



Rewarding Learning

eGUIDE//English Literature

Shakespearean Genres

Unit A2 1

As You Like It

| Content/Specification Section | Page |
|--|-------------|
| <u>Starting Point</u> | 2 |
| <u>A01 Plot, Characters, Themes</u> | 4 |
| <u>A02 Dramatic Methods</u> | 12 |
| <u>A03 Contexts</u> | 14 |
| <u>A04 Connections</u> | 16 |
| <u>A05 Argument and interpretation</u> | 17 |
| <u>Activities</u> | 20 |
| <u>Glossary of terms</u> | 21 |



Starting Point

In this unit there are 5 Assessment Objectives involved – A01, A02, A03, A04 and A05.

A01: Textual knowledge and understanding, and communication

In this examination, the candidate should be able to articulate informed and relevant responses that communicate effectively knowledge and understanding of the selected play.

This Assessment Objective (AO) involves the student's knowledge and understanding of the play, and ability to express relevant ideas accurately and coherently, using appropriate terminology and concepts. Quality of written communication is taken into consideration in all units.

A02: Dramatic methods

In this examination, the candidate should analyse Shakespeare's use of such dramatic methods as characterisation, structure, language and staging.

The student should analyse relevantly the ways in which meanings are shaped in plays. This means identifying dramatic features and showing how these features relate to the key terms of the question.

Discussing dramatic methods – advice to teachers and students:

In this component, equal marks are available for the candidate's treatment of the extract and other relevant parts of the text. As the unit is closed book, examiners will be realistic about the amount of detail from the wider text which can be provided in the time available. Every play has its memorable phrases which come to mind when writing, but it is anticipated that the larger-scale features of form, structure, language and staging will be helpful in constructing a relevant response. The student will, however, be expected to respond in a more detailed fashion to the use of language and dramatic methods within the given extract. A reminder of the process of identification (of methods), illustration, analysis, and relation to the question may be timely.

A03: Contexts

In this examination, the candidate should demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which a play is written and received by drawing on appropriate information from outside the play.

Each question will specify a particular type of context in the stimulus statement/directive. In this unit the stipulated context will be literary and will focus on the nature of a particular Shakespearean genre. Contextual information offered should be of this stipulated type. It should be relevant to the question. And it should be external to the play itself.



Contextual information which is made relevant to the key terms of the question will be rewarded. Students should be aware that little credit can be given for contextual information that is introduced merely for its own sake. They should remember that the text has primacy over the context. A good response will use contextual information sparingly and judiciously.

A04: Connections

In this examination, the candidate should explore connections within a Shakespeare play, and between the extract accompanying the question and the wider text.

The student should explore similarities and differences between characters, plot lines, themes, staging, and other dramatic techniques within the play and its wider context. Significant, pointed connections which are made relevant to the key terms of the question will be rewarded.

A05: Argument and interpretation

In this examination, the candidate should offer opinion or judgment in response to the given reading of the play, taking account of the key terms as the basis of the argument.

This AO is the driver of Unit A2 1 and is of primary importance.

A05 can be satisfied in full by the candidate developing his/her own reading in response to the given reading. If, however, critics are used, they must be

- used with understanding
- incorporated into the argument to reinforce or be seen as an alternative to the student's opinion
- not used as a substitute for the development of the student's own opinion
- properly acknowledged.

Coherence and relevance of argument will be rewarded. Students should be aware of the importance of planning in the sequencing and illustration of the reading they wish to put forward. They should also beware of the danger of replacing the key terms of the question with others of their own choosing which they assume mean much the same thing.

The following information is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, but is intended as a starting point for teachers and students. It reflects some of the stylistic and contextual issues which may be explored and developed further both in the classroom and through teachers' and students' own independent research.



A01 Plot, Characters, Themes

Plot Summary

As You Like It is one of Shakespeare's best-loved comedies and its heroine Rosalind, one of Shakespeare's finest creations. It was written towards the end of the reign of Elizabeth I in about 1599 when many critics have suggested that Shakespeare had reached the peak of his comic achievement. As in many of Shakespeare's plays of this time, there was a reaction to the growing commerce and political change of the period. Increasingly the fashion was for pastoral plays set in an imaginary world of simple and idealised rural life, and *As You Like It* follows this fashion. Most of the action of the play takes place in the Forest of Arden and the forest is the pastoral heart of the play. Everything that gives this play its exquisite quality happens in this forest, which provides hospitality and love in contrast to the animosities of the court. The play is more than an enchanting love story and it beguiles audiences because of its complex attitudes and relationships. Its analysis of the contrasting virtues of the court and country would have appealed to contemporary audiences in particular, and there is a clever discussion of the virtues of idealism and realism through the characterisation of the play. The balance between melancholy and humour is finely judged and from this play emerges one of the great speeches concerning man's decay.

Act One - Meetings

Before the story begins, a good duke, Senior, has been usurped and exiled by his ruthless brother Frederick and has taken refuge in the forest with a few faithful courtiers. They live happily, simply and in freedom although there are challenges in terms of hunger and the weather. Act One is set at court where Rosalind, the good Duke's daughter has remained to be with her friend and cousin Celia, Frederick's daughter. We are introduced to Orlando, the son of Sir Rowland de Boys who is complaining to his servant Adam that he is being mistreated and deprived of his inheritance by his elder brother Oliver, who was given a thousand crowns by Sir Rowland to bring him up properly. Oliver enters and the two brothers quarrel over the money. Oliver then summons Duke Frederick's wrestler Charles with whom Orlando has arranged a wrestling match. He convinces Charles that Orlando is plotting against him and persuades Charles to fight him in earnest, saying to the wrestler, 'I had as life thou didst break his neck as his finger.' In the next scene, Celia is seen comforting Rosalind for the plight of her banished father, and they then witness the wrestling match between Orlando and Charles which Orlando wins. Duke Frederick is outraged by this outcome when he finds out that the unknown challenger is the son of Sir Rowland (who is a former enemy of his) and he brusquely departs, but both Celia and Rosalind compliment Orlando on his victory. Rosalind is particularly pleased as Sir Rowland had been a friend of her exiled father. At this moment in the play, Orlando and Rosalind fall in love with one another but their delight is short lived as Duke Frederick returns and banishes Rosalind, despite Celia's protestations, for her alleged disloyalty but more because of her and her father's popularity. Celia, angered by her father, decides to join Rosalind and they agree to dress up in humble clothes, Rosalind as a man, and join the exiled Duke Senior in the Forest of Arden, taking with them the court jester Touchstone, a worldly man with a zest for life. Rosalind takes on the name of Ganymede, while Celia takes that of Aliena.



Act Two - Development

This Act, like the rest of the play is mainly set in the forest. Duke Senior, in conversation with some of his followers, extols the virtues of forest life far away from the court, and they discuss the behaviour of the melancholy Jaques, a fellow-courtier, also banished, and agree to try and find him. Back at court, Frederick is infuriated by Celia's and Rosalind's absence and he sends Oliver to try and find them believing they are in the company of Orlando. Orlando is warned of this by his loyal servant Adam and together they depart the court in fear of Frederick's anger. In the forest, Rosalind, disguised as Ganymede and Celia, disguised as Aliena, overhear a young shepherd boy Silvius who talks of his love for Phebe to a fellow shepherd, Corin. Rosalind and Celia tell Touchstone to try and secure food from Corin, but Corin can offer little as he is under pressure from his master who is intending to sell their sheep flocks and take their land. Taking sympathy on Corin, Rosalind and Celia arrange for the master's lands and house (where they propose to live) to be transferred to Corin. In the next scene we meet Jaques, who has been found, and is now in the company of the Duke Senior's musician, Amiens, and Jaques is taken back to meet Duke Senior. Elsewhere Orlando and a weary Adam are in the forest seeking food and in the pursuit of this, Orlando bursts in on Duke Senior. The Duke treats him gently and welcomes him to his court-in-exile and they discuss their fortunes in words and song.

Act Three – Courtship

Act Three revolves around the courtship between Rosalind and Orlando but there is also a more earthy kind of courtship between Touchstone and a goatherd, Audrey, and also between the loving Silvius and the proud Phebe who has rejected his marriage proposal. However the Act begins at court with Oliver being charged by Frederick to bring back Orlando, dead or alive within a year. Back in the forest, Orlando pins up verses in praise of Rosalind on the trees, which the disguised Rosalind reads. Touchstone mocks and parodies these verses and Celia confirms their origin. Touchstone and Corin then debate the virtues of court and country. Elsewhere in the forest, after overhearing Orlando get the better of a debate with Jaques, Rosalind decides to accost Orlando and in her disguise she persuades him that she has a cure for his love: he is to woo her as if she were his 'Rosalind' and this will bring him to his senses. Out of this highly artificial situation emerge love scenes full of lyricism, passion, irony and humour. Rosalind's obsession with Orlando continues and she takes council from Celia. Hearing of Phebe's rejection of Silvius, Rosalind rebukes Phebe as she admires Silvius' devotion, only to find that Phebe has fallen in love with 'him' (Ganymede) and again she rebukes Phebe. Phebe, frustrated by this, plots to use Silvius to win over the disguised Rosalind by persuading him to deliver a letter to Ganymede.

Act Four - Rosalind's Magic

Rosalind dominates this Act. Firstly she gets the better of Jaques in a debate over melancholy and then she turns her attention back to Orlando. In a discussion that follows she goes through a mock marriage with him with the aid of Celia, chides him for being late and then reluctantly allows him to leave to dine with the Duke. Whilst he is away, Celia is critical of Rosalind, believing she has gone too far in this case of love. At this point, Silvius arrives to deliver Phebe's love letter to Rosalind who firstly rebukes Silvius for its abusive tone and then for his folly in love. Oliver then arrives at the end of the Act to tell Ganymede that Orlando has been wounded in a brave struggle with a snake and a lion which were threatening Oliver's life. Hearing of the danger Orlando was in, Rosalind faints.

Act Five - weddings and reconciliation

The final Act brings about the meeting of all the exiles, the resolution to all the love affairs and the rightful return of all possessions. Firstly, the love of Oliver, who has been reconciled with his brother Orlando, and Celia (in disguise as Aliena) is confirmed and their marriage will follow on the next day. Similarly Touchstone and Audrey announce



their marriage after the dismissal of one of Audrey's previous suitors, William, the country clown. Later on after further wooing and assertions of true love, Silvius finally wins over Phebe who is now aware of Rosalind's true identity. Orlando remarks that it is a bitter thing to look into other people's happiness and Rosalind hearing this, promises Orlando that she will bring about his own happy marriage. In the final scene, the various marriage pacts are confirmed with Duke Senior and at that point Rosalind and Celia enter out of disguise and their partners are confirmed amidst much rejoicing, announcements and song including a wedding song from the masquer Hymen. The final moments revolve around Duke Frederick's change of heart, occurring after a meeting with a religious man on the edge of the forest that leads to his decision to abort his attack on Duke Senior's banished court. Instead he restores his dukedom to Duke Senior with all lands and possessions returned and withdraws from the world into a monastic existence. This brings about general rejoicing, Jaques follows Frederick into a similar future and this only leaves Rosalind to close the play with her epilogue asking the audience to approve the play with their applause.

Importance of the pastoral element

In writing *As You Like It*, Shakespeare was heavily influenced by the pastoral romantic tradition, made up of two strands: pastoral and romance.~

- Pastoral was a form of literature that idealised nature and rural life. The country was seen as superior to the town; it was a place of escape where human nature could be purified. This tradition originated from Greek times and was based on the simple, frugal life of a shepherd, (pastor in Latin meaning shepherd). Rural life in medieval England had been glorified e.g. through the Robin Hood ballads.
- Romance was a French term originating from the Middle Ages and dealt with themes of love and chivalry based on brave knights and female 'goddesses'. A woman could only be won after endless trials and tribulations. This was an idealised, sexless version of love which included 'love at first sight'. The plots frequently included marvels and supernatural elements.
- Pastoral Romance combined these two traditions in the sixteenth century and a Shakespearean audience would have been very aware of this and would have expected to see certain things such as shepherds, magical forests, a series of journeys and adventures, love eventually triumphing over adversity, disguises, harsh fathers and happy endings. In *As You Like It* Shakespeare would have fulfilled all their expectations.

Significance of the play's title

Critics disagree about the significance and origin of the title of the play. The most common view is that by calling it *As You Like It*, Shakespeare is suggesting that he has produced something here similar to two earlier successful plays, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as he knows that the audience likes this style. Other suggestions revolve around it as a play that can be enjoyed by all levels of society, as there is something in the play to appeal to all classes and all interests, so all will like it in some way or another.

The Source of the play

Stories about pastoral romance were very popular in Shakespeare's time and Shakespeare used one of these stories, *Rosalynde, Euphues Golden Legacie* by Thomas Lodge, written in 1590, as his source for this play. Some new characters such as Jaques and Touchstone were added and this gave *As You Like It* extra depth and breadth as a play for



its contemporary audience, as did the added songs and dances. In the main Shakespeare remained loyal to Lodge's original tale. In the original tale, leading characters are exiled who then fall in love in a forest, characters put on disguises, the court meets the country folk, various wooings take place and eventually three (not four) weddings are celebrated.

Themes

Love

The theme of love is very much the driving force of the play. It is mentioned throughout and is introduced by Rosalind in her first scene. Yet there are many forms of love in the play:

- **Romantic love** - Romantic love is the dominant theme as shown in the harmonious ending which celebrates the marriage of four couples, although it could be said that the marriage of Touchstone and Audrey is slightly different and based more on lust than romance. Much of the love is idealised as shown in the relationship between Silvius and Phebe which fits neatly into the old-style pastoral love, based on simple country folk. The play endorses the notion of romantic and pastoral love but without illusions. Romantic love is mocked, satirised and ridiculed throughout the play; the postures of the courtly wooer, the extravagant attitude that there is love at first sight or that one would be ready to die if one is rejected in the courtship all become targets of Rosalind's humour. Yet despite this mockery Rosalind's love for Orlando is genuine and sincere, as she makes clear in her numerous conversations with Celia. Rosalind displays the full range of emotions of a lover: she is excited and exuberant when she discovers Orlando, is frightened when she sees the bloodied handkerchief and relishes her flirtation with Orlando. The audience can enjoy the unbridled love of the final scenes and the celebrations that follow, but with the knowledge that the play has questioned the absurdities and contradictions of love, and that a universal happy ending is not absolutely guaranteed.
- **Love as Folly** - the plot involves all the lovers in some kind of folly or 'strange capers' and this is noted by several of the characters including Touchstone, who acts as a commentator for the love affairs in the play. Phebe acts foolishly in her desire for the disguised Rosalind, Celia appears foolish in her rapid descent into her love for Oliver and Rosalind's foolish actions leave her open to criticism and mockery from Celia. In this respect Shakespeare is suggesting that being in love is akin to a form of madness which brings about strange behaviour. It can also be cruel as shown in Phebe's initial rejection of Silvius.
- **Other sorts of love** - such as brotherly love between Orlando and Oliver in the finale, love as a form of friendship and service as seen in the actions of Celia and Adam respectively and self-love as shown in the form of Jaques also feature in the play.

Appearance and reality

Things are not what they seem in *As You Like It* in several ways, as there is multiple layering of appearance and reality. There is deceit, disguise and misunderstanding throughout the play. Some characters are more aware of the reality; others are more in the dark and remain duped until the final moments. Disguise is the most obvious feature here with the actions of Rosalind and Celia, and this use of disguise heightens dramatic irony as the audience is aware of what is reality. Such a feature would have been commonplace for a Shakespearean audience used to girls' roles being played by boys, and they would



have been entranced by the ambiguities that arose from this situation. (It was a dramatic convention that stage disguise was impenetrable, even for the closest of relatives.)

Court and Country

This is a central opposition in the play and is one of the main themes. The Court as represented in the first Act is full of corruption, danger and unpleasantness, the 'painted pomp of the envious court', whereas life in the forest is in contrast simple and free. Life may be simple and free there, but the forest is by no means a simple creation, and life there is both idealised and attended by its own hardships and cruelties. Consequently, it is not a simple opposition of bad versus good but one where two different settings are portrayed. One of the significant moments in this respect is the lament for the 'sobbing deer', where the suggestion is made that the violence and ways of the court have been transposed to the country, usurping the principles of the countryside; yet in the countryside we also see cruelty for instance in the behaviour of the employer of Corin. The setting of the forest therefore offers a critique of the supposedly more civilised court life. Significantly many of the characters choose to return to the court and their positions there at the end of the play.

Other Themes

A range of other ideas are worth considering here:

- **Order and disorder** - the play starts with the disorder of the court as shown in Frederick's usurpation and Oliver's theft of Orlando's lands (so we see disorder both in the state and in the family), and moves to the relative calm of the forest where after a series of reconciliations, order is finally restored. In this respect *As You Like It* is different from several other Shakespearean plays such as the tragedies *Othello* and *Macbeth*. In those plays the ordered world is thrown into disorder as the play progresses.
- **Time** - it is worth noting the pace of the play where after the hectic pace of Act One at Court, the play moves very slowly in the remaining Acts in the country. Some critics have gone as far as to say that nothing happens in Acts Two, Three and Four. As Rosalind comments, 'Time travels in diverse paces with diverse persons'.
- **Reconciliation** - the disorder and conflict at the beginning of the play end in several reconciliations at the end, such as that of the two Dukes, that of the brothers Oliver and Orlando, and between those already in the forest.

The Setting

The Forest of Arden is one of Shakespeare's most celebrated settings. It is a fictitious place and a state of mind and not the countryside close to Stratford-upon-Avon. There is little extensive description of the forest in the play, but Arden represents an alternative world where humans live a simpler, freer and more natural life, a refuge from the competitive life at court. In this world, community and brotherhood dominate; it fosters reconciliation and regeneration, free from wickedness, as people are transformed by its experience. Some have suggested that it is the biblical Garden of Eden before the fall. However, it should not be seen as a Utopia as winters are harsh, there are hard masters, hunger and want, dangerous creatures, exhaustion, and many of its residents are poverty-stricken. Some critics have gone to another extreme and see it as 'a bitter Arcadia'¹. (Arcadia was the setting for many ancient Greek pastorals.)

¹Jan Kott - *The Road to Shakespeare* - 2010



There are clear hints of a nostalgic vision of something that was better in the past, but its occupants in the play appear to relish this world where they can 'fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world', although there are those such as Jaques who mock the forest.

Shakespeare created similar remote worlds in other plays; these are festive worlds of romance, full of magic, often with people in disguise, full of confusions but ultimately leading to happiness and marriage. However, there are no elves or fairies in this forest unlike in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* nor is it 'enchanted' like the island in *The Tempest*. Consequently there appears to be greater realism in Shakespeare's description of forest life in *As You Like It*, despite the appearance of a snake and a lioness.

The major characters

Rosalind

Rosalind is one of Shakespeare's greatest female characters. She subverts the romantic tradition as a female by taking the lead in the wooing. She is an attractive character because she has a broad range of talents such as her inner strength, her poetry, her inventiveness, her wit and wordplay, and because finally she succeeds in the denouement. She dominates the stage and has plenty of lines - more than either Macbeth or Prospero. She is a dynamic character, attractive, subtle, sensitive, ardent and intelligent. In this respect she is a far more three-dimensional character than the typical romantic heroine, and she engineers most of the plot and its outcome with a strong sense of humour as she alternately mocks and celebrates love. She is the source of what happens in the play, and is able to manipulate those around her including Orlando, and able to stand her ground with Jaques and Touchstone. At court she has superior social status as the daughter of a Duke, but she leaves the court under Frederick's displeasure and Shakespeare makes her motives very clear in the earlier stages of the play where she is shown as a girl of strong affections, fond of her cousin Celia and missing her father. Interestingly her use of language changes depending on her circumstance: at first she speaks in the flowery language of the court but as she moves into the forest her language becomes more frank and workmanlike. It is her idea to disguise herself as a man, but she never loses her femininity. In this disguise she takes on a far more dominant character taking the initiative to buy a farm, arranging the mock marriage, testing Orlando and finally bringing all the couples together. She is a strong character, never frightened to speak her mind whilst retaining her dignity and pride. She can be frank, as shown when she describes her physical attraction to Orlando but she also takes on the role of a 'saucy lackey' with great spirit and enthusiasm. Yet she is realistic and at times sceptical about love and its 'foolish postures' and this witty realism is clear for the audience to see. As she states in Act Three she certainly proves to be 'a busy actor in the play' and she concludes the play with her Epilogue with the memorable line, 'If I were a woman'.

Orlando

Orlando is the romantic hero of the play, gentle, strong and valiant despite the injustices which he suffers in the early moments of the play. His journey into the forest is very much his initiation into life, away from his spirited youth and the security of his father's household. His heroic victory in the wrestling match shows both his physical strength and his courage, as do his caring for Adam in the forest and his killing of the lioness. He is considerate to his servant Adam and shows great understanding when he forgives his brother Oliver in the final Act. His tussle with Oliver is apparent in terms of both verbal and physical defiance, and he disputes successfully with Jaques in the forest. His 'gentility' is important as it refers to his social status as a 'gentleman' and this is his guiding idea



throughout the play. He appears as a worthy suitor for Rosalind with whom he falls in love at first sight, and he remains besotted with her throughout as a typical courtly wooer (perhaps foolish at times), penning verses, talking about dying for love and ultimately in a state of euphoria when Rosalind finally reveals herself.

Oliver

Oliver (along with Frederick) is the villain in the play, ignoring his father's dying wishes and refusing to give Orlando what is rightfully his in terms of land and status. Accurately described to Orlando as 'the enemy of all your graces', he appears ruthless and violent until the final moments when he is converted to goodness by Orlando. He marries Celia and returns to Orlando what is rightfully his in terms of inheritance.

Celia

Celia fulfils the role of a true friend for Rosalind and goes out of her way to support her throughout the play. She is of high status but she never tries to assert her social standing to those around her and is clearly embarrassed by the behaviour of her father, Duke Frederick, as she says, 'Let my father seek another heir'. The credibility of her relationship with Rosalind should be looked at carefully: they have much in common - both are witty and playful, they tease one another in the forest and Celia's detached eyes often ask the questions which we as members of the audience would ask Rosalind. She does appear to become more reserved as the play progresses and Rosalind becomes even more dominant. Her whirlwind relationship with Oliver allows Rosalind to ask similar questions in these parallel relationships and the credibility of her relationship could be called into question, especially as she is silent in the final Act. By this time she has become increasingly separated from Rosalind, perhaps aware that she is about to lose her best friend.

Touchstone

Touchstone is a typical Shakespearean character, an earthy fool, court jester and a comic spirit who joins Rosalind and Celia in their flight to the forest. His character was an invention not included in the original source and one clearly of Shakespeare's making, similar to other fools in *Twelfth Night* (Feste) and *King Lear*. He is a wise and learned fool who is able to use the mask of clowning to utter truths and act as a commentator for what is going on around him, with a series of daring statements exposing the dishonest. Consequently his description as 'a clown' in the cast list and Rosalind's suggestion that he is a 'natural' or that he is a 'motley-minded gentleman' are inaccurate, and it is significant that Rosalind invites him to join them in the forest. He is fully integrated into the play, more so than other Shakespearean fools and he becomes one of the characters who marry in the play with his marriage to Audrey. His view of marriage is in contrast to that of Rosalind. He is marrying for sex and the earthy side of the relationship and his bawdy comments about marriage and his lack of scruples are in stark contrast to the views of the romantic Rosalind. As a central character he mocks Orlando's wooing, and his comments on the proper use of time, his discussion of country life with Corin and his views on court life allow Shakespeare to discuss many of the central themes of the play through this character. He loves language and he is full of stories, puns and at times false logic. His wit and use of double meanings in what he says make him a real 'touchstone' in the play, (a metaphor for a way of testing concepts and ideas to see whether they are 'true gold'), whilst 'exposing the affectation and folly of others'².

Jaques

Jaques, described as 'the solitary in the woodland love affairs', is another Shakespearean

² Quoted from Stanley Wells – *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*



addition to the original source. He is not a comic figure but a melancholic with a caustic wit and one whose grumbling undermines the spirit of romance in the play. He appears to 'relish his sourness in the rustic world.' To a Shakespearean audience he would be a familiar figure, a sardonic observer, one whose character is of a particular psychological disposition, one who is sad due to an excess of the 'black bile', one of the 'humours' of medieval science which, it was believed, leads to a cynical view of life and human nature. Many critics have commented on his similarities to Hamlet in the prince's darker moments. We know little of him, his age, his past life or experiences or his true feelings, but his 'past travels' have brought him to this state where he can only see foolishness, absurdities and ingratitude. He is especially remembered for two moments in the play: firstly his satire on mankind and most importantly for his renowned speech in the same Act where he talks about the 'seven ages of men' in a gloomy fashion where mankind is seen to play a series of prescribed parts. His perspective is a limited one and contradicted by other comments in the play, so any suggestion that Jaques acts as a mouthpiece for Shakespeare needs to be treated carefully. Despite his oddities he is not ridiculed in the play and he takes little part in the final action retiring quietly to monastic life. What he provides is an alternative view on love and marriage and on humanity in general, and a different style of humour.

Duke Frederick

The Duke as the usurper in the play rules through a regime of injustice and vindictiveness with 'his eyes full of anger'. He represents the danger to rightful rule to a Shakespearean audience but his conversion at the end of the play and his retirement end his reign of terror.

Duke Senior

Duke Senior acts as a contrast to Duke Ferdinand, as one who has been usurped but has found peace and harmony in the forest. He is generous, sharing his hospitality and he is rewarded at the end of the play with the regaining of his status and courtly life.

Corin

Corin, as 'the true labourer', the shepherd in the forest seems happy with his lot despite his modest lifestyle and Touchstone's mocking. He represents the 'working man' of the country and epitomises the pastoral theme.

Silvius and Phebe

It is appropriate to place these two characters together as for a Shakespearean audience they would have been familiar as a pair of stock characters from pastoral literature. Silvius as the lovelorn shepherd with Phebe as the disdainful shepherdess speak a similar poetic language and eventually marry after a traditional but challenging courtship.

Adam

Adam represents loyalty and devotion, and the difficulties of age as expressed in Jaques' speech. Significantly he does not appear after Act Two and his fate is uncertain.

Audrey

Audrey, a simple goatherd, ends up marrying Touchstone and would have appeared on the Shakespearean stage as a 'rough wench'. For that reason she appears to be a suitable partner for Touchstone and his desire for an 'earthy relationship'.



A02 Dramatic Methods

Language

The language used in the play is very diverse and this is highlighted by the division between prose and verse. The normal convention of the time was that the high-status characters spoke in verse while prose was used by those of lower status or for comedic effect. However in this play, Shakespeare does not follow this convention, for much of Rosalind's language is prose while Silvius, for instance, uses verse extensively.

With the verse there are several variations and forms in the play: there is the formal poetic eloquence such as that of Duke Senior at the beginning of Act Two and Jaques' speech on the 'seven ages of man', the lyrical form as shown by the definitions of love in Act Five and Orlando's verses to Rosalind, and the flexible blank verse which Shakespeare had developed for narrative and expressive purposes.

The play is however dominated by the prose form (1300 lines of the 2400 overall). There is extensive wordplay and use of puns and antithesis. Examples of these features are in the spirited dialogue between Rosalind and Celia in Act One scene Two. Wordplay is used by characters such as Celia, Touchstone and Rosalind as part of their comic repartee both at court and later in the forest. Celia uses the clever antithesis of such terms as 'folly' and 'wisdom' to great effect in Act One. Antithesis is also used to compare the court and the country and to sharpen the focus on this theme. This is best shown when Touchstone compares the pros and cons of each in Act Three. Rosalind in particular shows skilful rhetoric particularly in her dismissal of Orlando at various parts of the play for lacking the marks of a true lover. The crispness of expression here shows effective use of sound features such as assonance and alliteration as well. Shakespeare also uses lists effectively to intensify description and dramatic effect. Rosalind's list of questions about Orlando in Act Three is a good example of this technique. Throughout the play there are examples of witty and fast-paced dialogue and much of this comes from Rosalind. Significantly however, Shakespeare uses Touchstone to exemplify wordplay at its extreme with real wit and at times absurdity and subversiveness to entertain his audience. This is perhaps best shown in his exchange with Celia in Act One scene Two regarding honour.

Imagery

The play is full of natural imagery as one might expect with its country setting. Although there are few lengthy descriptions of the forest, there are many images relating to trees, running brooks, animals, cultivation and the weather which intensify the dramatic and emotional impact of the play. The seasonal images are particularly powerful and this reinforces the theme of time, for imagery of the passage of time is prominent throughout. The country song in Act Five scene Three abounds with such images and leads us into the finale where the couples marry. Significantly however, Shakespeare mocks the conventional imagery of love poetry of his time as seen in Phebe's speech in Act Three scene Five. Perhaps the strongest image of the play is Jaques' memorable line 'All the world's a stage'.

Staging

As You Like It may have been among the first plays performed at the newly-built Globe.



The popularity of pastoral plays in Elizabethan and Jacobean times suggests that it would have been performed extensively at least in the early years of the seventeenth century. Deciding on how to contrast the court and the country on stage and also how to present the major theme of love has been central to the various stagings. Victorian productions were very keen to place a 'whole forest' on stage including streams and live animals such as deer. Modern productions have shown an interest in the idea of gender and there have been all-male and all-female productions. Locations have been more varied of late, based on the idea of the divided post-war Berlin for instance, and some more recent productions have been minimalist in their staging. Others have used the staging to comment on the exploitation by man of the natural world. In the film version of 1992, the forest was portrayed as an urban wasteland, the court as the nearby offices of a financial corporation. The political issues highlighted by the play have also been given sharper focus and placed in the modern context of warring families or religions.

Songs, Music and Dance

Songs, music and dance are used regularly in the play and these were added by Shakespeare to his source to entertain his audience and add variety to the visual spectacle. These forms were all popular amongst contemporary audiences and the pastoral nature of the play gave him scope to introduce all of them. There are seven songs in the play culminating in 'Wedding is great Juno's crown' in Act Five celebrating marriage and fertility. The songs also gave the opportunity for repetition which added to the dramatic force of the play and allowed emphasis.

The Masque

A masque was a courtly entertainment based on classical mythology and was popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this play, masqued actors appear on stage in Act Five, with Hymen, the god of marriage offering a performance of dignity and solemnity to add to the wedding proceedings. As well as adding formality, the masque was traditionally a great spectacle and a great moment of theatre, which might include music, song, dancing and poetry along with elaborate scenery and costumes. Stage directors have found opportunities for all these features in the ending of *As You Like It*.



A03 Contexts

This information is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, but is intended as a helpful guide to teachers and students. It reflects some generic features (that is, relating to the genre of Shakespearean Comedy) which might be found useful.

A little bit about the playwright and the context of this play

As You Like It appeared at the height of Shakespeare's writing powers somewhere between 1598-1600. Like many of his other plays, *As You Like It* is an innovative and challenging play which interrogates the beliefs, assumptions and politics of the society in which Shakespeare lived. There are clearly subversive elements here, but like his other comedies it concludes in the restoration of order and stability.

The political, religious and social conditions of the late Elizabethan period when this play was written can be seen in several aspects of the play. Elizabeth's court has similarities to that of Duke Frederick. There were accusations of arbitrary government, criticisms of profiteering, factional politics and questions of legitimacy. There was also a series of social problems emerging with the growth of homelessness and vagabondage alongside the growing exploitation by country landlords. As Juliet Dusinberre commented on Shakespeare, 'he made the most of his own licence to criticise under cover of his own fictions...his play acknowledges the realities of the Elizabethan court'³.

Satire at the time was very fashionable – one of Shakespeare's contemporaries, Ben Jonson, used satire extensively – but there are only a few satirical elements, mostly to do with Jaques and Touchstone in *As You Like It*.

Shakespeare wrote several comedies, particularly in the early stages of his career. His other comedies included:

- ***Love's Labour Lost (1597)***: centred around witty women who mock the courtly wooing of their suitors.
- ***A Midsummer Night's Dream (1598)***: another romantic play with a woodland setting on the themes of folly, instability and the lunacy of love.
- ***Much Ado About Nothing (1600)***: featuring the strong female lead Beatrice, who is engaged in a 'battle of the sexes' with her suitor Benedict.
- ***Twelfth Night (1602)***: where the use of disguise, cross-dressing and a professional fool have clear similarities with *As You Like It*.
- ***The Tempest (1611)***: a late comedy which is set on an island and includes extensive use of magic and a masque and ends harmoniously with marriage. (Not all critics would agree that *The Tempest* is best considered as a comedy, and generally, you should be aware that the 'dividing lines' between genres are often indistinct.)

³ Juliet Dusinberre - *As You Like It' and the Elizabethan Court* - 2009



We can see from this list some of the themes and motifs which Shakespeare was interested in pursuing in his comedies.

There has always been debate about which of Shakespeare's plays should be included in the genre of comedy. It has often been suggested that *As You Like It* has more elements of evil and seriousness than other comedies, as shown in some of the characters' actions in Act One and the role of Jaques throughout the play but this cannot really make it a tragicomedy. By including these other elements Shakespeare is giving us a mixed perspective on life.

Shakespeare wrote in other genres such as his extensive history plays and perhaps the most famous selection, the tragedies that appeared in the early years of the seventeenth century. Some plays, such as *Measure for Measure* (1604) had elements of both comedy and tragedy, and for that reason became known as the 'problem plays'. After the period of the tragedies, Shakespeare then returned to writing comedies in his final years.

The nature of Shakespearean Comedy

Shakespearean comedy normally includes the following features. Many, if not all, of these appear in *As You Like It*:

- love is usually a central theme which builds towards a happy ending, usually in marriage;
- a plot centred on love and how the obstacles to a happy resolution to love's problems are overcome – these obstacles may be external or internal;
- a plot sometimes multi-stranded and complex with several contrasting pairs of lovers;
- the comedy may contain scenes based on the comic trope of 'the battle of the sexes';
- the pastoral romance tradition is sometimes made use of;
- sometimes a contrast, opposition or tension between the worlds of court and country exists;
- a plot may feature disguise and mistaken identity;
- this comedy is mainly genial and tolerant rather than acerbic in tone, though social criticism or satire may be present; and
- various types of comedy may feature including verbal comedy, slap-stick, caricature and social satire.



A04 Connections

Students should be keenly aware that there are equal marks available for their treatment of the extract and the wider text in the exam. The focus should be on parallels or connections between the extract and the wider text which are relevant to the key terms of the stimulus statement. It may be beneficial for students to prioritise connections that also reveal their knowledge and understanding of the dramatic methods (A02) and the nature of Shakespearean Comedy (A03).

When studying the play, you will note many connections and it may be useful to track elements which show parallels or contrasts.



A05 Argument and interpretation

For your response to convince the examiner, it is important to have a well-structured argument so you need to plan before you write. It is a good idea to underline the keywords of the question before you begin to read and annotate the extract given – it will help you focus on the most relevant features.

Constructing an essay argument requires you to write thematically rather than chronologically, so make this easier for yourself by adding any relevant references from the rest of the play next to the notes that relate to them. You will be able to link them more easily and avoid missing connections that could have earned you marks before you go on to your next paragraph.

A very strong argument will examine alternative interpretations and explain why these have been dismissed as infeasible or ill-fitting. This does not need to form a large part of your essay, but it will show the examiner that you have thoughtfully considered other points of view and made an informed decision to reach your own conclusions.

Specimen Question:

Throughout the comedy as a whole, Rosalind's main function is to satirise ideas of love.

By referring closely to Extract 4, printed in the accompanying Resource Booklet, and to other appropriately selected parts of the text, show to what extent you would agree with the view expressed above.

Your argument should include relevant comments on Shakespeare's dramatic methods and relevant external contextual information on the nature of Shakespearean Comedy.

N.B. Equal marks are available for your treatment of the given extract and other relevant parts of the text.

In the Sample Assessment Materials the Mark Scheme for this question indicated the following key points:

A02 - The staging of the first meeting between Rosalind and Orlando at Court; the satirical tone and language in the central interactions between Rosalind and Orlando; the presentation of love in the play's ending and epilogue; the use of contrast in the presentation of the various love affairs and Rosalind's role as a commentator.

A03 - See detail on Shakespearean comedy in the Context section.

A04 - The presentation of love, courtly love, courtship, marriage, adultery: the satirising of issues about love in the extract and the play as a whole.



A05 - The student may argue that Rosalind is a sincere lover, she has a more important role in showing the sheer joy of love, she shows a balanced view of love that understands human frailties, but is still able to appreciate the virtues of love.

Other questions worth considering include:

Is the play about: (a) nature and the goodness of the natural world?

(b) social criticism of contemporary society?

(c) gender?

How important are the different settings in the play?

What are the various philosophies exhibited in the play? (You might start with Rosalind, Jaques, Touchstone.)

What is the significance of disguise and transformation in the play?

What are the parallels and contrasts in depicting love and marriage in the play?
Is satire Shakespeare's ultimate intent in this play?

As You Like It is ultimately about 'girl power'. Is it?

How much do the characters change by the end of the play?

Is *As You Like It* optimistic or pessimistic about nature and mankind?

A view of critical opinion

'A play which is light-footed, full of gaiety and warmth and confidence in humanity'⁴.

Not all critical opinion has agreed with the statement above. The most common criticisms address the following points:

- After the action of the first Act very little else happens particularly if compared to the more dynamic *Twelfth Night*.
- The sudden conversion of the wicked characters such as Oliver and the Duke is unconvincing. One critic has suggested that an extra scene where the Duke meets the hermit should have been added by Shakespeare to show the conversion.
- The suddenness with which Celia and Oliver fall in love is unrealistic.
- The ending has been questioned as being unclear. If the play is about the subversion of normal gender roles, will this continue in the aftermath of the play?

⁴John Russell Brown - *The Shakespeare Handbooks*



Early responses to the play

The play appealed to critics in the eighteenth century and nineteenth centuries. Samuel Johnson said 'Of this play the fable is wild and pleasing'⁵, while William Hazlitt was attracted by the romantic elements⁶ and, as a theatre reviewer appreciated how well the play worked on the stage. William Blake the great painter of the nineteenth century took the opportunity to portray the forest.

Modern criticism of the play

The twentieth century has been more critical of the play and especially the role of Jaques who is seen as 'an incomplete character'⁷. Favouring historical and more satirical works a group of critics schooled by Leavis were not endeared to the imaginary worlds created by Shakespeare.

Recent criticism has dealt with the issues of gender, patriarchy, social hierarchy and personal identity.

The feminist movement of recent decades has concentrated on gender issues. Anne Barton commented, 'Behind Rosalind's disguise lies the great Renaissance wish dream of harmony between the masculine and feminine principles'⁸ and as Greer commented, 'With Orlando what you see is what you get. Rosalind on the other hand, needs to be freed from the feminine role that projects so pale a version of the resourceful, noisy, energetic person she really is'⁹. The major issue raised by critics is whether Rosalind will maintain her independence and strength now she is married and in a conventional relationship.

Several critics comment on the so-called pastoral dream and Shakespeare's supposed intentions in this area. Unwin commented that 'Elizabeth's court at this time was increasingly adopting Frederick's style of arbitrary ... decision making', and that 'Shakespeare was tuning in to the worries of his contemporary audience about legitimacy and the role of government'¹⁰. Sinfield is sceptical of the aims of many of the characters, suggesting that 'The forest people...have hierarchy, property and money and give little serious thought to living without them'¹¹. For him the forest is not a utopia as some suggest. Nuttall commented that 'the play shows us not a court made simple, but a simple place made courtly'¹².

Remember:

- Stick to the key terms used in the question.
- Think what the question is really asking you.
- Argue clearly – explore opposing points of view but explain why they don't sway you.
- Make connections throughout the text, demonstrating your knowledge of the play and your ability to link concepts, ideas and references.

⁵ Samuel Johnson - Quoted from Stanley Wells - *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare* - 1991

⁶ William Hazlitt - *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* - 1817

⁷ James Smith - *As You Like It - in Scrutiny* 1940

⁸ Anne Barton - *Parks and Ardens in Essays* - 1973

⁹ Germaine Greer - *Shakespeare* - 1996

¹⁰ Stephen Unwin - On directing an *As You Like It* production in 1994

¹¹ Alan Sinfield - Quoted in *Shakespeare's Comedies - A Guide to Criticism* - Emma Smith - 2008

¹² A D Nuttall - *Shakespeare the Thinker* - 1972



Activities

Links to other resources / Suggestions for further reading

The following works are useful for further study:

- Leo Salinger - Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy – CUP - 1974
- Stanley Wells - The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare – CUP - 1991
- James Smith - As You Like It - Scrutiny 9.1 - CUP - 1940
- Harold Bloom - William Shakespeare's As You Like It - Chelsea House- 1998
- Juliet Dusinberre - As Who Liked It? - Shakespeare Survey - CUP - 1994
- Valerie Traub - The Homoerotics of Shakespeare's Comedy – Routledge - 1992

There are several **film versions** of the play:

- The 2006 version directed by Kenneth Branagh set as a classical 1930's movie.
- The 1992 version directed by Christine Ezard set on an industrial wasteland in London.
- The 1936 version directed by Paul Czinner is a traditional and elaborate view of the play.

Several live performances of the play have also been recorded, a selection of these are available from <http://www.rsc.org.uk/>



General Glossary for A2 1

– this glossary is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Antagonist | The main character who opposes the protagonist or hero in a narrative or drama; in simple terms he/she is the villain. (See protagonist.) |
| Aside | A brief remark made by a character during dialogue which is understood not to be addressed to or heard by other characters. In an aside true feelings are voiced, as distinct from what is being said for others to hear. See also soliloquy. |
| Blank verse | Non-rhyming lines of poetry, the standard verse form of Elizabethan drama, also known as 'iambic pentameter'. Each iamb is an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, like the sound of a heartbeat – five iambic feet make a ten syllable pattern per line, a rhythm frequently used in Shakespeare's work. |
| Characterisation | The means by which a character's traits are established, often through action and dialogue in drama. |
| Climax | The moment of greatest tension in a drama. It is usually near the end of the play where the rising conflict results in a high point of intensity. |
| Costume | The clothes or outfit worn by a character. |
| Denouement | The plot resolution of a narrative. |
| Dialogue | The words spoken between two or more characters in a play, novel or poem. |
| Dramatic convention | A set of rules which all parties in a dramatic performance accept (including, importantly the audience), e.g. the 'Three Unities' in classical Greek drama, the Shakespearean soliloquy, the missing fourth wall of a traditional nineteenth-century stage set, the impenetrability of disguise in Shakespearean drama. |
| Dramatic irony | A stylistic device where the audience is aware of the implications of a speech or act, but the character(s) involved is not. The audience has an understanding that the characters do not have. |
| Figurative language | Non-literal language – similes, metaphors, hyperbole and synecdoche, for example – used by writers to communicate additional meaning about characters and situations. |



| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Imagery | This word generally applies visually, to vivid or figurative language used in a more than literal way that stimulates a picture in the imagination. Tactile imagery appeals to the sense of touch. Auditory imagery appeals to the imagination by echoing or creating sound effects. |
| Juxtaposition | Placing two contrasting characters, things, ideas close together to illuminate meaning or create tension. |
| Lighting | Refers to the way the stage is lit and the equipment which provides artificial light effects. |
| Metaphor | Where one thing is described directly as another, to enhance meaning or effect. When this is used for a more protracted purpose it is called an extended metaphor. |
| Meter (or metre) | The pattern of rhythmic accents in poetic verse, formed of stressed and unstressed syllables in certain numbers and combinations. |
| Metonymy | A form of figurative speech in which a closely related term is substituted for an object or idea. One example would be referring to royalty or a monarch as “the crown”. |
| Motif | A dominant or recurring idea or figure of speech within a work of art or within the work of an artist, musician or writer. |
| Pathos | A quality of a play’s action or dialogue that stimulates the audience to feel pity for a character. Pathos is always present in tragedy, and may be present in comedy as well. |
| Props | Items used on stage by the actors. |
| Protagonist | The principal character in a novel or drama (See antagonist). |
| Soliloquy | A speech in which a character’s true feelings or intentions are voiced, usually but not always when that character is alone on stage. In general, soliloquies are longer than asides, which have the same revelatory function, and do not always involve turning ‘aside’ from an ongoing dialogue. |
| Sound effects | Sounds on the stage used to create the setting or atmosphere of the play, or for other dramatic effect. |
| Stage/Set design | This refers to the visual scenery on the stage, the creation of the background in which the play is set. |
| Stage directions | The directions written in the play script to indicate how the characters should speak and move. Shakespeare seems to have written very few explicit stage directions. These were added by later editors. There are however plenty of implicit stage directions in the Shakespearean text. |

**Structure**

The way in which the parts of the plot are organised.

Synecdoche

A form of figurative speech where the whole concept of something is referred to by one of its parts. An example would be calling a car “wheels” or asking if someone can “lend a hand”.

Theme

A main idea or concern explored in a work of art.