



# SHAKESPEARE

*for Students*

B O O K I

# SHAKESPEARE

## *for Students*

**Critical Interpretations of** *As You Like It, Hamlet, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, The Merchant of Venice, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Othello, and Romeo and Juliet*

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# How to Get the Most out of *Shakespeare for Students*

## Purpose of the Book

*Shakespeare for Students* is principally intended for beginning students of Shakespeare and for other interested readers, presenting information on some of Shakespeare's most popular and frequently taught plays. A further purpose of *Shakespeare for Students* is to acquaint the reader with the uses and function of literary criticism itself. Selected from an immense and often bewildering body of Shakespearean commentary, the essays and excerpts in *Shakespeare for Students* offer insights into Shakespeare's plays from the perspective of numerous twentieth-century critics. Readers will not need a wide background in literary studies to use this book. Students can benefit from *Shakespeare for Students* whether they seek information for class discussions and written assignments, new perspectives on traditional issues, or noteworthy and innovative analyses of Shakespeare's artistry.

About twenty percent of the essays and excerpts reprinted in *Shakespeare for Students* can also be found in Gale's companion literary series *Shakespearean Criticism*, a multi-volume set which provides a comprehensive collection of published criticism, spanning four centuries, on all of Shakespeare's plays and poems.

## How an Entry Is Organized

Each play entry consists of the following elements: an introduction to the play, essays and excerpts of criticism prefaced by explanatory annotations, and an annotated bibliography of sources for further study.

- The **introduction** to each entry presents a descriptive list of the play's major characters, summarizes its plot, and outlines the principal thematic issues and character studies found in the criticism.
- The **literary criticism** is arranged by topics, such as significant thematic issues and studies of principal characters. In addition, all act, scene, and line references in the commentary have been changed to conform to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, published by Houghton Mifflin Company, which is a standard text used in many high school and college English classes.
- **Explanatory annotations** preface the critical essays and excerpts as an additional aid to students. These notes provide several types of useful information, including the scope and importance of the commentary that follows, as well as definitions of the literary terms and concepts found in the critical work. The names of characters who are the subject of substantial discussion in the commentary are identified by boldface type in the annotations. This feature simplifies the process of locating information on specific characters.
- A complete **bibliographic citation** follows each piece of criticism. This feature will help the interested reader locate the original essay or book from which the reprint is taken.
- The **sources for further study** list at the end of each entry comprises additional discussions of the play. The list is divided into two sections; the first offers suggestions for other literary commentary, the second recommends media adaptations of the play available on videocassette.

## Other Features

- Throughout the book, **illustrations**—artistic renditions and performance photographs—add a visual dimension and enhance the reader's understanding of the critical discussions of each play.

- An alphabetical **index** to major themes and characters at the end of the book identifies the principal topics and character studies of each play, including issues and figures that, while significant, are not singled out for individual attention by entry sub-headings.

#### **A Note to the Reader**

When writing papers, students who quote directly from *Shakespeare for Students* may use the following general formats to footnote reprinted criticism. The first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to materials reprinted from books.

- <sup>1</sup> Irving Ribner, " 'Macbeth': The Pattern of Idea and Action," *Shakespeare Quarterly* X, No. 2 (Spring 1959), 147-59; excerpted and reprinted in *Shakespeare for Students*, ed. Mark W. Scott (Detroit: Gale Research, 1992), pp. 245-51.
- <sup>2</sup> Franklin M. Dickey, *Not Wisely but Too Well: Shakespeare's Love Tragedies* (The Huntington Library, 1957); excerpted and reprinted in *Shakespeare for Students*, ed. Mark W. Scott (Detroit: Gale Research, 1992), pp. 467-70.

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## A Brief Chronology of Shakespeare's Life and Major Works

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| <p><b>1564</b> Birth of William Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-avon. His notice of baptism is entered in the parish register at Holy Trinity Church on 26 April.</p> <p><b>1571</b> Shakespeare probably enters grammar school, seven years being the usual age for admission.</p> <p><b>1575</b> Queen Elizabeth visits Kenilworth Castle, near Stratford. Shakespeare may have witnessed the pageantry, which is possibly reflected in <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>.</p> <p><b>1582</b> Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway.</p> <p><b>1583</b> Birth of Susanna, the first child of William and Anne Shakespeare.</p> <p><b>1585</b> Births of twins Hamnet and Judith Shakespeare.</p> <p><b>1592</b> Robert Greene publishes a pamphlet entitled <i>Groats-worth of Wit</i>; it chides Shakespeare as an "upstart crow" on the theater scene.</p> <p><b>1592-93</b> Shakespeare probably writes <i>Venus and Adonis</i>.</p> <p><b>1593</b> Shakespeare probably begins composing his Sonnets.</p> <p><b>1593-94</b> Shakespeare probably writes <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i>.</p> <p><b>1594</b> Richard Burbage, William Kempe, and Shakespeare act with the Lord Chamberlain's Men at Greenwich Palace.</p> <p><b>1595-96</b> Shakespeare probably writes <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> and <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>.</p> <p><b>1596</b> Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, lord chamberlain and patron of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, dies. Shakespeare's company comes</p> | <p>under the patronage of George Carey, second Lord Hunsdon. Hamnet Shakespeare dies at age eleven.</p> <p><b>1596-97</b> Shakespeare probably writes <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>.</p> <p><b>1597</b> Shakespeare purchases the New Place, a large Stratford mansion, and the surrounding grounds.</p> <p><b>1598</b> Shakespeare is listed as a principal actor in a performance of Ben Jonson's <i>Every Man in His Humour</i>.</p> <p><b>1599</b> Shakespeare probably composes <i>As You Like It</i> and <i>Julius Caesar</i>. Land for the Globe Theatre is leased by Nicholas Brend to leading shareholders in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, including Shakespeare. Thomas Platter, a German traveler, attends a production of <i>Julius Caesar</i> at the Globe Theatre, the earliest known performance of the play. John Weever publishes the poem "Ad Guglielmum Shakespeare," praising Shakespeare's <i>Venus and Adonis</i>, <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i>, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, and other works.</p> <p><b>1600-01</b> Shakespeare probably writes <i>Hamlet</i>.</p> <p><b>1603</b> <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> is performed at Hampton Court. Queen Elizabeth dies. The new king, James I, arrives in London a month later. King James grants a patent, or license, to the Lord Chamberlain's Men and renames them the King's</p> |
|---|---|

- Men; Shakespeare's name is mentioned in the patent.  
The King's Men enact a play, possibly *As You Like It*, before King James at Wilton.  
Shakespeare appears in a performance of Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*, the last record of his acting career.
- 1604** Shakespeare probably writes *Othello*, which is first performed at Whitehall on 1 November.
- 1605** *The Merchant of Venice* is performed twice at court and commended by the king.
- 1606** Shakespeare probably writes *Macbeth*, which may have been performed at Hampton Court for the visiting King Christian IV of Denmark.
- 1607** *Hamlet* is performed aboard the British ship *Dragon* at Sierra Leone.
- 1608** Shakespeare, Richard and Cuthbert Burbage, Thomas Evans, John Hemminges, Henry Condell, and William Sly lease the Blackfriars Theatre for a period of twenty-one years.
- 1609** Shakespeare's Sonnets are published.
- 1612-13** Frederick V, the elector palatine and future king of Bohemia, arrives in England to marry Elizabeth, King James's daughter. The King's Men perform several plays, including *Othello* and *Julius Caesar*, during the wedding festivities.
- 1613** The Globe Theatre burns down during the first performance of *Henry VIII*.
- 1614** The Globe Theatre reopens.
- 1616** Shakespeare dies; his burial is recorded in the register of Holy Trinity Church on 25 April.
- 1619** *Hamlet* and several other Shakespearean plays are performed at court as part of the Christmas festivities.
- 1623** Anne Hathaway Shakespeare dies. John Hemminges and Henry Condell, Shakespeare's fellow actors, compile and publish thirty-six of the dramatist's works in the First Folio, the earliest collected edition of Shakespeare's plays.

# Some Research Perspectives for Students of Shakespeare

by Gladys V. Veidemanis, Oshkosh Area Public Schools

"The play's the thing . . .," Hamlet concludes in Act II of *Hamlet* as he contemplates a strategy to entrap his murderous uncle, but his words apply as well to anyone endeavoring to be a student of Shakespeare's works. To write an essay, produce an oral report, or undertake an extensive research project on some aspect of a Shakespearean play—tasks you are likely to be assigned during your high school or college career—you must first begin with a close and careful reading of the text, view live or videotaped productions of the play, and listen to recordings of notable performances. Only after you have developed firm ideas of your own and formulated specific questions to be resolved are you truly ready to turn to critical studies of the play that will challenge, validate, or even revise your initial assumptions and interpretations.

Fortunately, this collection of criticism—the only work of its kind explicitly intended for use by high school students as well as other interested readers—has been designed to simplify the research process by providing a cross-section of critical commentary on the eight Shakespearean plays most commonly taught in America's high schools: *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. For each play discussed in this volume you are given an introduction, which provides an overview of the play and discusses its historical importance; an annotated list of principal characters; an act-by-act plot synopsis; one or more overview essays which synthesize critical commentary on the play; and a selected group of critical essays that both survey the play as a whole and concentrate on its dominant themes, characters, imagery, and distinctive features.

To use this resource most efficiently, you will want to start by closely reading the introductory material provided on the play you are studying (and be sure to return for a rereading of this material after you have finished exploring the critical essays that follow). Next you should read the opening essays, so positioned in each entry as to provide an overview of the entire work and highlight major issues requiring scholarly consideration. Following this preliminary reading, you are ready to explore the principal topics that follow to help you locate the essays most applicable to your chosen research project. As a time-saver, each essay is preceded by a summary of content to alert you to whether or not the material that follows is pertinent to your subject. All of the critical essays in this collection have been carefully edited and abridged to enable you to focus more quickly and directly on specific themes, topics, or characters; however, you may occasionally wish to use the bibliographical citation at the end of each essay to locate a particular essay as originally published in order to read it in its entirety.

"Why consult the critics?" you well might ask. Shouldn't your own opinions and ideas be sufficient for the tasks you have been assigned? Of course your response to the text is what matters most, but reading literary criticism can help you in three important ways:

- (1) to clarify troublesome passages and problems in the text,
- (2) to stimulate thinking about aspects of the play you have overlooked or disregarded, and
- (3) to illuminate conflicting interpretations of characters and themes that need to be weighed in your analysis of the play.

Steeped in ambiguity, Shakespeare's plays always raise more questions than they answer, and every reading is likely to raise new questions and modify initial assumptions. For example, why does Hamlet delay his revenge—out of prudence, cowardice, or failure of will? In *Julius Caesar*, who are the villains—the conspirators Brutus and Cassius or the alleged tyrant Caesar himself? In *Romeo and Juliet*, are we meant to regard the doomed lovers as playthings of Fate or, instead, as victims of their intense infatuation and reckless impetuosity? In *Macbeth*, is Duncan truly as virtuous as Macbeth describes him or, as some readings suggest, is he power-hungry, personally weak, and possibly senile? And how do we explain our ambivalence about Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, our feelings of pity and sympathy in spite of his heartless greed, hypocrisy, and malicious behavior? To accentuate

the diversity of critical opinion that abounds, occasionally in this volume essays that express opposing viewpoints have been juxtaposed, a reminder of how richly the plays lend themselves to divergent readings and conflicting interpretations.

Clearly, you don't have to agree with, or believe, everything you read. Literary criticism invites an engagement of intellects, a sharing of responses to the intensive study of a subtle and sophisticated literary text. For that matter, some essays may infuriate you or cause you to argue aloud to the corners of your room. Great! Then literary criticism will have served its central purpose: to make you defend your ideas about a given play and become better informed about your subject.

In reading literary criticism, you are best advised to read through the entire essay once (preferably twice), then go back and take selective notes. As much as possible, summarize important ideas and concepts in your own words, then judiciously identify and record quotations that will lend eloquence, authority, or textual proof to your written or oral presentation. And as you take notes, keep in mind that the primary skill required in literary research is the careful attribution of both borrowed opinion and direct citation. When you draw on other people's thinking, whether with a direct quote or a summary of ideas you have encountered, remember that you have a moral obligation to give credit to the person whose words or ideas you are borrowing. Phrases such as "According to . . ." or "As . . . asserts," should appear frequently in any oral or written report utilizing a wide range of supplemental critical research.

But never let yourself be dominated by the critics, however eloquent and authoritative they may seem. *You* are the writer, the reader, the researcher, the person in charge of the text you have read and the paper or speech you wish to create. Literary criticism, then, is essentially a tool to facilitate the tasks you have been assigned. But, happily, you will discover that reading what the critics have to say is also a pleasure in and of itself, an encounter with some of the best commentary that has been expressed about the greatest plays ever written. Make sure to enjoy the intellectual adventure this book enables!

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# AS YOU LIKE IT

## INTRODUCTION

Commentators have described *As You Like It* as both a celebration of the spirit of pastoral romance and a satire of the pastoral ideal. Traditionally, a pastoral is a poem focusing on shepherds and rustic life; it first appeared as a literary form in the third century. The term itself is derived from the Latin word for shepherd, *pastor*. A pastoral consists of artificial and unnatural elements, for the shepherd characters often speak with courtly eloquence and appear in aristocratic dress. This poetic convention evolved over centuries until many of its features were incorporated into prose and drama. It was in these literary forms that pastoralism influenced English literature from about 1550 to 1750, most often as pastoral romance, a model featuring songs and characters with traditional pastoral names. Many of these elements manifest themselves in the commonly accepted source for Shakespeare's play, Thomas Lodge's popular pastoral novel *Rosalynde*, written in 1590. But by the time Shakespeare adapted Lodge's romance into *As You Like It* nearly a decade later, many pastoral themes were considered trite. As a result of these developments, Shakespeare treated pastoralism ambiguously in the comedy—it can be viewed as either an endorsement or a satire of the literary form—a method which is nowhere more evident than in the play's title.

## PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

**Orlando:** The youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys. He eventually marries Rosalind.

**Adam:** Oliver's aged servant who goes into exile with Orlando.

**Oliver:** The eldest son of Sir Rowland de Boys who governs his house like a tyrant. He is converted from villainy in Arden forest and marries Celia.

**Charles:** Duke Frederick's wrestler whom Orlando defeats.

**Celia:** Duke Frederick's daughter and Rosalind's cousin. She accompanies Rosalind in exile under the name Aliena and eventually marries the reformed Oliver.

**Rosalind:** The exiled Duke Senior's daughter and niece of Duke Frederick. She disguises herself as

a youth named Ganymede when she goes into exile. She eventually marries Orlando.

**Touchstone:** A fool in Celia's service. He accompanies Celia and Rosalind into exile. He courts and marries Audrey.

**Le Beau:** One of Duke Frederick's courtiers.

**Duke Frederick:** Duke Senior's younger brother and usurper of his throne. He is also Celia's father and Rosalind's uncle.

**Duke Senior:** The exiled elder brother of Duke Frederick and father of Rosalind.

**Amiens:** A courtier attending Duke Senior in exile.

**Corin:** An old shepherd who befriends Rosalind, Celia, and Touchstone.

**Silvius:** A shepherd in love with the shepherdess Phebe. He eventually marries her.

**Jaques:** A melancholy lord attending Duke Senior in banishment.

**Audrey:** A country wench who marries Touchstone.

**Sir Oliver Martext:** A vicar whose marriage of Touchstone and Audrey is interrupted by Jaques.

**Phebe:** A shepherdess who falls in love with Ganymede. She eventually marries Silvius.

**William:** A country fellow who loves Audrey.

**Hymen:** The god of marriage who marries all the couples.

**Jaques de Boys:** The second son of Sir Rowland de Boys and Oliver and Orlando's brother.

## PLOT SYNOPSIS

**Act I:** Orlando, who has been denied his inheritance and education by his brother Oliver, fights with him over his birthright. Envious of Orlando's virtues, Oliver schemes to have Charles the wrestler murder Orlando in an upcoming match. Rosalind and Celia attend the bout at Duke Frederick's court and watch Orlando defeat Charles. Rosalind gives him a necklace, and he falls in love with her. Later, Le Beau warns Orlando that the duke is threatened by his presence, and he advises the youth to flee the court. Meanwhile, Rosalind admits to Celia that she loves Orlando, but her happiness is interrupted when the duke banishes her.

She decides to journey to Arden forest disguised as a courtier named Ganymede, accompanied by Celia and Touchstone.

*Act II:* Upon reaching Arden, Rosalind, Celia, and Touchstone overhear Silvius professing his love of Phebe to Corin. Elsewhere, Orlando and Adam have also reached the forest in an exhausted and hungry state. In his search for food, Orlando discovers Duke Senior and his retainers. Orlando menacingly demands food, but is surprised when the duke kindly welcomes him to their table. While Orlando retrieves Adam, Jaques gives his "Seven Ages of Man" speech.

*Act III:* Smitten with the memory of Rosalind, Orlando wanders through the forest hanging love poems on trees. Eventually, the lovers meet, but he does not recognize her because she is still in disguise. She proposes to cure him of his love if he will pretend to court her as if she were Rosalind. Meanwhile, as Touchstone courts Audrey, Silvius attempts to woo Phebe. But Phebe falls in love with Ganymede, who castigates her for spurning Silvius's love.

*Act IV:* Jaques debates the nature of his melancholy with Rosalind, until Orlando appears. She admonishes him for his tardiness and the two lovers continue their wooing game, until Orlando departs, promising to return in an hour. Sometime after, Oliver—who has come to the forest seeking his brother—encounters Rosalind and Celia, who are waiting for Orlando to return. He explains that Orlando is late because he was wounded while saving Oliver from a hungry lioness. Presenting Rosalind with a bloody handkerchief, Oliver declares that the experience has reformed him. Shocked by the sight of Orlando's blood, Rosalind faints.

*Act V:* When Orlando learns that Oliver and Celia have fallen in love and are to be married the next day, he tires of his game with Rosalind. She then asserts that she knows a magician who can give him Rosalind as a bride. She also pledges to gratify both Silvius and Phebe. The next day, Rosalind reveals herself, and Phebe settles for Silvius, since Ganymede no longer exists. As the god of marriage Hymen begins the ceremony, Touchstone and Audrey appear, joining the couples to be married. The rite is again interrupted when Jaques de Boys suddenly arrives with the news that Duke Frederick has been reformed by an old religious man and that Duke Senior may reclaim his title. Everyone rejoices except Jaques, who declares that he will join Duke Frederick and the hermit in seclusion.

### PRINCIPAL TOPICS

Numerous oppositions in *As You Like It* reveal Shakespeare's partiality toward the pastoral rustic life of Arden forest to life at court. At Duke Freder-

ick's court, disorder holds sway. The deterioration of political authority is the most obvious form of disorder, for Duke Frederick has unlawfully seized Duke Senior's kingdom. This political degeneration is compounded by a more personal disorder, since the dukes are also brothers at odds with each other; this conflict is underscored by the antagonistic relationship of two other brothers at the court, Oliver and Orlando. Arden forest offers a sense of pure, spiritual order in contrast to the corrupt condition of Duke Frederick's court. The journey there is long and arduous; when the characters arrive they are physically exhausted and hungry. Moreover, such threatening elements as the "icy fang" and "churlish wind" portray life in Arden as anything but ideal. The harsh experience of nature acts as a purgative process, however, which lays bare the characters' virtuous natures calloused by court life. Some characters, like Orlando and Rosalind, need little improvement, yet find in Arden a liberation from the oppression they have endured at court. Others, such as Oliver and Duke Frederick, approach the forest with malicious intent only to undergo a complete spiritual reformation. Arden thus represents a morally pure realm whose special curative powers purge and renew the forest-dwellers, granting them a self-awareness which they will ultimately use to restore order at court. Closely allied with the opposition of court life and Arden forest is another dichotomy, that between fortune and nature. Here, "fortune" represents both material gain—which is achieved through power, birthright, or possession—and a force that unpredictably determines events. "Nature," on the other hand, reflects both the purifying force of Arden and humanity's fundamental condition stripped of the trappings of wealth, power, and material possessions. The opposition of these two entities provides another example of the overall theme of antithesis and conflict in *As You Like It*.

Time is another theme that is treated differently in the court scenes and those in Arden forest. At court, time is specific; it is marked by definite intervals which amplify the corrupt and violent nature of Duke Frederick's rule. In most cases, it is related to the duke's threats: he orders Rosalind to leave the court within ten days or she will be executed, and he gives Oliver one year to find Orlando or else his land and possessions will be confiscated. In Arden, however, the meaning of time is less precise. Some scholars argue that in the forest time is replaced by timelessness, enhancing Arden's mythical, otherworldly properties. Others interpret time not in the passage of hours and minutes, but in the progress of events, leading to self-awareness, that the characters experience in Arden. This view of time has a cause and effect aspect, determined by the characters' changes in attitude as events in the forest ultimately lead to the multiple marriages. Time is also explored in relation to the human being's aging process. Jaques's melancholy "Seven Ages of Man" speech (II. vii.

139ff.) pessimistically illustrates the individual's passage through life in distinct stages, ending with the image of man and woman as pathetically ineffectual and dependent creatures. Touchstone also offers a description of the aging process, but his concern is that as human beings age, they lose their ability to enjoy physical love. Rosalind presents a more optimistic opinion of aging, however, asserting that life is worth living when you can grow old with someone you love.

Sexual disguise and role-playing are two other closely related and important themes in *As You Like It*. These issues primarily focus on Rosalind, who disguises herself as a gentleman named Ganymede to insure her safe passage to Arden. Though she can discard her male costume when she reaches the forest, Rosalind does not do so until the end of the play. Critics generally agree that she continues to act as Ganymede because the disguise liberates her from her submissive role as a woman. She is therefore able to take more control of her own life, especially in her courtship with Orlando. In their play-acting scenes, Rosalind controls the tactics of courtship usually reserved for men, inverting the strategy to teach Orlando the meaning of real love rather than love based on his ideal vision of her. An added dimension to Rosalind's role-playing is evident if we consider the comedy in its Elizabethan context. In Shakespeare's age, it was common for boys to play the roles of women in dramas. The playwright takes advantage of this convention in *As You Like It* to accentuate the play's theatricality. If we consider that the boy actor who performs Rosalind must also play Ganymede, who in turn portrays Rosalind in the play-acting sessions with Orlando, we can appreciate that this subtle, yet complex, theatrical technique illustrates how disguise and role-playing often operate on several different levels in the play.

### CHARACTER STUDIES

Of all the characters in *As You Like It*, Rosalind, Orlando, Touchstone, and Jaques have attracted the most critical commentary. Rosalind is perhaps the most important figure in the play, for it is through her influence that many of the play's conflicts and controversies are resolved. It is Rosalind's self-awareness, as well as her charming wit and individualism, that enables her to resist and correct the false definitions of love of those around her. It also allows her to assess other characters' motives and aspirations. Orlando—the primary focus of Rosalind's attention—has seemingly little appeal beyond his role as a stereotype of the romantic lover. Closer examination reveals, however, that for all of his passionate rhetoric and wretched verse-writing, Orlando is a character of nimble wit. This quality is perhaps most evident in his humor-

ous debate with Jaques in Act III, scene ii. Touchstone is all that his name implies: he acts as a touchstone or test of the qualities of the other characters both at Duke Frederick's court and in the forest. It is Touchstone's inherent skepticism of Arden that allows him to play the courtly observer and put the others to the comic test. By marrying Audrey, he parodies not only the shepherds' ideal pastoral life, but the pastoral romance convention as well. Jaques—Duke Senior's aloof and melancholy retainer—is commonly considered Touchstone's foil. He, too, provides commentary on the play's diverse issues, but from a completely different perspective. Jaques's misanthropy, or distaste for humanity, initially casts a dark shadow over the events in Arden forest, but as the other characters change for the better, his bitter pessimism appears stagnant and ineffectual. Jaques is a satire of another Elizabethan stereotype, the traveler who returns from abroad only to become discontented with domestic life. Shakespeare shows no sympathy for Jaques throughout the play: his cynical statements are rebuked time and again by such characters as Rosalind, Orlando, Touchstone, and Duke Senior. Ultimately, he is the only character who does not achieve some form of reformation and personal enlightenment from the Arden experience.

### CONCLUSION

Although critics remain divided on whether or not *As You Like It* should be read as a satire or a celebration of the pastoral ideal, the reader cannot deny taking great pleasure in the play's festive atmosphere and its various love affairs. Perhaps it is just such an appeal that has made *As You Like It* one of Shakespeare's most popular and best loved comedies.

(See also *Shakespearean Criticism*, Vol. 5)

### OVERVIEWS

#### Sylvan Barnet

[Barnet presents a succinct overview of *As You Like It* in relation to Much Ado about Nothing and Twelfth Night, Shakespeare's other festive comedies. In this excerpt, the critic explores the contrasting elements of the court and Arden forest, relates the various implications that the courtships of Orlando and Rosalind, Oliver and Celia, Silvius and Phebe, and Touchstone and Audrey have on the whole play, and surveys the theme of redemption through