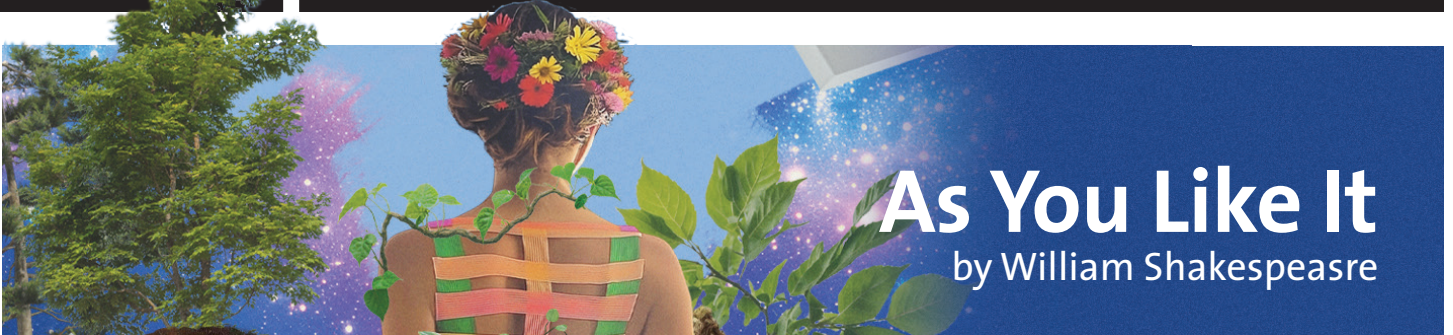




Oregon  
Shakespeare  
Festival

# 2025 Study Guide



## As You Like It by William Shakespeare

Illustration from As You Like It 2025 OSF play art.



### As You Like It Facts

- *As You Like It* is believed to have been written around 1599 during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and opened at the new Globe Theatre in London that same year.
- The play was registered by the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1600. It was first published in the First Folio in 1623. It is thought to be the 19th or 20th play that Shakespeare wrote.
- Scholars believe that Shakespeare may have used Thomas Lodge's pastoral romance, *Rosalynde: Euphues Golden Legacy* as inspiration and source material for *As You Like It*.
- It is traditionally thought that Shakespeare performed the role of Adam himself.



**A**s You Like It takes place in two contrasting settings. In the first setting we are in a royal court where we find two brothers, Oliver and Orlando, who have just lost their father. Since he is the oldest, Oliver has inherited his father's estate and does not want to give any of that money to his younger brother, Orlando. The court is full of rigid rules and varying levels of hierarchy. This hierarchy is used to determine people's lifestyles, economic status, and jobs. The idea of hierarchy is to maintain order even in the face of chaos. In the second setting, the characters find themselves in the forest of Arden. In the forest, the characters can live

more simply. They are allowed to love more openly and have more of a sense of freedom than they do at court. Shakespeare's forests are full of magic, chaos, and possibility, a stark contrast to the rigid life at court. After Duke Senior has been exiled from court, he remarks on the difference between court life and forest life by saying:

"Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile, Hath not old custom made this life more sweet Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods More free from peril than the envious court?"

--*As You Like It*, Act II, Scene 2



# Love and Marriage



Marriage of Catharina de Medici with Henry II of France. Wikimedia commons.

**L**ove is a central theme in *As You Like It*. The play shows love in various different forms. It is likely that Shakespeare would have been familiar with the eight kinds of love discussed by Greek philosophers (though sometimes historians cite four, six, seven, and other numbers). From *agape*, typically translated as unconditional love or charity, to *storge*, the love of parents and children, Greek philosophers weren't satisfied with a general concept of love. For example, in the central relationship with Rosalind and Orlando there is romantic and courtly love, perhaps *eros* (passion, physical attraction) or *philia* (love between equals) or some combination of the two. They express their love through poetry and in carvings on trees. An example of sisterly (*agape* or *philia*?) love can be found between Rosalind and Celia. There is also unrequited love in *As You Like It*. Silvius is madly in love with Phoebe but she is not interested in him and scorns him.

Given these differing examples of love, it's fun to consider why Shakespeare's comedies end in marriage. *As You Like It* features a whopping four unions. It's likely that weddings are central to Shakespeare's comedies because they bring everyone back together after hardships or turmoil between couples, their families, or the community. His characters often marry for love, which may have seemed unusual for audiences in the Elizabethan era. The rise of Humanism in this era, which emphasized personal choice and reason, likely contributed to changing marriage practices. Unlike marriage in Medieval England in which partners—particularly women—had little say, by the late-Renaissance, most parents and guardians hoped that the two parties agreed before being married. This was especially true among the growing middle class. Forced marriage between members of the nobility seeking to gain wealth and power would continue for many years to come.

## Before seeing/reading the play

1. William Shakespeare's play *As You Like It* is often described as a pastoral romance or a pastoral comedy. What are some of the elements that make a story pastoral? These and other websites provide information:  
<https://osuasyoulikeit.wordpress.com/contexts-for-as-you-like-it/shakespeares-sources/pastoral-conventions-in-shakespeares-as-you-like-it-by-victoria-munoz/>  
<https://oxfordre.com/literature/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-1078#:~:text=Pastoral%20is%20a%20way%20of,is%20or%20can%20be%20pastoral>
2. In several of Shakespeare's plays, including *As You Like It*, characters disguise themselves in different ways. In this play, Rosalind conceals herself as a boy named Ganymede. Research what was expected of women in the Elizabethan era. What are some reasons Rosalind might choose to disguise herself as a boy? These and other websites provide information:  
<https://www.writers theatre.org/blog/gender-shakespeares-stage-history/>  
<https://www.elizabethi.org/contents/women/>  
<https://elizabethanenglandlife.com/the-life-and-roles-of-elizabethan-era-women.html>
3. What are the origins of the names of the following characters in *As You Like It*: Ganymede, Aliena, Orlando, and Oliver? Based on your discoveries about these names, what might some of their characteristics be? What do these definitions tell you the play may be about? These and other websites provide information:  
<https://www.behindthename.com>  
<https://www.ancestry.com/first-name-meaning/>
4. Shakespeare writes the role of the Fool into many of his plays. Like the character Touchstone in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare's Fools serve very specific purposes in his stories. Research some of the characteristics of the Fool and how they are different from characters that just act foolishly. These and other websites provide information:  
<https://nosweatshakespeare.com/blog/ultimate-guide-shakespeares-fools/>  
<https://www.bardology.org/shakespeares-clowns-and-fools/>
5. Hierarchy is ingrained in Shakespeare's time and plays. There is always the hierarchy with the royals, but there are two more examples of hierarchies that we learn about at the beginning of the play. One is between a pair of Dukes who happen to be brothers, and another between a different set of brothers. Research what hierarchy means and how class and status play a role in the formation of a hierarchy. These and other websites provide information:  
<https://hierarchystructure.com/elizabethan-era-social-hierarchy/>  
<https://www.history.org.uk/student/module/4536/overview-of-elizabeth-i/4543/social-structure>  
<https://www.history.org.uk/student/module/4536/overview-of-elizabeth-i/4543/social-structure>



6. What does it mean to be a good ruler or leader? What is a tyrant, and what characteristics might they possess? How do you think people are treated by a good ruler versus how a tyrant might rule over them? These and other websites provide information:  
<https://www.inc.com/nicolas-cole/3-personality-traits-that-reveal-whether-youre-a-leader-or-a-tyrant.html>  
<https://fee.org/articles/the-three-traits-of-tyranny/>

7. In Shakespeare's time, what inheritance rights did eldest sons have? What obligations did elder brothers have to their younger brothers? This and other websites provide information:  
<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/learning/medievalwomen/theme2/inheritance.aspx#:~:text=This%20is%20a%20typical%20example,cum%20pertinenciis%20suis%20integre%20remaneat>

8. Learn about Shakespeare's life and times from the following websites:  
<https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/SLT/index.html>  
<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/>



Adam and Orlando costume renderings by An-Lin Dauber.



Forest of Arden set model by Tanya Orellana.



# Textile Revolution

## Our production of *As You Like It* celebrates Textile Art.

Researchers believe clothing—in the form of animal skins and plant matter—was first donned around 170,000 years ago, making it possible for our ancestors to move beyond the warm climates of Africa. Early extant sewing needles have been dated to 50,000 years ago. As early as 6000 BCE, flax, rush, reed, and palm were used by Egyptians for clothing and rope. Across these developments, makers have incorporated decorative details in the form of patterns woven or knitted into garments as well as the application of decorative gems and metals, trims, appliques, and embroidery. Different types of fibers, from wool to linen to polyester, have been developed to create a wide variety of textiles for use on bodies and in homes for both comfort and decoration.

Considering the history of working plant and animal matter into thread, fabric, and garments, it's surprising that Textile Art wasn't recognized as a legitimate

artform until late in the 1800s. Despite long histories of embroidery, weaving, quilting, and other decorative textiles, these forms are considered crafts or hobbies rather than art.



Woman spinning, Iran 600 BCE

The rise of the Textile Art movement is strongly associated with the women's movement of the 1960s-70s. Textile Art became a way for women to highlight and recognize the legitimacy of an art media that had long been dismissed. Look for ways this inspiration shows up in the scenic design and costumes.



Mother's Quilt, Faith Ringgold, 1983.



Elsi Giauque, Spatial Element 1979.



## After seeing/reading the play

1. In the epilogue that Rosalind speaks to the audience, she says, “to like as much of this play as please you.” How do you think this phrase ties in with the title of the play? What message(s) do you think Shakespeare is trying to send with this title?
2. Refer to your research on the meanings of character names. Now that you have seen the play, in what ways do the names Ganymede, Aliena, Orlando, and Oliver fit those characters?
3. Refer to your research on character disguises and women in the Elizabethan era. What are some specific freedoms that Rosalind is afforded because she disguises herself as a man? What does she gain in her relationships with different characters by being in this disguise? How might her actions and language be different if she entered the forest as a woman?
4. Compare the women in *As You Like It*. What are the different qualities you find in the women? How do they express themselves in the play? Compare the men in *As You Like It*. What are the different qualities you find in them? How do they express themselves in the play? How do the characters’ background influence who they are and how they communicate? In what ways do the characters, both from the court and the country, change throughout the play?
5. Some characters, such as Duke Senior, Rosalind, and Orlando, are forcefully banished or exiled from the court, while others such as Celia, Jaques, Touchstone, and Adam, choose to leave. What hardships do the different characters face in exile? What do they learn in exile?
6. Which of the characters seem to adapt or fit most naturally in the forest? Which characters have a hard time adapting to it? How are they changed by their time in the forest?
7. What liberties do the characters have in the forest of Arden versus those they’d have at court? How does this freedom help them to either resolve hardships or gain forgiveness from earlier events in the play?
8. What are the similarities and differences between Celia’s and Oliver’s situations? How do the two respond to their changing circumstances? What does Oliver do to become worthy of Celia? What are the similarities between Orlando’s and Rosalind’s situations?
9. What is it about Ganymede that Phoebe finds attractive? In what ways is he different from Silvius? From what we learn about Phoebe, why might she prefer Ganymede over Silvius? How are Phoebe and Silvius alike?
10. Refer to your research on the Fools in Shakespeare’s plays. What kind of Fool is Touchstone? When does he speak the truth? Why is Jaques so enamored with Touchstone? Who else in the play do you consider to be a Fool? Who is Just foolish? Why?
11. There are many references to time (including different seasons in the year, the seven ages of man, etc.) in the play. What is the role of time in the show?
12. Different kinds of love are explored in *As You Like It*: parent and child, brother and brother, cousin and cousin, romantic partners. There is also love of self, love of solitude and love of illusion. How are these kinds of love expressed in the play and by whom?
13. Shakespeare’s comedies are usually about people living together in a community. Even though *As You Like It* begins with a breakdown of a flawed community, in the end, almost all of the relationships are mended. What has changed for the characters?



Phoebe and Silvius costume renderings by An-Lin Dauber

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