

# The theme of freedom william shakespeare's as you like it

[Literature](#)



## **To what extent do you agree with the view that, in the Forest of Arden, characters find freedom in spite of enforced banishment?**

Within 'As you Like it', we can see that through enforced banishment, many of our protagonists are able to find freedom within the play and therefore are able to further define themselves in the Forest of Arden. Rosalind is able to find greater liberty in the Forest of Arden where she is free of societal pressures and stereotypes. Arguably, the forest is a place of change, in which Rosalind's disguise as a man, serves to empower her and allows her to further be herself. Therefore, we see that our protagonist is able to throw off the constraints of patriarchy and to further explore her character without her sex inhibiting her ability to interact with other characters within the play.

When entering the forest, we can see this immediately take effect when Rosalind states 'I could find in my heart to disgrace my man's apparel, and to cry like a woman; but I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat; therefore, courage, good Aliena'. This serves as evidence that by assuming the disguise of a man, she is able to remove the stereotypes of women in Elizabethan England and to further empower herself. Arden allows Rosalind to show more independence and arguably be more true to her real character than if she was dressed as a woman. By arriving in Arden, there is foregrounded a clear juxtaposition in the reaction of the two women to the forest. We see that Rosalind is 'merry' in the forest, and is relishing the moment where she is free of society and can be truly herself. However, it can be argued that she has become a stereotype of the patriarchy. When becoming a man she finds her 'courage'

and is no longer truly herself. Therefore, it can be argued that despite her newfound freedom, she still is being controlled by society. On Arriving Rosalind announces to Celia that 'this is the Forest of Arden', in which she constructs the forest as a place where she can create a new identity for herself as 'Gademede'. However, despite Rosalind's freedom gained through her disguise, Celia as 'Aliena' is confined to the archetypal stereotype of the female. She complains that she 'cannot go no further' and loses the strength shown earlier in the play evidences by her decision to flee her farther in her love for Rosalind. The only time that we see Celia show her happiness is when with Oliver, and when she is given the chance to 'buy' a part of the forest and pin it down through her ownership. Consequently, it is arguable that Celia has not gained freedom in the forest. Instead, she has also conformed to stereotype. But, generally, it can be seen that Rosalind is granted freedom within Arden.

Significantly, in Arden we see that the forest offers a chance for freedom from the pressures and the life of Court. Many of the Characters in the play find freedom, despite their enforced banishment, from the court driven social hierarchy. However, it can also be seen that individuals within the play are unwilling to leave the court behind. Duke Senior refers to the men that followed him into the forest as his 'brothers'. If we take a Marxist approach, we can see that Duke senior has broken down the class boundaries between him and his followers by showing them to be equal. However, it is ambiguous to how much class boundaries are broken down. Duke senior is still seen as a leader of the men. This is made more prominent when Duke senior says that he 'finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, Sermons in stones'.

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This raises the question of how far detached is he from the court. It is arguable that the Duke is trying to impose aspects of the court life upon nature, evidencing that he is not free from court and that he longs to be back where his brother is. Touchstone also symbolizes the impact of class in the play due to his status as an educated man. We are able to see Touchstones freedom from social structure and social conformity through Touchstone's marriage to Audrey. She is only a simple goatherd, and would therefore cause the contemporary audience to judge the marriage as inappropriate. This is further evinced when Touchstone says 'many a man has good horns'. The aforementioned 'horns' are an example of cuckoldry jokes that are a sign of a deceived husband. We further see this cuckoldry when Audrey fails to understand Touchstones language such as 'poetical' and 'foul', ensuring this laughable absurdity of this scene. This scene's purpose is merely to create humor in contrast to the previous 'pure' love we have already seen, between Orlando and Rosalind. However, it can also be seen as a symbol of the power that the upper class had over their subordinates.

Touchstone as a symbol of freedom within the play also challenges marriage within the forest of Aden. In a place where there is freedom we see that Touchstone is marrying more for lust and desire than love. This is a direct juxtaposition of the marriage of Celia and Oliver; however, it is more alike to that of Orlando and Rosalind. We see that Orlando is self-interested and is more in love with the idea of love, and then he is in love with Rosalind.

Touchstone explains his reasons for marrying through to Jaques as being 'As the ox hath his bow, sir, the horse his curb, and the falcon her bells, so man

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hath his desires'. This clearly shows that the marriage is far from idealized. Instead Touchstone explains his marriage as being there to satisfy his natural instincts and desires. Therefore, we can see that within the Forest of Arden, Touchstone does not have complete freedom; moreover, he is just trying to satisfy himself through marriage.

In Conclusion, we can see that there are aspects of freedom within the play. The freedom for the characters to love who they wish, symbolized by touchstone, but also, characters freedoms to express them. The women's disguised in the men's clothes symbolize freedom; however, they arguably deny themselves this by conforming to stereotypes