



# AS YOU LIKE IT

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE  
EDUCATION ACTIVITIES PACK

## ABOUT THIS PACK

This pack supports the RSC's 2013 production of *As You Like It*, directed by Maria Aberg, which opened on April 12th at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon and runs until September 28th.

This pack has been written for use with Key Stage 3 to 5 Drama, Theatre Studies and English students, but many of the activities can be adapted for younger age groups. The activities aim to help students explore some important features of the text and production, using the RSC's rehearsal processes.

The pack contains:

- Background information about the original staging of the play
- Introductory information about the creation of the current production
- Practical activities inspired by the current production

## ABOUT OUR EDUCATION WORK

We want children and young people to enjoy the challenge of Shakespeare and achieve more as a result of connecting with his work. Central to our education work is our manifesto for Shakespeare in schools, *Stand up for Shakespeare*. We know that children and young people can experience Shakespeare in ways that excite, engage and inspire them. We believe that young people get the most out of Shakespeare when they:

- Do Shakespeare on their feet - exploring the plays actively as actors do
- See it Live - participate as members of a live audience
- Start it Earlier - work on the plays from a younger age

We also believe in the power of ensemble - a way of working together in both the rehearsal room and across the company enabling everyone's ideas and voices to be heard.

Director Maria Aberg created a rehearsal space where all the actors were encouraged to improvise, experiment with movement, and play with the text until the whole company were immersed in the worlds of *As You Like It*.

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These symbols are used throughout the pack:



### READ

Notes from the production, background info or extracts



### ACTIVITY

A classroom or open space activity



### WRITE

A writing activity



### LINKS

Useful web addresses



The cast of As You Like It. Photo by Keith Pattison.

# BACKGROUND

## POLITICAL BACKGROUND



As You Like It was written in 1599, the same year in which Shakespeare wrote Henry V and began writing Hamlet. The first Globe Theatre was also built in this year. 1599 was a tense and unstable political time for England. In the Protestant court of Elizabeth I the puritans were becoming increasingly powerful. The puritans wanted to close the public theatres and Elizabeth's enthusiasm for drama was critical to the survival of Shakespeare's company among others.

Elizabeth herself was growing old but had not yet named an heir. England was constantly under the threat of invasion. In 1599 Queen Elizabeth sent an army to crush a rebellion in Ireland and the English successfully defeated an attack by the Spanish Armada. Had the Spanish been successful, England would have become a Catholic country.

Country people, by contrast, were unconcerned with the politics of religion and had a more relaxed attitude toward defining their faith. A variety of faith systems, including pagan ones, could be found among country dwellers.

In this context it is possible to interpret the court of Duke Ferdinand in As You Like It as reflecting the more rigid and stringent practices of the English court. By contrast, the inhabitants of the Forest of Arden mirror the diversified and more liberal spirit of English country life.

For more information about the events of this important year, see James Shapiro's 1599.

## SYNOPSIS AND STAGING



The first production of As You Like It would have been performed at the Globe Theatre in Southwark in 1599. Rosalind, one of Shakespeare's greatest female roles, would have been played by a young male apprentice: no women were allowed to perform onstage in Shakespeare's time. Rosalind, therefore, was played by a boy pretending to be a woman who was pretending to be a man.

For a full synopsis of the play and further information about original staging practice please visit:

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/as-you-like-it/synopsis.aspx>

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/as-you-like-it/history-of-the-play.aspx>

# TWO WORLDS: THE COURT & THE FOREST

'The Court and the Forest in many ways are each other's opposites. I guess it was finding two worlds that felt really far apart, that both felt contemporary and that captured the essence of the play in different ways.' –

MARIA ABERG, DIRECTOR

## ACTIVITY 1: CREATING THE WORLDS OF THE PLAY



Look at the images of the court and the forest of Arden, taken from Maria Aberg's 2013 production.

- Ask students to decide on what atmosphere they think designer Naomi Dawson and Director Maria Aberg wanted to create in each of these two places. Specifically ask them to focus on:
  - Differences in the use of space
  - Differences in colour and textures
  - Differences in costume and dress

What does this tell them about the world of the court and the world of the forest?



As You Like It. Photos by Keith Pattison.



## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COURT AND FOREST

**'You have to perform your gender in the court. There are rigid rules on how you are allowed to behave.'**

**MARIA ABERG**

**'The wildness of the forest was important, as was the potential to be physically freer in the natural world. And, by contrast, Maria spoke about the court as being cold and lacking in sensuality.'**

**AYSE TASHKIRAN, MOVEMENT DIRECTOR**



The movement from the court to the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* represents the opportunity the characters have for change. The new setting opens up a world of fewer restrictions, in which Rosalind can play Ganymede and all the characters can express themselves. Whereas, in the court the only form of self-expression seems to be the wrestling that Duke Frederick enjoys.

The Director's talk audio offers more insight into Maria Aberg's thought processes:

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on/as-you-like-it/audio-directors-talk.aspx>



Mark Holgate as Charles the Wrestler and Alex Waldmann as Orlando. Photo by Keith Pattison.

## ACTIVITY 2: DESIGNING THE TWO WORLDS



Set students the challenge of creating their own 'opposite' worlds to reflect the different attitudes and events of the forest and the court in the play.

- Students should prepare a drawing of their set design for the court which responds to the following questions:
  - What era or historical period will you be setting your production in?
  - What five words best describe the spirit of your court?
  - How will your set, costumes and lighting reflect this spirit?
  - What reference materials (books, films, music, art etc) might help create this world?
  - How will the characters living in this world move and behave?
- Then, encourage students to do the same for their contrasting world of the forest:
  - What five words best describe your forest?
  - What kind of music best suits this world?
  - What objects, natural and man-made, create the structure of your set?
  - What colours and textures dominate in your forest?
  - How do people in this world move and behave?
  - How is your forest world different from the world of the court?

Why do you think Shakespeare creates such different worlds? What does this enable him to do with the text? Corin even says "those that are good manners at the court are as ridiculous in the country as the behaviour of the country is most mockable at the court" about the difference in behaviour. Where are you more true to yourself?

## ACTIVITY 3: CREATING CHARACTERS



The practical sequence below introduces students to some of the major characters in the play. It also highlights the Court/Forest opposition in the play.

- Organise the room so the whole group are stood in a circle and can see one another.
  - Go round the circle and ask students to introduce themselves by name, imagining that a spotlight is on them as they announce themselves.
  - Within the circle, ask each student to turn to the person beside them and tell them a fact about themselves.
  - Taking turns, each pair should then use that fact to 'sculpt' their partner into a statue.
  - Go round the circle, with each person introducing their partner as the statue, along with the fact to the rest of the group.
  - Ask each pair to then take a name of a character from *As You Like It* from a hat (the names and other information for this activity are on the 'Creating the Characters' sheets in the Resource materials)
  - Using the facts that come with the character name, ask each person to turn their partner into a statue of that character, and then swap so that both partners get to sculpt.
  - Students should then both learn their character's line, so that they can deliver it while showing their statue.
  - Go round the circle again, as before, but introducing their partner as the statue, along with the line they have learnt from the text.



The cast of *As You Like It*, in rehearsal.  
Photo by Keith Pattison.

- Now divide students into court and forest groups. Distribute one character description with a line to each member of each group.

- Using only one chair for each group, have students create photographs which capture the spirit of the court or the forest and which convey the sense of individual characters and

their relationships.

- Ask the groups to visit one another's photographs and to guess who's who in each. Ask them to describe in a few words the spirit of each photograph. How is the Court photo different from the one of the Forest characters?

## ACTIVITY 4: MOVEMENT

The following sequence is adapted from rehearsal work led by Ayse Tashkiran, the movement director for the 2013 production. It demonstrates how movement is also vital in creating the world of the play.



- As in a game of 'Simon Says' invite the whole group to play 'Duke Frederick Says', gaining a sense of the command of the Duke in the court.

- If the action is not prefaced with 'Duke Frederick Says...' students should not obey the command. If they do, then they will be out of the game/banished.
- Ask students to walk around the room, confining their movements to straight lines and angled turns only. Challenge them, as they walk, to make sure they don't make eye contact with anyone. Once they are moving, ask them to create movements for the following verbs, using only their hands:
  - Fighting
  - Wooing
  - Dancing
- Reflect on what it would be like to live in a place that was this restricted. Then, invite the group to run through the space, avoiding contact with others but trying to make eye contact as much as they can.
- As they run, have them rename objects the room as they pass and touch them - e.g. a chair becomes the sky; the floor is a potato and so on.
- Collectively discuss the differences between the worlds, how they felt in experiencing each of them, and what might happen to someone who had come from the first world into the second?



Rosie Hilal as Audrey. Photo by Keith Pattison.

## ACTIVITY 5: PLAYING A WOMAN PLAYING A MAN



This activity explores the challenges of playing a character that cross-dresses. Of course, in Shakespeare's time a boy played a woman who pretended to be a man, so the dynamic was very different.

- Ask students to walk around the room as a woman; then walk as a man. What differences do they notice? How do they expect each to move?
- Invite two male members of the group into the middle of the circle. Each of them will need to tuck a rag or scarf into the back trouser waistband, leaving enough material hanging out. The aim of the game is to snatch the opponent's 'tail' before he can take yours.
- Then ask two females to play the game. Compare the two versions. How is the behaviour different?
- Challenge students to walk around the room again as a woman and then as a man, using any traits they observed in the game.
- Apply these insights to the extract from *As You Like It*, Act III Scene ii, in the Resource Materials asking students to add movement to a paired read-through of the text. Remind students that Orlando is attracted to this young man at some level, without knowing that he is really his beloved Rosalind. Rosalind is doing her best to pretend to be a man at this point.
- It might be interesting to tell students that during the 2013 rehearsal process the female actors dressed as men and went to a local pub to see if they could pass as male.

# RESOURCES

## CREATING THE CHARACTERS

.....

DUKE FREDERICK - Rules the Court with an iron fist. Has usurped the throne from his older brother whom he has banished.

'Firm and irrevocable is my doom  
Which I have passed upon her; she is banished.'

(COURT)

.....

OLIVER - The Greedy and Jealous Brother of Orlando and Jaques.

'I never loved my brother in my life.'

(COURT)

.....

TOUCHSTONE - The clever and witty fool at Duke Frederick's court. He accompanies Rosalind and Celia into the Forest.

'The more pity that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly.'

(COURT)

.....

ROSALIND - The Spirited Heroine, daughter of the banished Duke Senior. Friend of Duke Frederick's daughter Celia.

'Dear Celia, I show more mirth than I am mistress of.'

(COURT)

.....

CELIA - The Good Friend, daughter of Duke Frederick but loyal to Rosalind . Goes with her to the Forest of Arden when Rosalind is banished.

'I pray thee, Rosalind, sweet my coz, be merry.'

(COURT)

.....

ORLANDO - The Young, Romantic Hero. Mistreated by his brother Oliver and very angry about that. Falls instantly in love with Rosalind.

'You have trained me like a peasant and I will no longer endure it.'

(COURT)

.....  
ADAM - The Faithful Old Servant. Mistreated by Oliver. Loyal to Orlando and goes with him into the Forest.

'Is "old dog" my reward? God be with my old Master! He would not have spoke such a word.'

(COURT)  
.....

CHARLES - The Wrestler. A champion fighter who provides entertainment for Duke Frederick. Eventually beaten by Orlando.

'I wrestle for my credit, and he that escapes me without some broken limb shall acquit him well.'

(COURT)  
.....

LE BEAU - A Courtier. Works for Duke Frederick. Could be seen as a gossip, but kind-hearted.

'Good sir, I do in friendship counsel you to leave this place.'

(COURT)  
.....

DUKE SENIOR - The Good Duke, banished by his wicked brother and living in exile in the Forest. Father to Rosalind.

'Now my co-mates and brothers in exile, are not these woods more free from peril than the envious court?'

(FOREST)  
.....

JACQUES - The Melancholy and Cynical Philosopher

'All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players.'

(FOREST)  
.....

CORIN - The Reliable Old Farmer

'The greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze.'

(FOREST)  
.....

ORLANDO - The Young, Romantic Hero freshly in love. Falls instantly in love with Rosalind.

'Hang there, my verse, in witness of my love.'

(FOREST)

.....

TOUCHSTONE - The Clever and Witty Fool who accompanies | Rosalind and Celia into the Forest. Courts the goatherd Audrey.

'Come apace, good Audrey. I will fetch up your goats, Audrey. And now, Audrey, am I the man yet?'

(FOREST)

.....

ROSALIND - The Spirited Heroine disguised as a man to hide her identity. In love with Orlando.

O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love!'

(FOREST)

.....

SILVIUS - The Lovesick, Rejected Shepherd

'Sweet Phebe, do not scorn me, do not, Phebe.'

(FOREST)

.....

CELIA - The Good Friend, pretending to be a shepherdess in the forest

'I like this place, and willingly could waste my time in it.'

(FOREST)

.....

PHEOBE - The Country Shepherdess Who Loves to be Admired

'But since that thou canst talk of love so well, thy company I will endure.'

(FOREST)

.....

AUDREY - The Country Wench who Herds Goats - honest if simple

'I am not slut, though I thank the gods I am foul.'

(FOREST)

.....

## ACT III SCENE ii (Edited by RSC EDUCATION)

ORLANDO: Where dwell you, pretty youth?

ROSALIND: With this shepherdess, my sister; here in the skirts of the forest, like fringe upon a petticoat.

ORLANDO: Are you native of this place?

ROSALIND: As the cony that you see dwell where she is kindled.

ORLANDO: Your accent is something finer than you could purchase in so removed a dwelling.

ROSALIND: I have been told so of many; but indeed an old religious uncle of mine taught me to speak. There is a man haunts the forest, that abuses our young plants with carving 'Rosalind' on their barks. If I could meet that fancy-monger I would give him some good counsel, for he seems to have the quotidian of love upon him.

ORLANDO: I am he that is so love-shaked. I pray you tell me your remedy.

ROSALIND: There is none of my uncle's marks upon you. He taught me how to know a man in love; in which cage of rushes I am sure you are not prisoner.

ORLANDO: What were his marks?

ROSALIND: A lean cheek, which you have not; a blue eye and sunken, which you have not; an unquestionable spirit, which you have not; a beard neglected, which you have not . . .

ORLANDO: Fair youth, I would I could make thee believe I love.

ROSALIND: But are you so much in love as your rhymes speak?

ORLANDO: Neither rhyme nor reason can express how much.

ROSALIND: Love is merely a madness, yet I profess curing it by counsel.

ORLANDO: Did you ever cure any so?

ROSALIND: Yes, one, and in this manner. He was to imagine me his love, his mistress; and I set him every day to woo me: And thus I cured him.

ORLANDO: I would not be cured, youth.

ROSALIND: I would cure you, if you would but call me Rosalind and come every day to my cote and woo me.

ORLANDO: Now, by the faith of my love, I will. Tell me where it is.

ROSALIND: Go with me to it and I'll show it you and by the way you shall tell me where in the forest you live. Will you go?

ORLANDO: With all my heart, good youth.

ROSALIND: Nay, you must call me Rosalind.