

## *As You Like It*

# Activities

### **Some *As You Like It* Dilemmas**

When the Stratford Festival is preparing to stage a work like *As You Like It* there is a long period of asking questions and pursuing possible solutions to the problems and difficulties. The questions we asked ourselves – directors, designers, actors – about *As You Like It* were similar to the ones which follow. Have your class try working toward your own answers.

### **Text**

1. Make a list of the characters in *As You Like It* and look for clues in the script about each character: how they see themselves and how others describe them.

### **Costumes**

2. What should Duke Frederick look like? How old is he? What should he wear? What are his clothes like? What overall image should be projected? Try a few sketches for a costume for Duke Frederick, basing your details on the evidence that the play itself provides. Look for clues in what he says about himself, and what others say about him.

### **Music**

3. What sort of music, scored for what kinds of instruments, should be heard in *As You Like It*? Make a list of instruments – or sounds – that could possibly be suitable.

### **Staging**

4. The atmosphere for the various locations in *As You Like It* is very important in a production. Consider two separate and distinct locations – Duke Frederick's palace and the Forest of Arden– and discuss how, by means of lighting, design, sound and staging, these two places can be differentiated and suggested. Why is that sense of difference important to the play?

### **Mapping the Scene**

In small groups, students examine the scene of Rosalind's banishment. Draw a floor plan for Duke Frederick's palace and map out the movements of all characters involved in this scene. Pay particular attention to the dialogue between Duke Frederick, Rosalind and Celia; it will provide valuable clues. Devise a legend and make sure all plans are clear. Students share their work with the other groups.

### **Conversations for Two**

This improvisational activity will help you to begin thinking about the themes of the story. With a partner, students brainstorm different scenarios that would fit the following situations. They then carry out a conversation. If comfortable, students can share their conversations with the rest of the class. Discuss the different choices made by pairs working with the same scenario.

1. Two friends discuss running away and how they should disguise themselves.
2. Two brothers fight over their dad's inheritance. The older brother is preventing the younger brother from getting his share.
3. Two friends debate the merits of city life versus the country life. Each person chooses a side to defend.
4. Two friends are talking about a strange happening. One friend has just fallen in love at first sight. The other friend is skeptical.

### **The Forest of Arden as Utopia**

The Forest is in direct contrast to Duke Frederick's corrupt court and some believe it to be a type of utopia. However, is this in fact a perfect place?

Search for clues in the text that support or refute the notion of the Forest of Arden as a kind of utopia.

### **Revisiting the Story**

Below, the plot of *As You Like It* has been simplified into five basic actions, one to accompany each act.

Act 1: The banishment

Act 2: The arrival at the Forest of Arden

Act 3: Relationships

Act 4: Wooing

Act 5: Happily ever after?

1. In groups, using the same outline, students create and present a series of five tableaux depicting each of these key images that summarize the story of *As You Like It*.
2. Students then add seven more key images or actions to the summary.
3. Students can present their twelve part tableaux sequence adding background music to bridge the transition from one tableau to the next in the sequence.
4. Students can title each of the twelve images or action in the sequence with sensational newspaper headlines. Students should decide for what kind of newspaper they are writing. The class can discuss how different headlines would be if the students were writing for a national newspaper, a community newspaper, etc.

### Modern Movie Trailers

After the class has read the play, discuss genres and modern cinematic treatments it lends itself to.

Divide the class into groups of five or six and have each group pick a genre or treatment for their cinematic version of the play. Each group will storyboard a trailer for their movie (or film the trailer if video equipment is available). The trailer should include voiceovers and lines from the play to entice an audience of their peers to see the movie.

Have each group pitch its trailer to the class. The students should act out the trailer or show their video.

### Sculpture Gallery

Divide the class into groups of 3. Instruct each group to designate each group member as either A, B or C. Group member A will be the “artist” and group members B and C are the ‘clay’.

Instruct the artists to use the clay to create a sculpture that captures the essence of the given line. Artists must be sure to work *gently* with their clay, and remember that the clay can be transformed into both inanimate objects or people, and can be manipulated to create facial expression, suggest bold movement, or to create different levels. Artists must also be sure to creatively incorporate the index card into the sculpture so that it may easily be read. After about 5 minutes, the artists may finish and be invited to freely walk through the sculpture gallery and appreciate each others’ wonderful works of art.

Repeat so that group members B and C each have turns to be the artist. The following are examples of quotes that may be used to create beautiful sculptures!

- How weary are my spirits!**
- Here lie I down, and measure out my grave.**
- Truly, the tree yields bad fruit.**
- Sell while you can – you are not for all markets.**
- Sweet Phoebe, do not scorn me.**
- My father was no traitor!**
- I cannot live out of her company.**
- Let me be your servant.**
- He deserves no pity.**
- Have I not cause to weep?**
- O Phoebe, Phoebe, Phoebe!**
- All the world’s a stage.**