SOUTHWEST SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

proudly presents

As You Like It
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MESA ARTS CENTER

Student Guide

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As You Like It

quick facts

VERBS love, come, go
Nouns man, time, fool
ADJECTIVES old, young, fair

WHAT'S 'Ganymede' is the name Rosalind assumes when she disguises herself as a boy.
IN A NAME 'Jove' is Jupiter, the King of the Gods in Roman mythology. And Ganymede? His prized servant. It was believed that a sign of status and importance was having a beautiful servant. And, according to Homer's ILLIAD, Ganymede was "...the loveliest born of the race of mortals.

Rosalind's right hand girl, Celia, takes on the name Aliena as her alias in the forest. The word 'aliena' is Latin for 'stranger'.

A big source for AYLI was Thomas Lodge's ROSALYNDE written in 1586. This story includes two brothers, the older of which hates the youngest, a wrestling match, a heroine named Rosalynde who is banished to the forest and disguises herself as a boy named Ganymede. A girl named Phoebe falls in love with Ganymede and a boy named Montanus (our Sylvius). Ganymede and the youngest brother (in this story, his name is Rosader, not Orlando) meet in the forest and eventually all is revealed and everyone gets married!

THIS SEEM FAMILIAR?

"SOMEBODY SAID ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE/AND EACH OF US IS A PLAYER/THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN TRYIN' TO TELL YOU..." These are song lyrics from a song the band Weezer wrote in 2008. They're talking about Jaques famous speech from this very show, you know, "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players." They're referencing a play written in 1599, we think. One of the main things that lead scholars to believe 1599ish was when this play was penned was because of this speech. In the summer of 1599, The Lord Chamberlain's Men (Shakespeare's company of players) opened their new theatre, The Globe. The motto of the Globe was "Tutus mundus agit histrionem," which is Latin for "the whole world is a playhouse," or, more loosely, "all the world's a stage." What better way to celebrate your new playhouse than write the motto into a new work?

MEET ME IN THE WOODS

Much of the play is set in the Forest of Arden. This is one of the big signs of a PASTORAL comedy. What are the tell tale signs you're in a pastoral? Shepherds, city folk running away to the forest (or country) and then doing shepherd/country stuff like singing, dancing and having a good time. The easy, carefree life of the country is very evident. All of this happens in As You Like It.

There is a Forest of Arden in Warwickshire, England, not far from Shakespeare's hometown of Stratford. Along with this, Shakespeare's mom is Mary Arden and, yes, she was a member of the Arden namesake of the land and forest. However, by Shakespeare's time, the forest was more like a small patch of woods. So we're not really sure if Will was giving his mom a shout out or, since the play is set in France, if he was talking about the forest of Ardenes which shares some of its' boundaries in the north part of France, or a mix of both.

CAMEO

According to records, Will cast himself the role of Adam.

Rosalind is perhaps the most well thought out female character in the canon. Because women could not yet perform onstage, it is believed that Shakespeare wrote this role for an especially talented boy actor who was in the company at the time. Portia from MERCHANT OF VENICE as well as Viola from TWELFHE NIGHT were penned around this time as well, giving a good foundation for this belief. That boy's name? We're not entirely sure, but it could be Alexander Cooke, a prominent boy actor at the time.

WAIT, WHERE?

WHO COULD IT BE NOW?

...
The Court of Duke Frederick

DUKE FREDERICK
Duke Senior's younger brother and usurper. Oh, and Celia's dad.

ROSALIND
Duke Senior's daughter and our heroine.

CELIA
Duke Fred's daughter, Rosalind's bestie and cousin.

TOUCHSTONE
The court fool.

LE BEAU
A courtier (adviser to the court.)

CHARLES
The wrestler.

The House of the Deceased

Sir Rowland de Boys

OLIVER de BOYS
The oldest son and heir.

JAQUES de BOYS
The middle son.

ORLANDO de BOYS
The youngest son and our hero.

ADAM
Old family servant who follows Orlando into exile.

DENNIS
Oliver's servant.

The Forest of Arden

The Exiled Court of Duke Senior

DUKE SENIOR
Duke Frederick's older brother and Rosalind's dad.

JAQUES
A melancholy lord and a attendant to the Duke.

AMIENS
An attending lord and musician.

Also other lords, attendants, musicians, people of the forest.

The Country Folks

PEBEB
A proud shepherdess.

SILVIUS
A shepherd. Totally in love with Phebe.

AUDREY
A country girl.

CORIN
An old shepherd.

WILLIAM
A country man.

SIR OLIVER MARTEXT
A vicar (clergyman).
We don't know much about the origin story of AS YOU LIKE IT on stage. It is pretty well agreed upon that the script was penned some time between 1598 and 1599, around the same time the Globe Theatre opened. (Check out the Quick Facts page to see an interesting connection between the Globe and the writing of this play.) We also know that it was officially registered by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men (The acting troupe with whom Shakespeare worked) on August 4, 1600. We don’t know EXACTLY when it was first performed. We DO know there was a performance of AYLIT recorded in December of 1603 attributed to the King’s Men (Shakespeare’s company name after James I became King in 1603. Promoted from a Lord to the KIng as their company patron? Not too shabby.

We begin in an Orchard at Oliver’s house where we learn that the wicked Oliver has cut his brother, our hero Orlando, out the family’s fortunes. A wrestler named Charles arrives and tells Oliver that Duke Senior has been banished and that there is a new Duke, Duke Frederick. Then we move to the new Duke’s palace and there’s some wrestling, some getting angry, some falling in love, some treachery and a decision is made to disguise the old Duke’s daughter, Rosalind, as a boy named Ganymede and run away into the Forest of Arden.

We see Duke Frederick get even more mad than before, and he threatens to take Oliver’s fortune if he doesn’t find his brother. Meanwhile, Orlando, who is super smitten with Rosalind, is writing and putting love poems all over the forest. Rosalind reads them and wishes she wasn’t dressed like a boy. But, she convinces Orlando to practice his wooing of Rosalind on “himself” on Ganymede. There is some talk of marriage between Touchstone and Audrey, a country girl, but it’s decided against, for now. And then Phebe falls in love with Ganymede, you know, the disguised Rosalind.

We jump between the Forest of Arden as the palace, and Oliver’s house as the plot treachery builds and the plot of Duke Frederick is made his thicker. Duke Frederick is mad his daughter has run away into the forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court. Forest with Rosalind and his court.

We begin with Orlando getting a talking to by Ganymede for being late to his wooing practice. There is a mock marriage, more music, another love letter, and then a bloodied Oliver arrives. He tells of Orlando’s kindness in saving him from a lion attack, that Orlando was injured in the attack, and that he has been converted from his wicked ways by his brothers selfless act.

We begin with Touchstone mocking another of Audrey’s suitors away. Oliver wants to give Orlando the family fortune now, but Orlando is overcome and paralyzed with love and can not think or act anymore. Phebe still loves Ganymede. Silvius still loves Phebe. Rosalind promises to makes everything right, “tomorrow.” And when tomorrow comes, love wins the day, there are FOUR marriages, the angry Duke finds his happy place, the banished Duke is restored, and there is much music, song and rustic revelry.

Did You Know?
The word 'puking' is used in Jaques’ “All the world’s a stage.” speech. Scholars are pretty certain this word, along with 422 others, to have been coined by Shakespeare!
Verse Versus Prose
the use of writing style
in AS YOU LIKE IT

First off, let's start at the beginning. What are we talking about with Verse and Prose? Most everything you read and write everyday is Prose. This is Prose, just words written in an order we understand. It's ordinary. Verse is extra-ordinary. Verse has a rhythm. A heartbeat. Sometimes it rhymes. Whether Shakespeare's characters speak in Prose or Verse can often tell us about their Status. Are they Royalty or Commoners? The language structure of their speech usually tells us: people of the court speak in Verse, common people speak prose.

But there are no formal rules in the forest

So, here’s the thing: Rosalind is of the court. She should talk in verse. Most of the scenes she has with Orlando are in prose. Do these scenes seem easier to understand as you are watching?

Meanwhile, Silvius, a very common man, expresses his love to Phebe in verse. Talk about a shake up in style! Can you hear the difference in speech?

OF COURSE SHAKESPEARE KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING

He writes a great witty remark about his own writing. We call this a "meta" moment. Okay, so in Act IV, listen for Jaques to say "Nay then God buy you, and you talke in blanke verse." before he exits the scene after having had a conversation in prose with Rosalind as Ganymede. The best part? The cue for that line comes on Orlando's entrance line "Good day, and happinesse, deere Rosalind!", is in verse. Classic writing style joke.
Where My Ladies At?

It is common knowledge that during Shakespeare's time only men were allowed on English stages. What is NOT commonly added is that women were being celebrated on Italian and French stages as early as 1578, a whole 14 YEARS before Shakespeare even hit the scene. Italian actress Isabella Andreini is noted as the most celebrated female actress during that time. However, back in England, a woman on stage was considered immoral and it was not until the Restoration of 1660 that ladies made their professional mark on English stages. How did all of this happen? Let's go back:

The Church introduced Miracle Plays to the people. How better to solve illiteracy problem the Church faced in reaching the people than having actors perform the stories from the Bible! Problem solved! BUT...

It was considered immoral and indecent for a woman to appear on stage so men played all the roles, but the Church didn't like this either. Meanwhile, the people LOVE this new theatre thing and suddenly companies start popping up producing theatre for ENTERTAINMENT. Uh-oh...

Suddenly, theatre is all the rage, playwrights thrive, the monarchy endorses and champions the theatres (Will's company was even called The Kings Men.) Women still can't act. BUT THEN...

LONG STORY SHORT: King Charles I is executed as a result of the English Civil War, the monarchy is taken down and the period known as the Interregnum begins. Basically the Puritans take over, led by a guy named Oliver Cromwell. And they shut down the theatres. All of them. And Charlie 2 flees.

BUT HERE'S THE THING: When Cromwell died, everything fell apart, the monarchy was restored (hence the period being called The Restoration), and Charles II returned to the throne in May of 1660. One of the first things he did? Opened all of the theatres and royally decreed that female roles be played by females. You see, while he was in exile, he took in some French theatre and rather enjoyed seeing women players. Along with this, during the Interregnum, theatre went underground and with no rules governing them, women began honing their craft in the underground theatre scene. SO...

On January 30, 1649

On December 8, 1660,

Margaret Hughes became the first English professional actress by bringing the character of Desdemona to life in THE MOOR OF VENICE, and adaptation of Shakespeare's OTHELLO at the Vere Street Theatre.

...and the rest is history.