

A Study Guide to Shakespeare's



As You Like It

A Study Guide to
AS YOU LIKE IT

I

THE DRAMATIC CONDUCT OF THE PLAY: THE WRESTLING MATCH

How much of the situation existing in the play comes out in Act I. i.?
And what action takes place?

The strained relation existing between the brothers Orlando and Oliver is revealed through Orlando's conversation with Adam and with his brother Oliver. The situation at court is also revealed through the conversation of Oliver with the wrestler Charles, and also the loving relation existing between Celia and Rosalind; thus we are at once put into the possession of three emotional or passional causes for action--Oliver's hatred of his younger brother, the younger Duke's hatred of his older brother, and the love of Celia for Rosalind. Of these causes for action only one bears any fruit in this scene, namely, Oliver arranges with the wrestler to kill Orlando. What are

the connections existing between sc. ii. and sc. i.? First there is a picture of the loving relationship existing between Rosalind and Celia (already mentioned by Oliver in sc. i.) which reveals very subtly differences in their natures. The action set going by Oliver in sc. i. is consummated in the wrestling match, but with a result different from that hoped for by Oliver, thus leaving Oliver's hatred still present as a cause of action. Out of the wrestling match what further passionate and emotional causes of action are set up? Duke Frederick's hatred for Orlando is aroused because he learns he is the son of a man he had considered his enemy, and action against him is the immediate result. Orlando is warned by Le Beau that he is not safe at the court. The Duke's hatred of his brother bears further fruit in its extension to Rosalind. The meeting of Rosalind and Orlando brought about by the wrestling match gives rise to a fresh emotional force in their budding love for each other. In Sc. iii., the state of Rosalind's heart as to Orlando, hinted at in sc. ii., is fully revealed; the Duke's hatred takes shape in his sentence of banishment or death, giving rise to a new direction for action, and the emotion of Celia's love for Rosalind bears fruit in her determination to go with Rosalind into banishment.

II

LIFE IN THE FOREST OF ARDEN

In Act II. how are the elements of action, character delineation and emotion intermingled?

Sc. i. gives us a picture of the banished Duke and his followers in the Forest of Arden, already prepared for in Act I., introduces us to the personality of the Duke, and in the conversation with the lords prepares us for coming delights in the personality of Jaques. It does not advance the action, at all. In sc. ii., the result of Celia's act in going with Rosalind is shown in the bad Duke's consternation, who determines that they shall be found, thus starting another thread of action to be developed later. Sc. iii. the passionate cause of action in Oliver's hatred of Orlando reaches a crisis; Orlando is obliged to flee to save himself from death. Sc. iv. shows Celia and Rosalind arrived at their journey's end in the Forest of Arden, and making arrangements with a shepherd for a comfortable little house to rusticate in; thus is closed the thread of action started by the Duke in banishing Rosalind. In the conversation of their new companions,

Corin and Silvius, we learn of the love of Silvius for the scornful Phebe, which is another emotional impulse to action, later blending itself with the plot. In sc. v. we meet Jaques, already mentioned, and get another glimpse of the pleasant company in the forest, but they are still quite detached from the active elements of the play. Sc. vi. shows us how far Orlando and Adam have gone in their flight, and sc. vii. presents again the good Duke's court, develops further the personality of Jaques, and prepares us, through his conversation about the fool whom he had met in the forest, for the contact of one of the threads of action with the element of inaction represented by this good Duke's forest court, while in the sudden breaking in upon them of Orlando it is brought into contact with another of the threads of action.

III

LOVE IN THE FOREST OF ARDEN

At the opening of Act III. what results have been brought about by the action so far? Everybody in the play except Oliver and the bad Duke has arrived in the Forest of Arden. In sc. i. of Act III. the hatred of the Duke is still active as a force, and Oliver through this means is also sent off to finally bring up in the Forest of Arden. The Duke's attitude as a motive force having worked itself out in its relation to Orlando and Rosalind, the emotional cause of action in the love of Rosalind and Orlando is free to develop, and the remainder of Act III. is devoted chiefly to the presentation of the situation between the lovers, which, owing to the disguise assumed by Rosalind, gives rise to the charming inconsistencies attending the wooing of a proxy Rosalind who is in reality Rosalind herself. Around these central lovers, whose characters Shakespeare unfolds, revolve other interesting personalities. Touchstone meets his fate in Audrey. Phebe still scorns Corin and perversely falls in love with Ganymede. The action is only advanced to the extent that Rosalind learns the state of Orlando's mind while he still remains in ignorance as to hers.

IV

HATRED BECOMES LOVE IN ARDEN

Are there any fresh elements or developments in Act IV.?

Sc. i. merely continues the love-making of Act III. Sc. ii. gives another glimpse of the good Duke's court; in sc. iii. the love of Phebe bears fruit in a letter to Ganymede, and Oliver finds his way to the forest. The bad Duke's intentions toward Orlando in sending Oliver after him are, however, frustrated by the sudden change of heart against a bad Duke is a good Duke. Contrast their actions throughout the play. Contrast also the two brothers, Orlando and Oliver. What are the resemblances between the characters of Oliver and Duke Frederick?--between Orlando and the banished Duke? Is Orlando's rebellion against his brother's injustice or the banished Duke's acceptance of his brother's injustice the more to be praised? Compare his attitude with that of Prospero under similar circumstances. Whose repentance is the more sincere, Oliver's or Duke Frederick's? Note that Oliver has lost all when he repents, while the Duke gives up everything just as he is about to realize his aim. Is the repentance of the usurping Duke merely a ruse of Shakespeare's to bring the play to a happy ending? In Lodge's story he does not repent, but is proceeded against by his brother. Contrast Jaques and Touchstone. Is Jaques's melancholy affected? What is the main difference between Rosalind and Celia? Which is the more the friend of the other? (For valuable suggestions on these points see 'Characters in "As You Like It,"' Poet-lore, Vol. IV. pp. 31 and 81, Jan. and Feb., 1892.)

QUERIES FOR DISCUSSION

Which is the better philosopher, Jaques or Touchstone, and which is more closely related to the philosophy of the play?

The characters of the two Dukes are not developed; they are merely walking gentlemen, whose office it is to keep the play in motion.

2. The Lovers of the Play.

The Different Kinds of Love in 'As You Like It.' Examples of love at first sight in Shakespeare. Note Orlando's surprise at the suddenness of Oliver's and Celia's love. Was his own less sudden? Consider Hymen's song and Jaques's remarks in the last scene as descriptive of the various couples. Does the comic element of the play, as represented by Touchstone, discredit sentiment in the play? Notice the

madrigal in Lodge's novel (given in Poet-lore, Vol. III., in the article on Lodge, Dec, 1891), and consider whether Shakespeare has borrowed anything from it in characterizing Rosalind's wooing? Contrast Lodge's Montanus as a lover with Shakespeare's Silvius. Is Montanus too much of a "tame snake" to be natural? Or does this constancy in love make him a superior figure? Is it a sign of Silvius's inferiority that love has its own way with him? Can love be true that changes if it is unrequited?

Are those actors right, do you think, who play Oliver as guessing who Ganymede is when she swoons? Is Rosalind's conduct unwomanly? Is her disguise unlikely?

QUERIES FOR DISCUSSION

It is best for the man to love the most; and therefore has Silvius and Phebe's unequal love-match a better chance for happiness than Rosalind's and Orlando's?

VII

THE PASTORAL ELOPMENT

The Rise of Pastoral Poetry, and Shakespeare's Use of it in 'As You Like It.'

Compare Spenser's 'Shepherd's Calendar,' Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess,' etc. Point out any differences you find between Shakespeare's and Spenser's pastoral poetry. Modern literary use of the pastoral element, Wordsworth's 'Michael.' Is the pastoral life of literature always artificial? Can a progress toward realism be shown? The humor of the play. Discuss in particular the humorous comments on contrasts between court and country life. Compare modern instances of the refinements and artifices of city life and the crudeness of work and pleasure in the country.

Special Points --1. The Forest of Arden: Is it in England, France, or Shakespeare's imagination? 2. "Old Robin Hood of England." What are the legends concerning him? 3. The archaic words in the play. (See Prof. Sinclair Korner's 'Shakespeare's Inheritance from the Fourteenth Century,' in Poet-lore, Vol. II., p. 410, Aug., 1890.)

QUERY FOR DISCUSSION

Is the opposition shown in the play between life at court and in the country truly shown to be to the advantage of the country.

VIII

THE MORAL ELEMENT

The moral side of the Play consists, according to the Introduction in the First Folio Edition, in its persuasion toward an Arden of the disposition, or a spirit of happy good will toward all men. How far does this cover the lesson of the Play?

What is to be thought of the idea in the 'Ethics of "As You Like It"' (Poet-lore, Vol. III., p. 498, Oct., 1891), that Touchstone's opinion of a shepherd's life (III. ii.) is the key-note of the play? Are the references to fortune in the play significant? Dr. F.J. Furnivall says: "What we most prize is misfortune borne with cheery mind, the sun of man's spirit shining through and dispersing the clouds which try to shade it. This is the spirit of the play." Of this Dr. Ingleby says: "The moral of the play is much more concrete than this. It is not how to bear misfortune with a cheery mind, but how to read the lessons in the vicissitudes of physical nature." C.A. Wurtzburg says: "The deep truths that may be gathered from the play are the innate dignity of the human spirit, before which every conventionality of birth, rank, education, even of natural ties, must give way." Give arguments drawn from the play in favor of or against all of these suggestions. Is it an evidence of Shakespeare's intention to be a moral teacher that he altered the fate of Duke Frederick?

QUERY FOR DISCUSSION

Has the play any moral that is not gently satirized in it?

IX

THE SOURCE OF THE PLOT

Shakespeare's Variations from Lodge.

Compare Lodge's 'Rosalind' with 'As You Like It.'

(For this story, see "Shakespeare's Library" or Extracts in Notes and Comment in Sources in "First Folio Edition").

Is the story better without the parts Shakespeare leaves out (e. g., Adam's proposal to Rosader to cut his veins and suck the blood; his nose-bleed; the incident of the robbers accounting for Aliena's sudden love, etc.)? Why is the "Green and gilded snake" added? Isn't the "lioness" enough? Is Rosader or Orlando the finer character, and why? The new characters introduced--Audrey and William--considered as embodying real instead of ideal pastoral life. Do Shakespeare's changes affect the plot, the characters, or the moral of the story? (For an examination of the plot of the play, see 'An Inductive Study of "As You Like It,"' in *Poet-lore*, Vol. III., p. 341.)

A Sketch of Lodge's Life and Work. (See 'An Elizabethan Lyrist: Thomas Lodge,' in *Poet-lore*, Vol. III., p. 593, Dec, 1891.)

QUERY FOR DISCUSSION

Is Shakespeare's framing of the plot of 'As You Like It' not to be admired, because it is borrowed?

X

THE MUSIC OF THE PLAY

This may consist of a brief paper on the subject illustrated by a program of the songs with the old and more modern settings. (See New Shakespeare Society's Papers, on this subject; 'Shakespeare and Music,' by E.W. Naylor.)