

And I'll love you for forever and a day day day day day day day day day day day,
Forever and a day day day day day day day day...

Clip 2

Oh, look at that queue! We'll be waiting forever and a day. Let's come back tomorrow.

Will

Now, on with the rehearsal everybody...

Robert Harley

Speaking of husbands and wives – when are you bringing Mrs Shakespeare to London, Mr Shakespeare?

Will

Mrs Shakespeare prefers to remain at home in Stratford... and I prefer that too. To bring, or not to bring: that is the question...