The Winter's Tale is a play by William Shakespeare, originally published in the First Folio of 1623. Although it was grouped among the comedies, some modern editors have relabelled the play as one of Shakespeare's late romances. Some critics consider it to be one of Shakespeare's "problem plays", because the first three acts are filled with intense psychological drama, while the last two acts are comedic and supply a happy ending. Polixenes is visiting the kingdom of Sicilia, and is enjoying catching up with his old friend. However, after nine months, Polixenes yearns to return to his own kingdom to tend to affairs and see his son. George Lillie Craik. The English of Shakespeare Illustrated in a Philological Commentary on His Julius Caesar. Chapman and Hall, 1857

Polixenes's yearning for his son and his desire to return to his own kingdom are reminiscent of the political and personal concerns of Shakespeare's contemporaries. In 1599, when Shakespeare wrote this play, England was facing the same questions about how the country should be ruled. Queen Elizabeth I, 66 years old, had no heirs, and people were worried about the future of their country and arguing about monarchy vs. democracy. Due to censorship, people weren't allowed to publicly debate such matters, but that didn't stop Shakespeare. from weighing in with his opinion.