



## Shakespeare Selection

For our Shakespeare selection, we have chosen *Pericles*.

Read it from Charles & Mary Lamb's *Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare* in the following pages. But we also recommend reading the actual play together as a family if you can.

Your older kids and teens may enjoy watching a movie adaptation (please pre-screen these first). And if you can take in a live performance, your family will never forget it!

Shakespeare

# Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare

by Edith Nesbit

## Pericles

Pericles, the Prince of Tyre, was unfortunate enough to make an enemy of Antiochus, the powerful and wicked King of Antioch; and so great was the danger in which he stood that, on the advice of his trusty counselor, Lord Helicanus, he determined to travel about the world for a time. He came to this decision despite the fact that, by the death of his father, he was now King of Tyre. So he set sail for Tarsus, appointing Helicanus Regent during his absence. That he did wisely in thus leaving his kingdom was soon made clear.

Hardly had he sailed on his voyage, when Lord Thaliard arrived from Antioch with instructions from his royal master to kill Pericles. The faithful Helicanus soon discovered the deadly purpose of this wicked lord, and at once sent messengers to Tarsus to warn the King of the danger which threatened him.

The people of Tarsus were in such poverty and distress that Pericles, feeling that he could find no safe refuge there, put to sea again. But a dreadful storm overtook the ship in which he was, and the good vessel was wrecked, while of all on board only Pericles was saved. Bruised and wet and faint, he was flung upon the cruel rocks on the coast of Pentapolis, the country of the good King Simonides. Worn out as he was, he looked for nothing but death, and that speedily. But some fishermen, coming down to the beach, found him there, and gave him clothes and bade him be of good cheer.

"Thou shalt come home with me," said one of them, "and we will have flesh for holidays, fish for fasting days, and moreo'er, puddings and flapjacks, and thou shalt be welcome."

They told him that on the morrow many princes and knights were going to the King's Court, there to joust and tourney for the love of his daughter, the beautiful Princess Thaisa.

"Did but my fortunes equal my desires," said Pericles, "I'd wish to make one there."

As he spoke, some of the fishermen came by, drawing their net, and it dragged heavily, resisting all their efforts, but at last they hauled it in, to find that it contained a suit of rusty armor; and looking at it, he blessed Fortune for her kindness, for he saw that it was his own, which had been given to him by his dead father. He begged the fishermen to let him have it that he might go to Court and take part in the tournament, promising that if ever his ill fortunes bettered, he would reward them well. The fishermen readily consented, and being thus fully equipped, Pericles set off in his rusty armor to the King's Court.

In the tournament none bore himself so well as Pericles, and he won the wreath of victory, which the fair Princess herself placed on his brows. Then at her father's command she asked him who he was, and whence he came; and he answered that he was a knight of Tyre, by name Pericles, but he did not tell her that he was the King of that country, for he knew that if once his whereabouts became known to Antiochus, his life would not be worth a pin's purchase.

Nevertheless Thaisa loved him dearly, and the King was so pleased with his courage and graceful bearing that he gladly permitted his daughter to have her own way, when she told him she would marry the stranger knight or die.

Thus Pericles became the husband of the fair lady for whose sake he had striven with the knights who came in all their bravery to joust and tourney for her love.

Meanwhile the wicked King Antiochus had died, and the people in Tyre, hearing no news of their King, urged Lord Helicanus to ascend the vacant throne. But they could only get him to promise that he would become their King, if at the end of a year Pericles did not come back. Moreover, he sent forth messengers far and wide in search of the missing Pericles.

Some of these made their way to Pentapolis, and finding their King there, told him how discontented his people were at his long absence, and that, Antiochus being dead, there was nothing now to hinder him from returning to his kingdom. Then Pericles told his wife and father-in-law who he really was, and they and all the subjects of Simonides greatly rejoiced to know that the gallant husband of Thaisa was a King in his own right. So Pericles set sail with his dear wife for his native land. But once more the sea was cruel to him, for again a dreadful storm broke out, and while it was at its height, a servant came to tell him that a little daughter was born to him. This news would have made his heart glad indeed, but that the servant went on to add that his wife--his dear, dear Thaisa--was dead.

While he was praying the gods to be good to his little baby girl, the sailors came to him, declaring that the dead Queen must be thrown overboard, for they believed that the storm would never cease so long as a dead body remained in the vessel. So Thaisa was laid in a big chest with spices and jewels, and a scroll on which the sorrowful King wrote these lines:

"Here I give to understand  
(If e'er this coffin drive a-land),  
I, King Pericles, have lost  
This Queen worth all our mundane cost.  
Who finds her, give her burying;  
She was the daughter of a King;  
Besides this treasure for a fee,  
The gods requite his charity!"

Then the chest was cast into the sea, and the waves taking it, by and by washed it ashore at Ephesus, where it was found by the servants of a lord named Cerimon. He at once ordered it to be opened, and when he saw how lovely Thaisa looked, he doubted if she were dead, and took immediate steps to restore her. Then a great wonder happened, for she, who had been thrown into the sea as dead, came back to life. But feeling sure that she would never see her husband again, Thaisa retired from the world, and became a priestess of the Goddess Diana.

While these things were happening, Pericles went on to Tarsus with his little daughter, whom he called Marina, because she had been born at sea. Leaving her in the hands of his old friend the Governor of Tarsus, the King sailed for his own dominions.

Now Dionyza, the wife of the Governor of Tarsus, was a jealous and wicked woman, and finding that the young Princess grew up a more accomplished and charming girl than her own daughter, she determined to take Marina's life. So when Marina was fourteen, Dionyza ordered one of her servants to take her away and kill her. This villain would have done so, but that he was interrupted by some pirates who came in and carried Marina off to sea with them, and took her to Mitylene, where they sold her as a slave. Yet such was her goodness, her grace, and her beauty, that she soon became honored there, and Lysimachus, the young Governor, fell deep in love with her, and would have married her, but that he thought she must be of too humble parentage to become the wife of one in his high position.

The wicked Dionyza believed, from her servant's report, that Marina was really dead, and so she put up a monument to her memory, and showed it to King Pericles, when after long years of absence he came to see his much-loved child. When he heard that she was dead, his grief was terrible to see. He set sail once more, and putting on sackcloth, vowed never to wash his face or cut his hair again. There was a pavilion erected on deck, and there he lay alone, and for three months he spoke word to none.

At last it chanced that his ship came into the port of Mitylene, and Lysimachus, the Governor, went on board to enquire whence the vessel came. When he heard the story of Pericles' sorrow and silence, he bethought him of Marina, and believing that she could rouse the King from his stupor, sent for her and bade her try her utmost to persuade the King to speak, promising whatever reward she would, if she succeeded. Marina gladly obeyed, and sending the rest away, she sat and sang to her poor grief-laden father, yet, sweet as was her voice, he made no sign. So presently she spoke to him, saying that her grief might equal his, for, though she was a slave, she came from ancestors that stood equal to mighty kings.

Something in her voice and story touched the King's heart, and he looked up at her, and as he looked, he saw with wonder how like she was to his lost wife, so with a great hope springing up in his heart, he bade her tell her story.

Then, with many interruptions from the King, she told him who she was and how she had escaped from the cruel Dionyza. So Pericles knew that this was indeed his daughter, and he kissed her again and again, crying that his great seas of joy drowned him with their sweetness. "Give me my robes," he said: "O Heaven, bless my girl!"

Then there came to him, though none else could hear it, the sound of heavenly music, and falling asleep, he beheld the goddess Diana, in a vision.

"Go," she said to him, "to my temple at Ephesus, and when my maiden priests are met together, reveal how thou at sea didst lose thy wife."

Pericles obeyed the goddess and told his tale before her altar. Hardly had he made an end, when the chief priestess, crying out, "You are--you are--O royal Pericles!" fell fainting to the ground, and presently recovering, she spoke again to him, "O my lord, are you not Pericles?" "The voice of dead Thaisa!" exclaimed the King in wonder. "That Thaisa am I," she said, and looking at her he saw that she spoke the very truth.

Thus Pericles and Thaisa, after long and bitter suffering, found happiness once more, and in the joy of their meeting they forgot the pain of the past. To Marina great happiness was given, and not only in being restored to her dear parents; for she married Lysimachus, and became a princess in the land where she had been sold as a slave.