

2012 Suggestions for Teaching *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare

Before seeing/reading the play

1. What are the origins and meanings of the names of the following characters in *As You Like It*: Rosalind, Celia, Orlando, Oliver, Sir Rowland De Boys, Touchstone, Ganymede, Aliena? Given your discoveries about the meaning of the names of the characters, what do you think the play might be about? This and other websites provide information:
<http://www.thinkbabynames.com/meaning/o/Rosalind>
<http://www.etymonline.com/>
2. What does it mean to be a good ruler? What characteristics does a good ruler possess? What is a tyrant? What characteristics does a tyrant possess? How are people treated when a good ruler is reigning? How are they treated under a tyrant? To what extent does the behavior of the ruler influence the behavior of the people s/he rules?
3. *As You Like It* is partly a satire of pastoral romance. Describe the elements of pastoral romance. Find examples of the pastoral tradition in today's films, televisions, advertising, etc. This and other websites provide information:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20060706.shtml
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastoral>
4. In several of Shakespeare's plays including *As You Like It*, a female character (here named Rosalind) disguises herself as a boy. However in this play there is another layer – when disguised as a boy, the character pretends to be a girl. How do you think this will be depicted– a girl playing a boy playing a girl? In Shakespeare's day, all the actors were male. How do you think this was depicted in Shakespeare's day – a boy playing a

girl playing a boy playing a girl? Research the stage history of Rosalind. These and other resources provide information:

<http://ise.uvic.ca/Library/SLT/stage/childactors.html>

Marshall, Cynthia (2004) *Shakespeare in Production: As You Like It*, Cambridge University Press

5. What were traditional gender roles in Shakespeare's day? What exploration of traditional gender roles do you expect to find in *As You Like It*? What are your expectations of how women will be portrayed? Men?

<http://ise.uvic.ca/Library/SLT/ideas/sexes.html>

<http://www2.cedarcrest.edu/academic/eng/lfletcher/ayli/azuber.htm>

<http://www.123helpme.com/view.asp?id=16170>

6. In Shakespeare's day, what inheritance rights did eldest sons have? Middle sons? Youngest sons? What obligations did elder brothers have to their younger brothers? This and other websites provide information:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primogeniture>

7. What is melancholy? How is it expressed? What were the characteristics ascribed to a melancholy man in Shakespeare's time? What are modern parallels? This and other websites provide information:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melancholia>

<http://artsites.ucsc.edu/faculty/bierman/elsinore/melancholy/melFirst.html>

Resources

Learn more about Shakespeare's life and times at the following websites:

<http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/>

<http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=865&CFID=6230886&CFTOKEN=25420173>

<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare.html>

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/life.htm>

<http://www.bardweb.net/man.html>

<http://www.shakespearemag.com/intro.asp>

After seeing/reading the play

1. What, in your opinion, is the significance of the title of the play?
2. Refer to your research on the meanings of the character names. Now that you have seen/read the play, what can you add to the significance of the names? In what ways does the name fit the character?
3. Shakespeare often used existing stories or plays as source material for his own plays. In the case of *As You Like It*, his primary source material, *Rosalynde: Euphues Golden Legacie* was first published in 1590. Read this novel on line at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17181/17181-8.txt> . Or read an article comparing the two works at <http://www.prismnet.com/jlockett/Grist/English/ayli-sources.html>. What elements do *Rosalynde* and *As You Like It* share? What elements of the story are purely Shakespeare's inventions? How do the invented elements enrich the source story?
4. What kind of a ruler is Duke Frederick? Find clues in the text that tell us about him as a ruler and about life in his court. What kind of a ruler is Duke Senior? Find clues in the text that tell us about life under his leadership, both in the forest and when he was at court.
5. There was a popular debate in Elizabethan times between the influence of *nature* and the influence of *nurture*. Orlando refers to it in the first scene of the play – his nature is noble and honorable, but he has been raised or nurtured to be rough and uneducated. What is the influence of nature? What is the influence of nurture? Which is more powerful? Why? How is this debate explored throughout *As You Like It*? Find specific references in the text.
6. Fathers play an important role in the play. In Act I, scene i Orlando says, "The spirit of my father grows strong in me..." Which characters have significant fathers or father figures? How is the father important to each? Who rejects the spirit of the father? Who embraces it?

7. The action of the play moves from court life to country life. In what other plays does Shakespeare transport characters from the court to the country? Find textual evidence that tells you about the two locations and how the characters feel about each. What are the virtues of the court? The forest? What are the vices of each? What is the importance of each? What is the ideal balance between the court and the forest? How does each rely on the other?
8. What is the mythic significance of a forest? What is said in the text about the Forest of Arden? How do people's attitudes about the forest change with their circumstances? Who are changed by their stay in the forest and how?
9. Describe the pace of the play in the court scenes. Describe the pace of the play in the forest scenes. How many plot lines are set in each location and how do they relate to each other? Describe how actions initiated in the court scenes are resolved in the forest.
10. Refer to your research on the tradition of pastoral romance. What elements of a pastoral does *As You Like It* contain? What new elements does Shakespeare add to his play?
11. Who is banished and why? Who chooses exile and why? What do they learn in exile?
12. Once the action of the play shifts to the Forest of Arden, there is a lot of music and singing. How does music contribute to life in the forest? What does it tell you about the congregation in the forest that the exiled Duke is supplied with a resident musician?
13. Describe the court's rules for how men and women behave towards each other. How do those rules change or relax in the forest to allow behavior and explorations of behavior that wouldn't be allowed in the court? To what extent does Rosalind's disguise as a man subvert the rules? Reinforce them?
14. What freedoms does Rosalind's disguise afford her? What limitations? What does Rosalind gain by pretending to be a man? What, if anything, does she lose?

15. Compare the women in the play. What different sides of womanhood are expressed in *As You Like It*? Compare the men. What different sides of manhood are expressed in *As You Like It*?
16. What are the similarities and differences between Celia's and Oliver's situations? In what ways are they contrasted? How do the two respond to their changing circumstances? What does Oliver do to become worthy of Celia? What are the similarities between Orlando and Rosalind's situations? To what extent are they a good match?
17. Why is Phoebe attracted to Ganymede? In what ways is he different from Silvius? Why would Phoebe prefer Ganymede to Silvius?
18. Why is Touchstone attracted to Audrey? Why is William attracted to Audrey? Which man is the better match for Audrey and why? Why does Audrey make the choice she does?
19. Different kinds of love are explored in *As You Like It*: father and child, master and servant, brother and brother, cousin and cousin, woman and man, one who loves too much and one who doesn't know what love is, love of self, love of solitude, love of an illusion. Compare the kinds of love expressed in the play. Compare the four sets of lovers. Select a character from the play. What does love mean to that character? Who does the character love and why?
20. Refer to Silvius' description of what it is to love in Act V, scene ii. In what ways is it an accurate description? In what ways is it idealized? What would you add to Silvius' remarks to make his description of love more complete?
21. What is the function of the Fool? What freedoms does the Fool have? What are all the definitions of "fool?" What is the difference between being a Fool and being a fool? Touchstone is referred to as the Fool; who are there other fools in the play? What makes them foolish?

22. Go through the text and write down all the references to time (including references to the seasons, the seven ages of man, etc.) What is the role of time in the play? How and why does time (and the play's action) move differently in the court and in the forest?
23. *As You Like It* is filled with contrasts: different kinds of rulers, different kinds of love, different kinds of brothers. The language of the play reinforces the idea of contrasts. Go through the text, note down a couple of instances of this, and bring them to a group discussion of contrasts and opposites in the play.
24. Shakespeare's comedies are about people living together in a community. Even though *As You Like It* begins with a breakdown of flawed community, in the end, almost everyone is enfolded back into a healed community. What allows each character to return home to his/her responsibilities? What specifically has changed for each character? How has time in Nature and within a community changed each character in the play? Why does Frederick choose a different path? Why does Jacques?
25. Director Jessica Thebus has chosen to set this production of *As You Like It* in a world reminiscent of a fairy tale landscape. How does this setting contribute to the telling of the story? How does it reinforce some of the major themes within it?
26. OSF's production makes Charles the Wrestler and Jacques female characters, both played by actresses. What effect does this have on the storytelling? How does this alter Charles and Jacques relationships with the male and female characters with whom they interact?

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