



[As You Like It](#), by William Shakespeare

In A Nutshell

As You Like It is a comedy written by William Shakespeare in late 1599 or early 1600. It is a love story taking place in the forest and featuring multiple couples falling in love. The primary romance is one of convoluted deception as the play's heroine, Rosalind, dresses up like a man (called "Ganymede") and teases the play's hero, Orlando, for being in love with Rosalind – while she herself has actually fallen in love with Orlando.

As You Like It is one of Shakespeare's more popular comedies, and is known for its heavy romantic element. You may have heard the play's most famous speech, which begins with "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players." In addition to being a witty commentary on life, this famous quote is also a good summation of all the coupling that goes on in *As You Like It*. Everyone is playing everyone else, and with all the marriages at the end, you bet there's going to be some fun throughout. *As You Like It* is also rather well known from the feminist angle, as its heroine (Rosalind) is one of Shakespeare's most fleshed-out female characters.

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Big Picture Study Questions

- 1 How is gender addressed in this play? Does Shakespeare suggest that gender is a fixed matter with certain definite elements? If that 's the case, then how does Rosalind seem to fit so naturally into playing a boy? Is Rosalind really playing here, or just exploring another side of herself?
- 2 What is the nature of Orlando 's masculinity? Why is he always trying to prove himself? Is that just his slighted little brother syndrome, or does it run deeper into insecurities about his own character?
- 3 Is Orlando's love for Rosalind, a figure whom he doesn 't know but idolizes, really based on a desire for romantic love, or is she just someone to idealize? Is there actually any romance between him and Ganymede?

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