

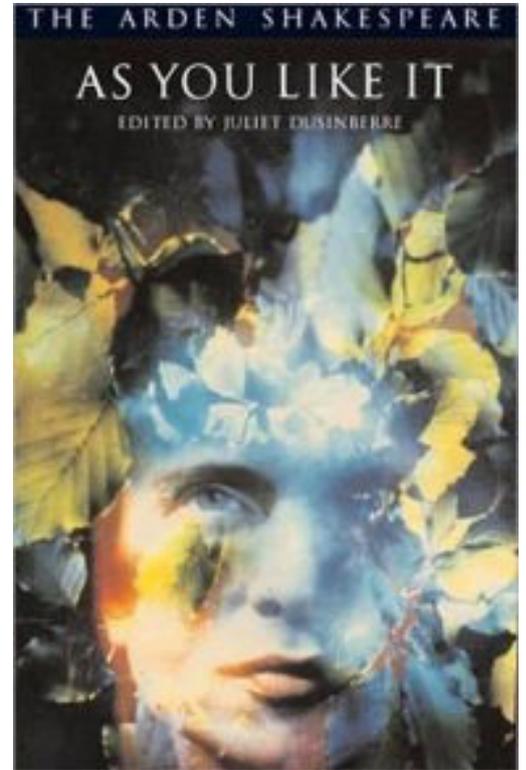


Introduction

As You Like It is a pastoral comedy believed to be written and first performed in 1599. It was published in the First Folio (as the first collected edition of Shakespeare is known) in 1623. Shakespeare's output during the 1590s had focused on history plays and comedies about love. He was also writing the sonnets during this period.

The play tells the story of Rosalind escaping tyranny by dressing as a boy and fleeing to the Forest of Arden. Also fleeing into the Forest of Arden is a boy, Orlando. The two met briefly in Act I, fell in love and now find each other in the forest. However, Rosalind is still in her disguise as a boy, Ganymede. As a kind of game to pass the time, Ganymede and Orlando woo each other. In amongst many other plot strands, they are eventually married, along with three other couples. Four weddings and no funeral, if you will.

Dr Johnson, writing in 1765, found the fable 'wild and pleasing', the character of Jaques 'natural and well-preserved', the comic dialogue 'very sprightly, with less mixture of low buffoonery than in some other plays', and 'the graver part' 'elegant and harmonious'.





The Main Characters

Duke Senior

Duke Senior, in exile. Having been usurped by his brother, Duke Senior and a band of loyal courtiers have escaped to the Forest of Arden. The Duke is enjoying this return to rural life, asking his 'co-mates and brothers in exile' the question 'Are not these woods more free from peril than the envious court?'. He seems to live a life of almost total leisure in the forest in contrast to the political machinations of his former life. The actor playing Duke Senior has one key balance to strike. He has to be jolly and avuncular, whilst also being convincing as a former ruler. Some productions veer too much towards a kind of Santa Claus Duke Senior, which robs the part of some of its depth.

Rosalind

Rosalind, his daughter, is one of the most demanding comic parts in Shakespeare. She commands nearly all of the scenes in which she appears and has to grapple with a dazzling array of complex emotions. Her performance in Act I is a mixture of defiance and fear, before her adventurous spirit shines through:

*Were it not better,
Because that I am more than common tall,
That I did suit me all points like a man?
A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh,
A boar-spear in my hand; and – in my heart
Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will –
We'll have a swashing and a martial outside,
As many other mannish cowards have
That do outface it with their semblances.*



The wooing game with Orlando that dominates the middle acts requires extremely careful handling. She and Orlando find each other in the forest. Orlando expresses his wish to talk about his love, Rosalind. Rosalind (dressed as Ganymede, remember) seizes this opportunity and suggests that Orlando pretend he/she is Rosalind and woo her accordingly. In a moment of apparent whim, he says yes and the game begins:

ROSALIND: I would cure you [of your love], if you would but call me Rosalind and come every day to my cote and woo me.

ORLANDO: Now, by the faith of my love, I will: tell me where it is.

If you or the audience question this moment too logically, the magic will be broken. Pace is crucial here. If the play can build up momentum, much like spinning a plate perhaps, then the magic may continue. If too slow, the plate will fall from its stick and the audience will fail to suspend its disbelief.

Duke Frederick

Duke Frederick, his usurping brother. He establishes himself in Act I as a threat to Rosalind, fearing her influence on his daughter, Celia. He banishes Rosalind under threat of death, forcing her into the forest. At the end of the play, he is marching into the forest to destroy his brother finally. However, on the way he undergoes a spiritual conversion – the sort of thing that happens in these magical forests – and this allows Duke Senior to return to his rightful position:

*And to the skirts of this wild wood he came;
Where meeting with an old religious man,
After some question with him, was converted
Both from his enterprise and from the world,
His crown bequeathing to his banish'd brother,
And all their lands restored to them again
That were with him exiled.*



Celia

Celia is Frederick's daughter and great friend of Rosalind. Celia accompanies Rosalind into the forest and whilst she seems less enamoured of the rural lifestyle, she enjoys the merriment to be found there.

Touchstone

Touchstone, the court jester. Perhaps the most difficult of Shakespeare's clown parts – Touchstone is the easiest to get wrong. He delivers many Renaissance jokes and flights of fancy, not all of which translate easily to modern performance. The most successful performances adopt the following approaches. Firstly, he must have a genuinely warm relationship with Rosalind and Celia, whom he accompanies into the forest. Secondly, he must rattle through the lines with high energy. That does not mean screaming the part as quickly as possible – Touchstone should have a light touch in delivery but be vocally and physically agile and nimble.

Oliver de Bois

Oliver de Bois is the eldest son of Sir Rowland de Bois. Oliver is one of the baddies of the piece. He abuses Adam, who has served the family for many years and treats his younger brother, Orlando, poorly. Oliver even tries to set fire to Orlando's house with him in it, forcing Orlando to flee to the forest. Oliver, however, eventually finds himself in the forest and at the mercy of wild beasts. He is saved from a snake and a lioness by his brother, Orlando (off-stage, conveniently), and this provokes their reconciliation. He also takes a shine to Celia when he meets her in the forest towards the end of the play and they are one of the four couples married at the end.

Orlando de Bois

Orlando de Bois, younger brother of Oliver. As explained, Orlando flees his brother's tyranny before meeting Rosalind in the woods and engaging in the wooing game. The actor playing Orlando should try to answer two questions about his character. Firstly, why does Orlando go along with the game? Secondly, how much does Orlando suspect and at what point(s) in the play?



An Orlando who seems to take Ganymede simply as Ganymede tends to look witless in contrast to Rosalind's theatrical mastery. However, an Orlando ready to give as good as he gets, and who may even apprehend that Ganymede is not all he seems, is much more likely to be a match for the heroine.

Jaques

Jaques, a melancholy traveller, is perhaps one of the most enjoyable parts in the play. Jaques is responsible for one of Shakespeare's most famous speeches, the Seven Ages of Man. Jaques' acerbic wit and irresistible pessimism provide the play with some rougher textures. Again, there is a balance to be struck in performing this character between his wit and his melancholy; if played too jokey, his jarring departure at the end of the play comes out of nowhere; if played too miserably, his scenes will drag.

William Hazlitt was typical of eighteenth-century criticism in praising Jaques as 'the only purely contemplative character in Shakespeare.'



Issues

August W. von Schlegel wrote in 1809–11 that 'nothing is wanted to call forth the poetry which has its dwelling in nature and the human mind but to throw off all artificial constraint and restore both to their native liberty'.

Genre

This play is a pastoral comedy. Its most obvious counterparts are *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*, but many of the comedies share the same structure. The play begins in a world of order and civilisation. The characters then enter a chaotic forest or similar space (the island in *The Tempest*, for example) and their world is turned upside down. At the end of the play, everyone returns to their ordered lives but takes with them some of what they have experienced in chaos.

City/Country

Linked to the paragraph above, this is more than a matter of simple geography. The differences between urban, courtly life and the life of the countryside animate many of the characters in this play. Duke Senior is happy to be in the apparent simplicity of the country, though some of his courtiers seem to prefer the comforts of urban life. The country provides an opportunity for escape from social pressures and conventions; people can re-fashion their identities in the country in a way they cannot in the town. Corin, one of the shepherds, disputes with Touchstone at one point over philosophy. Corin's common sense attitude to life cuts through Touchstone's sophisticated nonsense. Shakespeare, who worked in London but grew up in the countryside around Stratford-upon-Avon, is perhaps getting here at how easy it is to become detached from truth and goodness if you are detached from the natural world:



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CORIN: And how like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?

TOUCHSTONE: Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life, but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it is a very vile life. Now, in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious. As is it a spare life, look you, it fits my humour well; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach. Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd?

CORIN: No more but that I know the more one sickens the worse at ease he is; and that he that wants money, means and content is without three good friends; that the property of rain is to wet and fire to burn; that good pasture makes fat sheep, and that a great cause of the night is lack of the sun; that he that hath learned no wit by nature nor art may complain of good breeding or comes of a very dull kindred.

Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke, in their edition of 1864, stressed the literary and generic features of the Forest of Arden. It:

represents a poetical forest generally, where lovers, dukes, lords, shepherds, jesters, natural philosophers and artificial philosophers, lions and lambs, serpents and goats, oaks and olives, palm-trees and osiers, may all flourish contentedly and plausibly, without disturbing the peace of those whose imaginations accept the truths of poetry as universal truth, not mere geographical, animal, or botanical literalities.



Reality/Illusion

This finds its most obvious manifestation in *Rosalind/Ganymede*. Shakespeare is playing with identity here and his central question is this: How does illusion interact with reality? Orlando woos the boy, Ganymede, but is also wooing Rosalind. Is he therefore in love with Ganymede as well? Does it matter? Is identity a fixed point, or a more fluid set of ideas?

This also, of course, relates to theatre. How much of what we see in the theatre do we take with us into our own lives afterwards? When we are in the theatre, what is the distance between actor and performance? If we were to fall in love with an actor during their performance, are we falling in love with the actor or with the character? How real is theatre?

The focal moment for this in the play is Jaques' speech about the way humans seem to play different theatrical roles at different stages of their life. In response to Duke Senior's remark that '*This wide and universal theatre presents more woeful pageants than the scene wherein we play in*', Jaques replies that:

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant...*

Peter Brook (1953) noted that much of the spirit in a successful production of *As You Like It* 'comes from the juxtaposing of scenes written in different keys,' so that the director 'must not be afraid of inconsistency.'



Love

This play can be seen as Shakespeare road-testing a variety of ideas about love and playing them off against each other. The four couples married at the end have all reached their union on very different paths. Rosalind and Orlando have had an extended, poetic courtship. Celia and Oliver '*no sooner met but they looked, no sooner looked but they loved*'. Touchstone and Audrey's relationship is based on physical attraction and little else. Touchstone seems to want a get-out clause even before they have wed. He says that being married by a dubious vicar '*will be a good excuse for me hereafter to leave my wife*'. Jaques gives it two months before it fails. Finally, the shepherd, Silvius, is obsessed with the shepherdess, Phoebe, and dotes on her. Phoebe wants none of it until she is instructed by Rosalind/Ganymede to settle down, '*Sell when you can: you are not for all markets*'. Perhaps the truth is that reciprocated love is a combination of these; part poetic wonder, part enigmatic connection, part physical attraction and part compromise.

The language of lovers finds equal range in this play. At one end of the spectrum is Rosalind's practical advice, whilst at the other is Silvius' lament to Corin early in the play:

*Oh, thou didst then ne'er love so heartily!
If thou remember'st not the slightest folly
That ever love did make thee run into,
Thou hast not loved:
Or if thou hast not sat as I do now,
Wearying thy hearer in thy mistress' praise,
Thou hast not loved:
Or if thou hast not broke from company
Abruptly, as my passion now makes me,
Thou hast not loved.
O Phoebe, Phoebe, Phoebe!*



Critical response / Productions

There have been several notable productions of *As You Like It*:

- Edith Evans and Vanessa Redgrave both won fame in the early 1960s as Rosalind.
- In 1994, Cheek By Jowl did an all-male production with Adrian Lester as Rosalind (<https://bit.ly/2X0HjS8>). Michael Billington has declared that this is his favourite production of the play.
- The most successful version on screen is Kenneth Branagh's 2006 film, set in late 19th century Japan. Its highly able cast features Bryce Dallas Howard, David Oyelowo, Romola Garai, Adrian Lester, Alfred Molina, Kevin Kline, Janet McTeer and Brian Blessed doubling Duke Senior and Duke Frederick.
- It continues to be a staple for many theatre companies, most recently at the National Theatre in early 2016.

Shaw writes:

Shakespeare found that the only thing that paid in the theatre was romantic nonsense. When he was forced by this to produce one of the most effective samples of romantic nonsense in existence – a feat which he performed easily and well – he publicly disclaimed any responsibility for its pleasant and cheap falsehood by borrowing the story and throwing it in the face of the public with the phrase *As You Like It*.

Useful links:

<https://bit.ly/3dMYvjK>

<https://bit.ly/2JvuoQ2>

<https://bit.ly/2wKlqMd>

<https://bit.ly/2R2Dp7e>

<https://bit.ly/2w8SL30>



First steps into the text...

Below are some ideas related to key scenes in the play *As You Like It*. These are intended to inspire exploration and are in no way prescriptive. Detailed practical approaches to the text can be found in the Eduqas Drama and Theatre A Level Guide.

Each element – i.e. acting, directing and designing – can be covered simultaneously in the study and practical exploration of scenes from the play. This will enable learners to have prepared ideas for all the elements which will appear in Section A or B of the examination.

Context

The knowledge of the genre, practitioners to apply, as well as social, economic and historical context will apply to all answers in some degree in the examination. If learners relate them closely to the text, their relevance is heightened. For example, *As You Like it* is a comedy including many conventions of the commedia dell'arte, e.g. the fooling and misdirection of stock characters. The inter relationships between Phoebe, Silvius, Ganymede / Rosalind and Orlando imitate the machinations of the Innamorato in the commedia dell'arte. The clownishness of Touchstone might mirror the Zanni.

The original performance space of the Elizabethan theatre, with its inner stage, thrust performance space and closeness to the audience, might influence the choices of the learner. In contrast, the focus upon the themes of **Justice** and **Forgiveness** might inspire a more modern and symbolic interpretation of the play in production.

Acting

- **Practical exploration of the text** will help learners to form their own opinions about the characters at different stages in the play. For example, the development of Orlando throughout the play – from an oppressed brother trapped by the confines of the court, to a forgiving and open-minded lover guided to enlightenment by the influence of nature in the pastoral setting of Arden.



- **The specific rehearsal techniques used by practitioners and theatre companies** the learners are familiar with can be used to explore acting style, subtext and motivation of the characters. For example, in the exploration of what drives the melancholy of the Malcontent Jacques. In Act III, Scene ii, learners may experiment with this by considering the past relationship between the brothers and improvise a scene of them growing up. This might help to establish the reasons for Jacques' state of mind and why the brothers have such opposing outlooks on life.

Jacques: I'll tarry no longer with you. Farewell, good Signor Love.

Orlando: I am glad of your departure. Adieu, good Monsieur Melancholy".

- **Physical and vocal experimentation in the building of a role and relationships.** For example, experimentation with how much Rosalind takes on a masculine guise as Ganymede? She is called a "*pretty youth*" by Orlando, with voice "*something finer than you could purchase in so removed a dwelling*" (Act III, Scene ii). How might her courtly ways inform the way she takes on this mantle?
- **Close text work** from *As You Like it* to prepare monologue or duologue technique and performance skills will give learners the opportunity to use subject specific vocabulary about vocal and physical performance skills. Familiarity with and use of this vocabulary is expected in the written responses in the examination. In this play there is an equal balance of prose and verse used. An exploration of Jacques' verse speech in Act II, Scene vii, will help learners to see how an actor might use vocal skills to emphasise the strong imagery and vivid language of this speech.
- **Live theatre productions**, seen as part of the course, will provide helpful examples of acting skills at work, which can be referred to by learners in Section B. These observations also help learners to make similar or different creative choices throughout their study of the text.



Directing

For the purposes of the examination, directing refers to the work done with actors in terms of movement and positioning in the space, in rehearsal and in performance.

- **Performance style.** This might refer to the original style of performance or one that learners have applied to the text in their own experimentation with it. For example, as mentioned above, learners may wish to emphasise the commedia dell'arte qualities of the text and use stereotyped characters, fast paced physical actions and direct interaction with the audience. A director will need to consider how the performance space can accommodate this type of highly physicalised performance and how this might be developed in rehearsal.
- **Movement and positioning in the performance space.** As well as the placement of actors in relation to one another, this might also cover where they enter and exit the stage and the characters' relationship with the audience. For example, in Act IV, Scene iii, there is a lot of reported speech, in the letter, and telling of brave deeds. Learners might consider that the movements might become faster and faster and more frenetic as they contribute to the climax when Rosalind faints as she hears of Orlando's love for her.
- **Interactions between characters through reaction and response in the space.** The pacing and rhythm of the scene might be considered in conveying this relationship, as well as the reaction to the arrival of new characters and how they change the dynamic of a scene. For example, in Act V, Scene ii, there are many entrances and exits. Oliver leaves to allow Rosalind and Orlando to declare their affection. Then Silvius and Phoebe enter and the love triangle is resolved. They then all leave. Finally, Rosalind directs her words to different characters to unravel the love knot and to make clear to the audience how things have turned out for the best and each character has the lover they deserve. Learners might experiment with the best way of using the space to convey this resolution to the audience.
- **Rehearsal techniques.** These should refer closely to the technique used, its reason and intention and the success of its use in achieving the aim. For example, in Act II, Scene iv, learners might explore Rosalind's relationship with Touchstone and put it into a modern context, where one



friend is embarrassing the other and they both struggle to gain control over the scene.

- **Live theatre productions**, seen as part of the course, will provide helpful examples of directing skills at work, which can be referred to by learners in Section B. These observations also help learners to make similar or different creative choices throughout their study of the text.

Design

The design element covers set and props, hair and make-up, costume, lighting and sound. The questions in the examination will clearly state which skill area(s) are required in the response.

- **Production Style.** Reference to the original production style and context will inform the learners' ideas. In some cases, this will be a faithful rendition of the style, their own ideas or a different style completely. In both cases, justification of this concept in terms of their wider knowledge of the play, themes, relevance and intended impact upon a contemporary audience are required. The first productions were staged at the Globe on London's Southbank, a building very similar to the reconstruction that stands there today. The greatest difference between the Globe and most modern theatres is the way that the structure of the building (as well as the actors) actively engages the audience in the story. Proscenium arch spaces divide the audience from the action, but the thrust space of the Globe means that actor and audience are forever mingling and sharing the same space. In Section B, the influence of live theatre must be referred to in justification of their ideas.
- **Hair and Make-up.** Ideas might include: the use of colour and make-up and hair techniques to convey the period, age and status of the character(s). The use of techniques in the creation of prostheses and elaborate hair pieces and wigs, body make-up and light reacting colours might be explored. For example, the contrast in facial complexion and hair style between those of the court (pale and austere) and those of the forest (ruddy and unkempt). Learners will need to give reasons for choices of these ideas and connection to the given / chosen scene is essential. In Section B, the influence of live theatre must be referred to in justification of their ideas.



- **Costume.** Reference to the original performance and other productions might provide a starting point for costume ideas. The techniques a costume designer might use to create character, status, age and to convey meaning to an audience should be explored. This might be achieved by the choice of historical period, use of fabric texture, colour, silhouette of the design and the intended use by the actor in the given / chosen scene(s). Learners might consider how the costumes of the characters Corin and Silvius in Act II, Scene iv, will contrast to those of Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone. This play presents several costume challenges. Learners may consider how Rosalind is dressed as Ganymede, for example? How much of a boy should she (attempt) to look like? How successful is she at disguising herself? More widely, how successful should she be at disguising her identity more generally? Are there any moments when the mask slips? In Section B, the influence of live theatre must be referred to in justification of their ideas.
- **Set and props.** This refers to the study and discussion of various performance spaces and their suitability for the text and how other productions have been designed for their chosen space. The production style, location, mood and atmosphere of the given/chosen scene(s) might be created through the use of levels, positioning of exits and entrances, the proximity of the set to the audience, and whether set pieces are fixed or able to be moved automatically or by the actors. Learners will consider the use of large props to dress the scene, and the colour, period and significance of these in terms of the scene and in conveying a meaning to the audience. The two main locations of the play (the court and Arden) might be represented distinctly by two areas of action in the space. A thrust stage might be used with the court distanced up stage and above (physically and in status terms) the audience; and the forest on the thrust where human connections can be made. Shakespeare's plays were staged with as little set as possible, which also made for quick scene changes. Shakespeare gets the language and characters to do much of the work – Rosalind's line '*Well, this is the Forest of Arden*' is one of the best examples of scene-setting in the whole of Shakespeare. Modern productions have taken the opportunity to create trees and bushes and forest backdrops and so on. In some cases, this has been very effective at taking us into the world, but it is not in a strict sense necessary, and the play can be done without it. Learners may choose to place the action of the play in two opposing political regimes. This will emphasise the contrast between the dictatorship of the duke and his court and the more liberal



As You Like It

William Shakespeare

and democratic life of the forest. In *As You Like It*, learners might explore the sense of blurring the lines between reality and illusion through design ideas. In Section B, the influence of live theatre must be referred to in justification of their ideas.

- **Lighting design.** The techniques used by a lighting designer to convey location, mood, atmosphere and meaning to an audience might include the use of colour, different types of lighting, positioning of lights and their intensity, use of effects lights, and length of the lighting cue. The use of technology through projection and animated visual effects are considered part of the creation of this visual element. For example, the Masque in Act IV, Scene iv, may have a projection of the god, Hymen. Lighting colours will be bright and vivid to create a celebratory atmosphere. Spotlights might pick out each of the characters as Hymen mentions them and as the relationships are resolved. In Section B, the influence of live theatre must be referred to in justification of their ideas.
- **Sound design.** The techniques used by a sound designer to convey location, mood and atmosphere, change in dynamics and rhythm of a scene, and its impact upon an audience might include the use of different types of sound, placement of speakers, intensity, length of the cue and changes between sound states, manipulation of sound through software, and the looping of sound in performance. Music and song play a big part in the play. The style of music chosen might also determine the contrast in the locations. The court, perhaps more formal, and the forest, more abstract and evocative of the emotions experienced by those who enter its depths. In Section B, the influence of live theatre must be referred to in justification of their ideas.



Acknowledgements

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