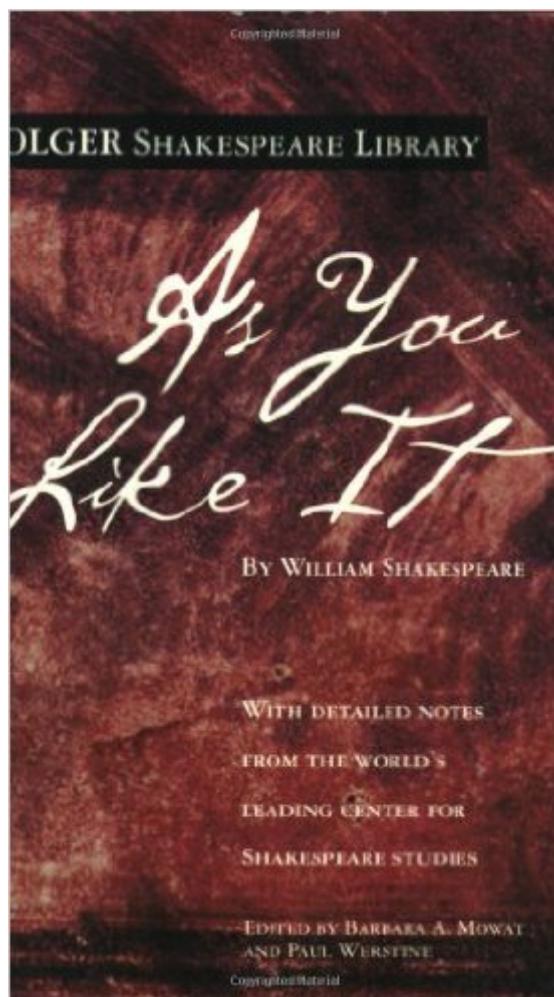


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As You Like It (Folger Shakespeare Library)



Synopsis

Readers and audiences have long greeted *As You Like It* with delight. Its characters are brilliant conversationalists, including the princesses Rosalind and Celia and their Fool, Touchstone. Soon after Rosalind and Orlando meet and fall in love, the princesses and Touchstone go into exile in the Forest of Arden, where they find new conversational partners. Duke Frederick, younger brother to Duke Senior, has overthrown his brother and forced him to live homeless in the forest with his courtiers, including the cynical Jaques. Orlando, whose older brother Oliver plotted his death, has fled there, too. Recent scholars have also grounded the play in the issues of its time. These include primogeniture, passing property from a father to his oldest son. *As You Like It* depicts intense conflict between brothers, exposing the human suffering that primogeniture entails. Another perspective concerns cross-dressing. Most of Orlando's courtship of Rosalind takes place while Rosalind is disguised as a man, "Ganymede." At her urging, Orlando pretends that Ganymede is his beloved Rosalind. But as the epilogue reveals, the sixteenth-century actor playing Rosalind was male, following the practice of the time. In other words, a boy played a girl playing a boy pretending to be a girl. The authoritative edition of *As You Like It* from The Folger Shakespeare Library, the trusted and widely used Shakespeare series for students and general readers, includes:

- Freshly edited text based on the best early printed version of the play
- Full explanatory notes conveniently placed on pages facing the text of the play
- Scene-by-scene plot summaries
- A key to the play's famous lines and phrases
- An introduction to reading Shakespeare's language
- An essay by a leading Shakespeare scholar providing a modern perspective on the play
- Fresh images from the Folger Shakespeare Library's vast holdings of rare books
- An annotated guide to further reading

Essay by Susan Snyder

The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, is home to the world's largest collection of Shakespeare's printed works, and a magnet for Shakespeare scholars from around the globe. In addition to exhibitions open to the public throughout the year, the Folger offers a full calendar of performances and programs. For more information, visit Folger.edu.

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Customer Reviews

My appreciation for Shakespearean comedies have increased with age. I liked "As You Like It" - it made for a good comedy and a good introduction for someone to Shakespeare. The Kindle version is pretty much flawless - it's copied from a good source and doesn't have any glaring transcription errors as some free e-books do. If you want a good introduction to Shakespeare, or even just want to branch out from his dramatic plays - give it a try. It's a free book - what can go wrong?

The plot involves a lot of people disguising themselves as the opposite gender but in the end everyone ends up with the one they really love. In that sense it's like a light romantic comedy but it also includes a lot of the great writing that Shakespeare is known for, including many of his most famous lines, such as the "all the world's a stage" monologue, and I hadn't realized this is the play the phrase "motley fool" came from. If you like Shakespeare, this is a must read, and it's entertaining as just a fun play. This kindle version is well formatted, though no footnotes or line numbers.

"As You Like It" is bar none, one of Shakespeare's VERY best works. It is probably the most poetic of the comedies and contains perhaps as many famous quotations as any other of his plays. Rosalind is perhaps his greatest female character and this work, along with the equally (or even more) brilliant "Midsummer Night's Dream," is the best example of Shakespeare's theme of the "dream world" vs. the "real" world. This play, especially the scenes in the forest, is a celebration of language and the power of the freedom of the imagination. It consequently can be read as a criticism of the "real world," here represented by Duke Ferdinand's court. Like many of the other comedies, Shakespeare is mocking the "ideal" which many in his society would have praised. Though this play deals with some pretty dark themes (which of his plays doesn't?) it is a light-hearted and fully enjoyable read!

As You Like It has many qualities to attract readers and audiences. Rosalind is one of the great heroines of all romantic literature. The play has more outstanding speeches than almost any other that has ever been written. Astonishing plot complications are quickly resolved in the simplest possible way, reflecting a playwright's tour de force. The Forest of Arden appears as a character in creating a magical atmosphere whereby all perceptions change, and all are healed. Right wins out, especially in drawing on good character . . . even from formerly badly behaving people. And for those who love marriages, this book has one of the most impressive ceremonies of all time in literature. Humans have never looked nobler in the end than in this play. Yet the play also abounds with some of the greatest lines of Shakespeare's fools that cause all of us to see that humility is more called for than pride or ambition. Certainly, As You Like It will make you feel the presence of an unmatched genius, that should inspire even the most arrogant to feel humbled in the Bard's presence. My recommendation is that you first see a performance (whether in person, or on a recording). If that's not possible, try for an audio. Many outstanding actors have been taped. After you have the sights and sounds of the play firmly in mind, then read the play. You'll find that your earlier experiences will unlock more of the play's depths, imagery and pleasures for you. Where in life is being true to your word very important? How can you improve your life by being more reliable in this way?

Note: This is a review of the particular "Cambridge School Shakespeare" edition [Edited by Rex Gibson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000] of As You Like it and not a review of the play itself. This edition (a) contains the unabridged play and (b) tries to explain and elucidate Shakespeare's play to teenagers of the age of maybe 15-17. It clarifies difficult language, highlights the main conflicts, puts the play into a historical context and the context of the literary tradition that it belongs to. It encourages the reader to think of different possible ways to play the characters and different ways to understand the play. I am not a teenager and I am not 16 years old any more, in fact, I am 53 years old with a PhD in Economics and a Masters in Psychology. I read Shakespeare for fun, to challenge my brain, and to grow personally. I found this edition of the play very helpful and enjoyable. The commentary neither spoiled my fun by overanalyzing or showing off its learnedness nor did it offend my intelligence by oversimplifying. In addition, the layout of the book is quite reader-friendly. If you are a Shakespeare scholar or a scholar of English Lit, this edition will probably be too simple for you. For people of my caliber, however, I can really recommend this edition. Enjoy!

Let me begin by saying that my three-star rating solely concerns this edition of "As You Like It". The play itself is one of Shakespeare's finest comedies and is deserving of five stars indeed. I've long held that the Oxford School Shakespeare is the finest introductory Shakespeare series available, for it typically portrays a perfect balance of scholarly rigor, readability, and concern for performance. However, recently I've observed that Oxford U.P. seems to be holding the newer Oxford School entries such as "Henry V" to higher standards of thoroughness and innovation than older entries such as this one. Like Roma Gill's Oxford School edition of "Julius Caesar", her edition of "As You Like It", while quite readable, is extremely thin in terms of commentary and supplementary material. To be sure, the insubstantial supplementary material reads like a compilation of throwaway material -- facsimiled sheet music for "It Was a Lover and His Lass" without any discussion of how it's been performed in previous productions, unhelpful classwork and examinations, a paltry background section, and a desultory "exploration" section, the point of which is altogether unclear. This reviewer recommends the Oxford World's Classics edition of "As You Like It" instead.

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