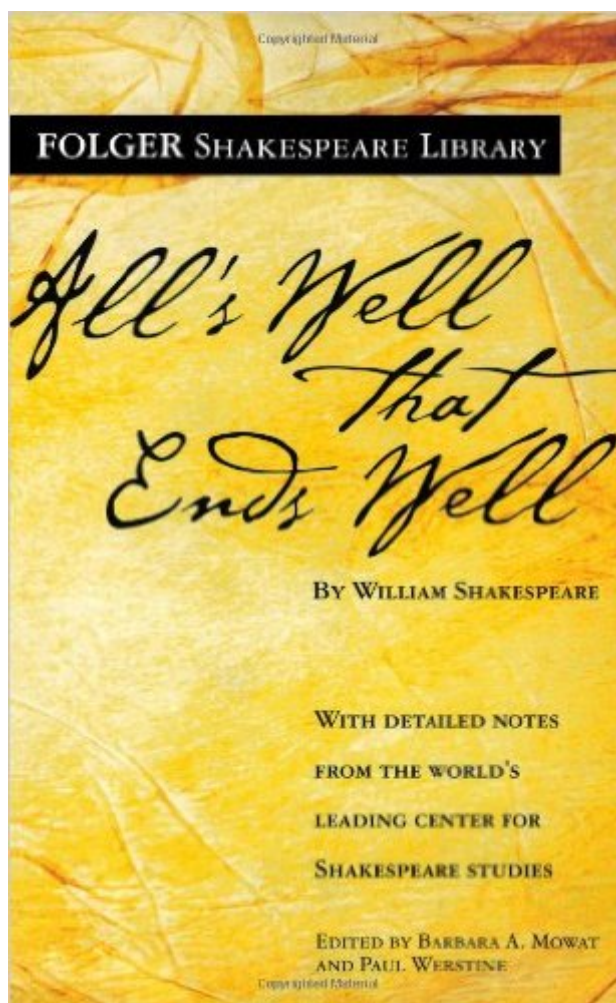


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All's Well That Ends Well (Folger Shakespeare Library)



Synopsis

Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* is the story of its heroine, Helen, more so than the story of Bertram, for whose love she yearns. Helen wins Bertram as her husband despite his lack of interest and higher social standing, but she finds little happiness in the victory as he shuns, deserts, and attempts to betray her. The play suggests some sympathy for Bertram. As a ward to the French king, he must remain at court while his friends go off to war and glory. When Helen cures the King, he makes Bertram available to her. To exert any control over his life, Bertram goes to war in Italy. Helen then takes the initiative in furthering their marriage, undertaking an arduous journey and a daring trick. Few today, however, see a fairy-tale ending. The authoritative edition of *All's Well That Ends Well* from The Folger Shakespeare Library, the trusted and widely used Shakespeare series for students and general readers, includes:

- Freshly edited text based on the best early printed version of the play
- Full explanatory notes conveniently placed on pages facing the text of the play
- Scene-by-scene plot summaries
- A key to the play's famous lines and phrases
- An introduction to reading Shakespeare's language
- An essay by a leading Shakespeare scholar providing a modern perspective on the play
- Fresh images from the Folger Shakespeare Library's vast holdings of rare books
- An annotated guide to further reading

Essay by David McCandless

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Customer Reviews

Now, there is no doubt that I will teach exclusively from the Folger edition of Shakespeare's plays when I have the good fortune to teach a Shakespeare class, as I did this summer. As I have written in previous reviews of editions of Shakespeare's plays, the Folger Shakespeare Library is the most accessible for students to use and for me to teach from. The Folger "All's Well That Ends Well" went over very well with the class. Of course, there is the play itself which my students didn't think they would enjoy as much as "Othello" or "Macbeth". I could understand their preconceptions; they knew "To be or not to be" and "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow". There are no very famous quotes from this play. In any event, they equated Shakespeare with tragedies. They were surprised by "All's Well That Ends Well". They were shocked by the sexual references and the entire "bed-switching" concept. They loved to hate Parolles and laughed with satisfaction when he is undone. What makes this edition preferable for students are the face-to-face footnoting and explications. Students appreciate not having to flip to the back of the book or have the bottom of the page (and, therefore, the flow of the reading) cut through by footnotes. And finally, there is the price. The Folger Shakespeare Library is always reasonably priced. This is a major factor when you consider what students are already paying for their college education.

What sets this edition of "All's Well..." apart is the very worthwhile essay from Mr. McCandless contained in the back of the book. Mr. McCandless' essay comes a long way in helping readers understand the seemingly inexplicable heel-face turn of Bertram at the end of the play. Highly recommended not only for the vast textual notes and introductory passages, as all Folger Shakespeare editions contain, but especially for the enlightening essay by Mr. McCandless.

I loved it. "All's Well That Ends Well" is a convoluted story of guys who want to marry the girl who doesn't want to marry them, but wants the guy that doesn't really want her but, wants to go off with another guy. There's a coward, homoerotic undertones, slapstick, deceit, and a king who is in charge and apparently clueless. The significance of a devious, influential, and brilliant young woman as a heroine is easy to understand when Queen Elizabeth was in the audience. In a period of sophisticated intrigues and war, this was a relevant bit of entertainment. Knowing the original context, much of this play's relevance is retained after almost 400 years. The subtle insinuation that Bertram would rather hang with his buddy than his lady is easily lost if you don't pay attention, and

would be easy to play down on stage. It shouldn't be, it was part of the play, and adds a subtle and arch touch to the script. I really enjoyed this one, especially when the coward Parolles gets burned. E. M. Van Court

This play is probably not as great as others of Shakespeare's comedies, but it is still worth the effort. The play is quite ribald. It is a short play. The plot is a familiar one - a woman is set an almost impossible task, and if she succeeds in completing it, she will get her dearest wish. Worth a read.

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