

As you like it as a romantic comedy

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AS YOU LIKE IT by William Shakespeare THE AUTHOR William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born into the family of a prosperous tradesman in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. While in his mid-teens, he was forced to leave school because his family fell into a period of poverty, so that he had only a rudimentary education. In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior and already three months pregnant. The marriage produced three children in three years, but in 1585, Shakespeare left Stratford to go to London to seek his fortune in the big city.

In London, he embarked upon a career on the stage, becoming a popular actor by the early fifteen nineties. In 1591, he penned his first play, *Love's Labour's Lost*. His early plays were comedies, and show nothing of the depth that characterized his later works. His plots were borrowed from a variety of sources, both ancient and contemporary. During his career, he wrote 37 plays, three narrative poems, and 154 sonnets. His writing brought him fame and popularity, but he continued to act as well as write (critics love to speculate about which of the characters in his plays would have been played by the author).

He eventually became a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men when James I ascended the throne). Most of his plays were performed at local theaters like the Rose, the Globe, and the indoor Blackfriars. When the Globe burned to the ground in 1613 (a cannon misfired during a performance of *Henry VIII*), Shakespeare retired, and died in Stratford three years later on his fifty-second birthday. *As You Like It* (1600) has for the last two centuries been one of Shakespeare's most popular

comedies. It is a pastoral romance – a genre originating in ancient Greece and still popular in Elizabethan England.

As he did in so many of his plays, Shakespeare borrowed the basic story from an earlier work – in this case, Thomas Lodge's prose romance *Rosalynde, or Euphues' Golden Legacy*. Into Lodge's basic framework Shakespeare introduces rollicking comedy absent from the original, along with new characters like Touchstone, Audrey, and Jaques. No one, either in Shakespeare's day or ours, expected realism in such a story. Instead, characters and audience alike find joy in the freedom of the forest and countryside, where stock characters do improbable things and meet with unlikely coincidences. And where, of course, (almost) everyone gets married in the end and lives happily ever after.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Duke Senior – The rightful duke, he is forced into exile in the Forest of Arden by his jealous brother.
- Duke Frederick – He forces his brother into exile and usurps his throne, but eventually is converted and returns the dukedom to its rightful ruler.
- Jaques – A lord under Duke Senior, he is incurably melancholy, even when all around him are rejoicing.
- Charles – Duke Frederick's prize wrestler, he is defeated by Orlando.

- Oliver – Eldest son and heir of Sir Rowland de Boys, he has deprived his brothers of their rightful inheritance and is terribly jealous of his noble youngest brother. When seeking Orlando in the Forest of Arden, he meets, falls in love with, and marries Celia, yields his inheritance to his youngest brother, and decides to live the life of a shepherd.
- Orlando – Youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys, he is forced into exile in the Forest of Arden by his

brother, where he is reunited with his love Rosalind. He eventually regains his inheritance from his father.

Touchstone – The fool in Duke Frederick’s court, he too departs for the Forest of Arden, where he meets and marries Audrey. Adam – Orlando’s eighty-year-old servant who finances his flight with his life savings and accompanies Orlando into exile in the Forest of Arden. Corin – An elderly shepherd in the Forest of Arden. Silvius – A young shepherd madly in love with Phebe, a shepherdess who constantly scorns his affection. Eventually they marry with the help of Rosalind. Rosalind – Daughter of Duke Senior, she flees to the forest disguised as a man named Ganymede to find her father, and there encounters and eventually marries Orlando.

Celia – Daughter of Duke Frederick and Rosalind’s best friend, she accompanies Rosalind to Arden, also in disguise as Ganymede’s sister Aliena, and falls in love with and marries a reformed Oliver. Phebe – A shepherdess beloved of Silvius, she falls in love with Rosalind in male disguise but eventually yields to the faithful attentions of her fellow shepherd. • • • • •

• • • • • Audrey – A country wench who falls in love with and marries Touchstone. NOTABLE QUOTATIONS “ Love no man in good earnest, nor no further in sport neither than with safety of a pure blush thou mayst in honor come off again. (Celia, lii, 26-28) “ The more pity that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly. ” (Touchstone, lii, 83-84) “ Sir, you have wrestled well, and overthrown More than your enemies. ” (Rosalind, lii, 255-256) “ Sweet are the uses of adversity, Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, Wears yet a precious jewel in his head; And this our life, exempt from public haunt, Finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks, Sermons

in stones, and good in everything: I would not change it. ” (Duke Senior, Ili, 12-18) “ O, what a world is this, when what is comely Envenoms him that bears it! (Adam, Iliii, 15-16) “ I can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs. ” (Jaques, Iiv, 11-12) “ 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 stages. At first, the infant, Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms. Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel And shining morning face, creeping like snail Unwillingly to school. And then the lover, Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad Made to his mistress’ eyebrow.

Then a soldier, Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard, Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel, Seeking the bubble reputation Even in the cannon’s mouth. And then the justice, In fair round belly with good capon lined, With eyes severe and beard of formal cut, Full of wise saws and modern instances; And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts Into the lean and slippered pantaloone, With spectacles on nose and pouch on side; His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice, Turning again toward childish treble, pipes And whistles in his sound.

Last scene of all, That ends this strange eventful history, Is second childishness and mere oblivion, Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything. ” (Jaques, Iivii, 149-176) “ Those that are good manners at the court are as ridiculous in the country as the behavior of the country is most mockable at the court. ” (Corin, Iliii, 45-48) “ Do you not know I am a woman? When I think, I must speak. ” (Rosalind, Iliii, 248-249) “ Sell when

you can; you are not for all markets. (Rosalind, IIIv, 65) “ I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad. ” (Rosalind, IVi, 25-27) “ The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, videlicet, in a love cause. ” (Rosalind, IVi, 89-92) [Editor’s note: Ussher’s famous chronology appeared almost fifty years later, but apparently his estimate of the age of the earth was commonly accepted long before he published his work.] “ Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love. (Rosalind, IVi, 101-102) “ Your brother and my sister no sooner met but they looked; no sooner looked but they loved; no sooner loved but they sighed; no sooner sighed but they asked one another the reason; no sooner knew the reason but they sought the remedy; and in these degrees have they made a pair of stairs to marriage, which they will climb incontinent, or else be incontinent before marriage. ” (Rosalind, Vii, 31-38) “ A poor virgin, sir, and ill-favored thing, sir, but mine own. A poor humor of mine, sir, to take that that no man else will. (Touchstone, Viv, 61-63) NOTES Act I, scene 1 - The play begins with Orlando, the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys, complaining of his treatment by his eldest brother Oliver. Oliver, the heir of his father’s estate, has withheld from Orlando the small inheritance left him by his father and has refused to provide for his education. When Orlando confronts Oliver, he refuses to honor his father’s wishes. After Orlando leaves, Oliver meets Charles Duke Frederick’s wrestler. We discover from their onversation that Duke Frederick has usurped the dukedom from his brother Duke Senior, who has fled to the Forest of Arden with some of his faithful nobles. Duke Senior’s daughter, the lovely Rosalind, remains at court

under Duke Frederick's protection, largely because she is the best friend of Duke Frederick's daughter Celia. Charles intends to stage a wrestling exhibition the next day, and Orlando plans to challenge him. Oliver paints a picture of Orlando as a great villain and advises Charles to dispatch him in order to avoid the treachery that the young man will surely bring to the ring.

In a brief soliloquy, however, we find that Orlando is a noble young man despite his lack of education, and is hated by his brother because of his sterling character. Act I, scene 2 - Rosalind and Celia are talking outside the duke's palace. Rosalind is unhappy because her father has been banished. Celia, trying to cheer her up, speaks of their friendship and the kindness of Frederick toward Rosalind, and promises that, when she inherits her father's kingdom, she will return to Rosalind what Frederick had stolen from her father Duke Senior. As they exchange clever quips, Touchstone, the duke's jester, enters.

Further witticisms follow, after which Le Beau, a courtier to Duke Frederick announces that the wrestlers are approaching. Charles has already broken the ribs of three challengers, and is about to wrestle the young Orlando. Celia and Rosalind, fearing for his safety, try to dissuade him from taking up Charles' challenge, but he refuses to relent. To the astonishment of all, Orlando wins the match. Frederick asks who he is, but scowls on finding that he is the son of his old enemy Sir Rowland. The girls congratulate Orlando, and Rosalind gives him her necklace.

The two are obviously attracted to one another. After the girls leave, Le Beau returns and warns Orlando to flee to avoid the duke's wrath; he also tells him that Frederick is becoming jealous of Rosalind's popularity and is likely to

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turn against her as well. Act I, scene 3 - Rosalind has fallen head over heels in love with Orlando, and Celia tries to break her out of her melancholy. Their banter is interrupted by Duke Frederick, who abruptly has decided to banish Rosalind for no better reason than that she is her father's daughter; she is to leave the realm within ten days on penalty of death.

Celia pleads for her cousin, to no avail, and then insists that, because she cannot live without her best friend, she will accompany her into exile. After Frederick leaves, the two girls decide to seek Duke Senior in the Forest of Arden. For safety's sake, Rosalind will disguise herself as a man and be called Ganymede, while Celia will dress like a peasant and present herself as Ganymede's sister Aliena. They also determine to take the court jester Touchstone with them to provide amusement on their journey.

Act II, scene 1 - The scene now moves to the Forest of Arden, where Duke Senior and his attendants are waxing philosophical about their plight. Jaques alone among the Duke's attendants remains depressed, mourning over the despoliation of the wilderness by the hunters of Senior's party. Act II, scene 2 - Duke Frederick discovers the flight of Rosalind, Celia, and Touchstone and suspects that Orlando, with whom Rosalind is clearly enamored, had something to do with it. He orders Oliver brought before him, intending to make him find his brother and the rest of the refugees.

Act II, scene 3 - Orlando's elderly servant Adam warns him that Oliver intends to kill him. Orlando is at a loss, not wanting to take to the road where his only mean of survival would be begging or thievery. Adam offers him five hundred crowns, his life savings, and the two together flee the vengeance of Oliver. Act II, scene 4 - Rosalind, Celia, and Touchstone arrive in the Forest of
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Arden in a state of exhaustion. There they encounter Corin and Silvius, two shepherds. The two are speaking of Silvius' profound but unrequited love for the shepherdess Phebe.

The conversation reminds Rosalind of her love for Orlando. After Silvius runs in search of his beloved, Touchstone approaches Corin to try to buy food for the party. Corin tells them he is in the employ of a churlish farmer who is trying to sell his farm. Rosalind offers to buy it and continue to employ Corin in running it. Act II, scene 5 - Elsewhere in the forest, Jacques luxuriates in his melancholy mood while another courtier, Amiens, sings to him. Amiens tells Jaques that Duke Senior has been looking for him, but Jaques replies that he has been trying to avoid his master in his search for solitude.

Act II, scene 6 - Orlando and Adam arrive in the Forest of Arden. The elderly Adam is near exhaustion, so Orlando tells him to rest while he goes in search of something to eat. Act II, scene 7 - Duke Senior and his men go in search of Jaques. When they find him, he tells them of meeting Touchstone and reports their conversation. Jaques then wishes that he could be a fool so he could speak his mind without anyone taking offense. At that point Orlando bursts in upon them with sword drawn and demands food. Much to his surprise, they respond like gentlemen and offer him part of their repast.

He then goes to fetch Adam. Jaques then meditates on the futility of life in the play's most famous speech. Orlando then returns with Adam, and as they eat Duke Senior discovers that he is the son of his old friend Sir Rowland de Boys. Act III, scene 1 - Duke Frederick, furious at his inability to locate the runaways, seizes Oliver's property and swears that he will return it only when Oliver produces his brother Orlando, dead or alive. Act III, scene 2 - As <https://assignbuster.com/as-you-like-it-as-a-romantic-comedy/>

the scene opens, Orlando is hanging verses in praise of Rosalind on every tree of the forest and carving her name into their trunks.

After he leaves, Corin and Touchstone banter about the differences between the court and the country. Rosalind and Celia then enter, having found Orlando's verses. Touchstone mocks them, but Celia pulls Rosalind aside and tells her that the author wears Rosalind's chain about his neck and is none other than Orlando. Rosalind then barrages her with questions faster than Celia can answer. The girls hide as Orlando enters with Jaques. The melancholy courtier wants nothing but to be left alone and scorns Orlando for the folly of his love.

After Jaques leaves, Rosalind, still disguised as Ganymede, approaches Orlando. The two exchange sallies about Time, then Orlando, marveling at Ganymede's educated speech, asks the youth if he is native to the forest. Ganymede responds that he is, but was educated by a scholarly uncle who warned him against the wiles of women. Orlando asks him to inform him of these dangers, admitting that he is the one who has been decorating the forest with love poems. Ganymede tells him that he knows nothing of the lover's appearance about him, but says that he could cure him of love if he really had been victimized by it.

He asks him how, and he says that he must pretend that he is his beloved, and he will be as pettish and inconstant as any woman alive, and thus cure him of his malady. He really has no desire to be cured, but he agrees to come to Ganymede's cottage every day and woo him in the name of "Rosalind." Act III, scene 3 - Touchstone is wooing a country wench named Audrey. He becomes frustrated because she is unable to comprehend any of

his sallies, but he offers to marry her and engages Sir Oliver Martext for the purpose, calculating that rites performed in such a setting are not likely to be very binding.

Sir Oliver, however, insists that they be married in the church with witnesses, so Touchstone puts him off. Act III, scene 4 - Rosalind is angry because Orlando has not appeared at the appointed time and tells Celia that his love must not be genuine. Celia tries to help by telling her that all men are thus, but Rosalind is not to be comforted. Corin then enters and tells the girls that Silvius is nearby, still pursuing the scornful Phebe, and they decide to watch the sport; Rosalind, in disguise as Ganymede, will even play a role in the romance.

Act III, scene 5 - Silvius is mooning after Phebe, who plainly tells him that she does not love him and begs him to leave her alone. At this point “Ganymede” intervenes, chastising Phebe for rejecting the true love of a good and loyal man despite the fact that she bears little in the way of beauty and wondering why a fine youth like Silvius would waste his time on such a scold. She advises Phebe to turn away from her pride and accept Silvius’ overtures of affection. Much to Rosalind’s surprise, however, Phebe quickly falls in love with Ganymede despite the repeated insults rained upon her.

After Rosalind, Celia, and Corin leave, Phebe reluctantly allows Silvius to accompany her, but can do nothing but talk about Ganymede, though she professes not to love him and wants to send him a bitter missive in response to his insults. Act IV, scene 1 - The scene begins with brief banter between Rosalind and Jaques, after which Orlando enters, an hour late for his appointment. He addresses the youth he knows as Ganymede by the name

Rosalind, and she torments him about the follies of love, going so far as to have Celia conduct a mock wedding.

Orlando then leaves for dinner with the Duke while Rosalind counts the minutes until his return. Act IV, scene 2 - Hunters return to the Duke's camp having killed a deer and sing a song of celebration. Act IV, scene 3 - Orlando is again late, and Rosalind's fretting is interrupted by Silvius, who brings a letter from Phebe. The missive is a love letter, pouring out the shepherdess' affection for Ganymede; while she dismisses Silvius, she swears she will die if Ganymede will not have her.

Rosalind, disgusted at Phebe's lack of appreciation for Silvius and the lad's persistent affection for one so false, nonetheless sends him back to his beloved with the message that, if Phebe truly loves Ganymede, she will love Silvius for "his" sake. After Silvius departs, Oliver arrives with terrible news: Orlando has been seriously wounded in combat with a lion. Apparently Oliver, on his way to seek Orlando on behalf of Duke Frederick, had a change of heart and determined to seek his brother in order to make amends. He fell asleep in the forest and was set upon, first by a snake, and then by a lion, both of which Orlando drove off.

The two brothers were then reconciled, and Orlando introduced Oliver to Duke Senior, who received him gladly. When Orlando fainted from the wound he had received from the lion, he sent Oliver with a message for Rosalind. Hearing of her love's injuries, Rosalind too passes out, causing Oliver to wonder about the character of this youthful Ganymede, but she claims that she was merely continuing to play the part of Orlando's love Rosalind. Act V,

scene 1 - Audrey is still upset that Touchstone refused to let Sir Oliver Martext marry them, but he promises that he will yet wed her.

Soon William, a previous suitor of Audrey, arrives, and Touchstone runs verbal rings around him and tells him to leave Audrey alone at peril of his life. Act V, scene 2 - The Forest of Arden clearly has strange powers - we now find that Oliver and “Aliena” (Celia) have fallen in love at first sight and intend to marry the next day. Oliver tells Orlando that he will yield to him all his father’s estate so he and Celia can live in pastoral bliss in the forest. Orlando then tells Rosalind of the sudden romance of Oliver and Celia, but bemoans the fact that he still has not obtained the object of his affections.

Rosalind, still in the guise of Ganymede, tells him that she has studied under a great magician, and promises that if he comes to the wedding the next day prepared to marry, she will bring his Rosalind there to wed him. Silvius and Phebe then enter, creating an interesting little love quadrangle - Phebe loves Ganymede, Silvius loves Phebe, Orlando loves Rosalind, and Ganymede loves “no woman.” Rosalind attempts to sort out the confusion by telling Silvius that she will help him if she can, and that he will be married on the morrow; telling Phebe that she would love her if she could, and would marry her if ever she marries a woman, but that she will wed on the morrow; and promises Orlando that she will satisfy him, and that he will be married on the morrow as well. All, then, are to meet the following day at Oliver and Celia’s wedding. Act V, scene 3 - Audrey and Touchstone look forward to their wedding the next day, and they are joined by two of the Duke’s pages, who sing a love song. Act V, scene 4 - The following day, all gather at a clearing in the forest.

Rosalind, still disguised as Ganymede, makes Duke Senior promise to give his daughter to Orlando should she appear and makes Phebe promise to marry Silvius if she decides not to marry Ganymede. She then leaves with Celia to prepare for the nuptials. While they are gone, Touchstone and Audrey appear and the Fool banters with Jaques and the Duke. Hymen then enters with Celia, and Rosalind in her own character. Duke Senior recognizes his daughter and Orlando his love, while Phebe recognizes that her Ganymede is not what he appeared to be and settles for Silvius after all.

After a wedding song, Jacques de Boys, the middle brother of Oliver and Orlando, enters and announces that Duke Frederick, on his way to the forest with vengeance in his heart, had met a holy man and been converted. He had then restored the dukedom to Duke Senior and restored the lands of all he had deprived. Frederick intends to retire to a religious life in the forest. Jacques decides to join him while the others begin a dance of celebration. Rosalind then delivers a brief Epilogue. ESSAY QUESTIONS Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay: 1.

Compare and contrast the courses of the love between Silvius and Phebe in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and that between Helena and Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Be sure to consider the relationships between the wooer and the wooed, the language used to express their quarrels, and the ways in which the playwright resolves the relationships. Compare and contrast the roles played by the forest in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Though the two settings are transformative in different ways, both play significant roles in changing those who enter their precincts.

Relate these changes and the ways in which they occur to the central themes of the two comedies. Setting plays a major role in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Discuss the contrast between the Duke's court and the Forest of Arden. Be sure to consider its impact on the behavior and attitudes of the characters, giving special attention to those who experience changes when moving from one environment to the other. In the movie version of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* directed by Kenneth Branagh, the same actor plays both Duke Senior and his brother Duke Frederick.

Comment on this decision. What possible advantages and disadvantages could such a casting choice have? How might it contribute to the effective communications of the leading themes of the play? In William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Duke Senior waxes philosophical about his exile in the Forest of Arden in these words: " Sweet are the uses of adversity, Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, Wears yet a precious jewel in his head; And this our life, exempt from public haunt, Finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks, Sermons in stones, and good in everything: I would not change it. How does the play demonstrate the " sweet uses of adversity"? In what ways do the central characters benefit from separation from their normal lives and forced exile to a strange environment? Choose three characters and describe how their experience in the Forest of Arden brings about positive changes in their personalities. Discuss the role of Jaques in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. How does the incurably melancholy courtier help to bring out the central themes of the play? Is he an insightful social critic or a boring pessimist?

Support your conclusions with specifics from the play. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. In William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Duke Senior intones, " Sweet are the uses of adversity. " Is this statement true in the context of the play? Does the statement correspond with biblical teaching? Do the two treat the idea in the same ways? Why or why not? Support your assessment with specifics, both from the play and from Scripture. Perhaps the most famous speech in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is delivered by Jaques in Act II, scene vii.

After bemoaning the fact that " All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players," he speaks of the seven stages of man, ending, as is typical with him, on a melancholy note. Critique the message of the speech. In what ways is it accurate and in what ways is it not? Be sure to consider not only the context of the play, but also biblical teaching about both the dignity and sinfulness of man and the meaning of human life on earth. William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* contains one of the most famous lines in the entire Shakespearean canon: " All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. Appropriately enough, many characters in the play engage in playacting, taking on roles to mask their true identities. In addition to serving as a device to drive the plot, what is the significance of these frequent masquerades? Consider the major themes of the play along with the restrictions imposed by the theater of Shakespeare's day in your answer. One of the central ideas in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is the contrast between court and country life. In Act III, scene ii of the play, Touchstone and Corin argue about the differences between the two.

In the process, Corin says, “ Those that are good manners at the court are as ridiculous in the country as the behavior of the country is most mockable at the court. ” Is Shakespeare here arguing for what today would be called Cultural Relativism, or does he favor country life over court life (or the other way around)? In answering the question, consider the ending, giving attention to the significance of some characters returning to court and others remaining in the country. In Act III, scene ii of William Shakespeare’s As You Like It, Rosalind says to Celia, “ Do you not know I am a woman?

When I think, I must speak. ” In general, the play at times seems to promote gender stereotypes such as this, while at other times those stereotypes are challenged, especially through the character of Rosalind herself, who is surely one of Shakespeare’s strongest heroines. Evaluate the view of women presented in the play, being sure to include specific quotations and incidents in your analysis. William Shakespeare’s As You Like It seems at the same time both to ridicule and to promote romantic love.

The same Rosalind who says, “ Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love,” falls head over heels in love with Orlando, a man to whom she has spoken only once, and few love affairs could be more improbable than those between Touchstone and Audrey and Oliver and Celia. Does Shakespeare value the ideal of romantic love, or is he mocking it? Evaluate the view of love presented in the play, being sure to include specific quotations and incidents in your analysis. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. William Shakespeare’s As You Like It ends with four marriages.

Which of those marriages do you think will be the happiest, and which the most torturous? Why do you think so? Consider what you know about the <https://assignbuster.com/as-you-like-it-as-a-romantic-comedy/>

characters, their patterns of behavior, and the environments in which their marriages will be lived out in answering the question. In literature, a foil is a character who brings out the salient characteristics of another by contrast. In William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, whom would you consider the most effective foil for Rosalind? Would you choose Celia, Orlando, Touchstone, or someone else?

Defend your choice by noting why that character is a better foil for the heroine than the other possibilities. William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* contains a fool, Touchstone, and a character who is foolish in his melancholy, Jaques. Compare and contrast these characters and the roles they play with Feste and Malvolio in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Use specific incidents and quotations from the two plays to support your analysis. In Shakespeare's day, women were prohibited from performing on stage. Instead, women's parts were played by boys whose voices had not yet changed.

Consider the implications of this practice for the character of Rosalind in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. When Rosalind disguises herself in the Forest of Arden as Ganymede, then entices Orlando to make love to "him" in order to learn how to win his beloved, we see a boy playing a girl disguised as a boy pretending to be a girl in order to help a boy win a girl's love. In addition to the obvious possibilities for humor such gender confusion provided, what do you think Shakespeare may have been trying to say? How might this have differed from the predictable homoerotic interpretations given by modern commentators?

In William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, characters who espouse extreme views of life and love are subject to ridicule. If Aristotle presented the Golden

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Mean as the midpoint between two extremes, explain how this Golden Mean is held up as the ideal in Shakespeare's play. Who represents this Golden Mean? What characters serve as the extremes between which this sensible center is located? Use specifics from the play to support your argument. William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* focuses on conflicts between two sets of brothers, Duke Senior and Duke Frederick and Oliver and Orlando.

Compare and contrast these conflicts to that between Jacob and Esau in the book of Genesis. Consider the characters of the siblings, the driving motives behind the conflicts, and the resolutions with which the conflicts are brought to a close. Discuss the treatment of class distinctions in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Be sure to include not only the conversation between Touchstone and Corin on the subject, but also the issues raised when those of noble birth disguise themselves as commoners. To what extent does the play affirm class distinctions and to what extent does it undermine them? 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 0. William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is full of songs befitting a pastoral romance. Discuss the significance of these songs. Are they intended merely as entertaining interludes, or do the words of the songs help to convey the themes of the play? Be sure to cite specifics from at least three of the songs in your answer. Discuss the significance of the title of William Shakespeare's romantic comedy *As You Like It*. Critics have proposed a number of possibilities, from the audience appeal of the pastoral genre to the ambiguity with which many of the play's themes are treated to the reference to the title in the Epilogue.

Choose the meaning that you think most appropriate and defend it with specifics from the play. Elizabethans believed in the Divine Right of Kings -

that monarchs were appointed to their positions by God, thus equating rebellion with blasphemy. Not surprisingly, many of Shakespeare's plays are driven by rulers who have usurped their crowns from their rightful owners. Such is the case with Duke Frederick in *As You Like It*. Compare and contrast him with another Shakespearean usurper; possibilities include *Macbeth*, Richard III, Claudius in *Hamlet*, Antonio in *The Tempest*, or any other candidate you can think of.

Pay attention to the characters and motives of the usurpers, their roles in driving the plots of the respective plays, and the outcomes of the resulting conflicts, especially in light of the genre differences among the plays. Analyze the stylistic variations in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Note that the script moves back and forth between blank verse and prose, with some characters always speaking in verse, some always in prose, and some switching from one to the other. Why do you think Shakespeare made these choices?

Support your analysis with specific quotations from the play. William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* demands contradictory skills of its audience. On the one hand, the audience is expected to take pleasure in the dramatic irony of Rosalind's disguise, since the viewers know something the characters don't know and can thus gain pleasure from the inside jokes in the dialogue. On the other hand, the audience must exercise a voluntary suspension of disbelief, accepting the fact that, not only does Orlando fail to recognize his beloved, but Duke Senior also fails to recognize his own daughter!

What qualities of the play itself equip the audience for the needed responses. Do you think a modern audience would be able to handle this contradiction as well as an Elizabethan one? Why or why not? Critic Mark Van Doren, writing on William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, said, "There is only one thing sillier than being in love, and that is thinking it is silly to be in love." In what way is this sentence an apt summary of Shakespeare's popular romantic comedy? Support your conclusion with specifics from the play.

In many of William Shakespeare's comedies, the forest is symbolic of the breaking down of society's values. Compare and contrast the way this theme is handled in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *As You Like It*. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. Both Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* and William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* center around a young woman who disguises herself in order to win the love of a man to whom she is attracted. Compare and contrast the characters of Kate Hardcastle and Rosalind with regard to their motivations, methods, and successes. Which do you find more admirable, and why?