

**Unit-1**  
***AS YOU LIKE IT***  
**By William Shakespeare**

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## 1.0 Objectives:

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- know the life and works of William Shakespeare
- understand the play *As You Like It* as one of the best comedies of Shakespeare
- outline the plot and analyze the play
- sketch the characters in the play
- comment on various themes emerged in the play

## 1.1 Introduction

### 1.1.1 Life of William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare has earned fame both as a poet and a playwright. His works including plays, sonnets and poems are widely acknowledged for their profound and enduring impact on literature. His plays are translated into more than 50 languages and performed all over the world for the audiences of all ages. Though Shakespeare was a popular figure in the literary circle, much of his personal life remains a mystery as there is no surviving descendant from his family or no autobiographical letters or diaries which can reveal or throw light on his personal life. William Shakespeare, the greatest dramatist was born on 23rd April, 1564, in a village named Stratford on the bank of the river Avon in the country of Warwickshire. He was the third and the eldest surviving child of John and Mary. John Shakespeare, a butcher by trade, was a prosperous man, a man of influence in the municipal affairs of Stratford. John Shakespeare and Mary Arden were married in 1557 and Mary brought with her, land and houses. William Shakespeare was admitted to the local Grammar School, where he received good formal education. At the age of 18 Shakespeare married Ann Hathway a woman eight years older than he. A daughter named Susan, was born in 1583. Two years later the pair had a twin Hamnet and Judith of which Hamnet, his only son, was obviously Shakespeare's darling child and the boy's untimely death landed the dramatist in a long lasting melancholy. Shakespeare had a passion for the theatre. Shakespeare came to London in search of livelihood. In 1587 the Queen's players visited Stratford. Probably their performances drew him to the stage. By 1592 he was a celebrity in the theatre circle.

Elizabethan age is called the golden age of drama. When Shakespeare began writing his plays, drama was on the verge of a giant leap forward. There were a number of public and private theatres bustling with dramatic activity. The nobility, the Lords, the Dukes, the Barons played a significant role by patronizing the player's companies. This gave popularity to drama. Even Queen Elizabeth and her successor King James-I were admirers of the stage. Yet until 1593 drama remained confined to London and other big cities. The plague of 1593, however, as the theatres were closed by the order of the Lord Mayor, drove the players away from London. They began performing in the country side of England, thus popularizing drama in remote areas of England. In 1594 the theatres reopened and then Shakespeare's dramatic career began to bloom. James Burbage constructed the first public theatre in the year 1576. It was called "The Theatre". In 1599 his son Richard constructed "The Globe". Shakespeare and his group formed the Lord Chamberlain's Company. Shakespeare remained attached as a playwright to this company. His career as a dramatist blossomed on "The Globe", to which he was one of the principal shareholders. The revival of the classical drama gave new dimensions to the dramatist's genius. Shakespeare's career as a dramatist spread over 20 years. Shakespeare played diverse roles in the London theatre, serving as an actor, playwright, and eventually becoming a business partner in the influential acting company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men. After the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, the acting company received a royal patent, leading to its rechristening as the King's Men, in honour of King James I. In 1599, Shakespeare, along with fellow players from his productions, established the Globe Theatre along the River Thames. His fame in the London theatre community grew steadily. While his name was initially absent from the first quarto editions of his plays, it later became a regular and prominent feature on subsequent title pages, evidently serving as a significant selling point. He experienced financial success through his association with the Lord Chamberlain's Men and his endeavours in writing and acting. Subsequently, in 1597 he made substantial real estate investments in Stratford, culminating in the acquisition of New Place, the town's second-largest house. Among his final works was *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, collaboration with frequent partner John Fletcher, most likely completed in the year 1613. Shakespeare passed away on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1616.

## **2. Works of William Shakespeare:**

### **Plays:**

#### **History Plays:**

1. *Titus Andronicus* (1587, pub. in 1594) – Political History
2. *Henry VI* (1588-91) – Historical play in three parts
3. *King John* (1595) – Political History
4. *Richard III* (1596) – Political History
5. *Richard II* (1597) – Full Title: *The Tragedy of King Richard II*
6. *Henry IV* (two parts: 1596 & 1597) – Political History
7. *Henry V* (1599) – Political History
8. *Henry VIII* (1612-13) - Political History (Heterogeneous History)

#### **Tragedies:**

1. *Julius Caesar* (1599) – Roman Tragedy
2. *Hamlet* (1599-1601) – Dark or Great Tragedy
3. *Romeo and Juliet* (1594-95) – Dark or Great Tragedy
4. *Othello* (1604) – Dark or Great Tragedy
5. *Timon of Athens* (1604) – Roman Tragedy
6. *King Lear* (1605) – Dark or Great Tragedy
7. *Macbeth* (1606) – Dark or Great Tragedy
8. *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1606-07) – Roman Tragedy
9. *Coriolanus* (1605-08) – Roman Tragedy

#### **Comedies:**

1. *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1587) – Early Comedy
2. *The Taming of the Shrew* (1588) – Romantic Comedy
3. *The Comedy of Errors* (1589-94) – Early Comedy
4. *Love's Labour's Lost* (1593-94) – Early Comedy
5. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-96) – Romantic Comedy
6. *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-97) – Romantic Comedy
7. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597) – Romantic Comedy

8. *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598-99) – Problem Comedy
9. *As You Like It* (1599-1600) – Romantic Comedy
10. *Twelfth Night* (1601) – Romantic Comedy
11. *Troilus and Cressida* (1602) – Dark Comedy
12. *All's Well That Ends Well* (1603) – Problem Comedy or Dark Comedy
13. *Measure for Measure* (1604) – Problem Comedy or Dark Comedy

**Tragi-Comedies:**

1. *Pericles* (1607-08) – Heterogeneous Comedy or Dramatic Romance
2. *The Winter's Tale* (1609-10) – Heterogeneous Comedy or Dramatic Romance
3. *Cymbeline* (1610-11) – Heterogeneous Comedy or Dramatic Romance
4. *The Tempest* (1610-11) – Heterogeneous Comedy or Dramatic Romance

**1.1.3 Check Your Progress:**

1. John and Mary had.....children.  
 a. six                                  b. seven                                  c. eight                                  d. nine  
 Ann Hathway was.....years old at the time of her marriage with William Shakespeare.  
 a. 20                                  b. 22                                  c. 24                                  d. 26
3. James Burbage constructed the first public theatre in the year.....  
 a. 1598                                  b. 1567                                  c. 1576                                  d. 1599
4. William Shakespeare passed away on .....  
 a. 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1617                                  b. 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1616  
 c. 17<sup>th</sup> March, 1637                                  d. 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1612
5. .... was established on the banks of river Thames.  
 a. The Theatre                                  b. The Globe Theatre  
 c. Phoenix                                  d. The Glass house
6. .... was written in collaboration with Fletcher  
 a. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*                                  b. *The Tempest*  
 c. *Troilus and Cressida*                                  d. *Pericles*
7. *The Twelfth Night* is a .....  
 a. romantic comedy                                  b. dark comedy

- c. comedy  
d. tragic-comedy
8. *As You like It* is published in \_\_\_\_\_
- a. 1600                      b. 1607                      d. 1603                      d. 1609

## 1.2 *As You Like It*

### 1.2.1 Introduction to the Play

*As You Like It* is a romantic comedy that belongs to the second phase of Shakespearean dramatic career. It is unanimously accepted as the best romantic comedy by the dramatist. The play *As You Like It* was written and performed about 1598–1600 and first published in the First Folio of 1623. The setting of the play is romantic. Shakespeare Comedy is based on the play *Rosalynde* (1590), a prose romance by Thomas Lodge.

The play has two main settings: the court that Duke Frederick has usurped from his brother, the rightful duke (known as Duke Senior), and the Forest of Arden, where the Duke and his followers (including the disgruntled Jaques) are living in exile. Rosalind, the Duke's daughter, is allowed to stay at court for the sake of Celia the daughter of Duke Fredrick. She falls in love with Orlando. Orlando is deprived of education and good upbringing by his elder brother Oliver. Oliver plans to murder Orlando. So he flees to the Forest of Arden with his faithful old servant Adam. Soon Rosalind is banished too, merely for being the daughter of the Duke Senior. She also flees to Arden accompanied by her cousin Celia and the fool Touchstone. Rosalind disguises herself as a young man named Ganymede and Celia as a shepherdess Aliena. Rosalind encounters Orlando who is desperately in love with Rosalind. Ganymede promises to cure him of his lovesickness by pretending to be that very Rosalind. The Duke Fredrick confiscates all the belongings of Oliver. Oliver, too comes to Forest of Arden Orlando, where Orlando saves him from a hungry lioness and a snake. Oliver feels ashamed for his evil behaviour. He decides to repent. He then falls in love with Celia. In the last act Rosalind reveals her true identity and marriage ceremony of the four pairs take place. At that time a messenger Jaques middle brother of Orlando and Oliver arrives with the news of Frederick's repentance. William, Audrey, Silvius, and Phebe the inhabitants of the forest and an

abundance of songs complement the play. The play is considered to be one of Shakespeare's great comedies.

### **1.2.2 List of Characters:**

#### **1. Orlando**

Orlando, hero of the comedy is the youngest son of Sir Rowland De Boys, courageous, gentle in nature, modest and tender, bears the knightly qualities, falls in love with Rosalind.

#### **2. Rosalind**

Rosalind, the daughter of Duke Senior Fredrick, cousin of Celia is the heroine of the play. One of Shakespeare's most delightful heroines, independent minded, strong-willed, good-hearted, and terribly clever, charmingly beautiful lady, innate resourceful under adverse condition, falls in love with Orlando

#### **3. Oliver**

Eldest son of Sir Rowland De Boys, brother of Orlando, villain of the play, repents at last and marries Celia.

#### **4. Duke Frederick**

Duke Fredrick is the usurper, Celia's father, Rosalind's uncle, and Duke Senior's younger brother. He is a selfish, whimsical and hot-tempered person, repents in the end and restores all estates and possessions to the rightful duke and other owners and goes with a sage to lead the life of a hermit.

#### **5. Amiens**

A lord attending the banished Duke. A man of sweet voice and loves singing. Songs given to him are good and simple but meaningful.

#### **6. Jaques**

A lord attending the banished Duke, a very melancholy fellow, follows the banished Duke into the Forest of Arden. He is the critic of the Duke, calls the Duke a greater usurper, who has usurped the land that belongs to the wild beasts, the only person who does not return to the civilized life.

## **7. Adam**

A servant to Oliver, he leaves his cruel master to follow Orlando into exile, offers all his savings to Orlando, an example of faithfulness in the world of intrigues and selfishness.

## **8. Touchstone**

A fool or court jester in Duke Frederick's court, accompanies Celia and Rosalind to the Forest of Arden, more than the average fool, exposes the follies of life through his satirical wit, courts Audrey and in the end is happily married to her.

## **9. Corin**

An old, gentle shepherd and a native of the forest of Arden, helps Rosalind and others to buy the pastoral land for shelter.

## **10. Silvius**

A shepherd, his job is not to tend the flocks, but to be livestock, adores Phebe and in the end takes her as his wife.

## **11. Celia**

Daughter of Duke Frederick and niece of Duke Senior, sister and inseparable friend of Rosalind, loyal kind, sympathetic and womanliness like Rosalind, practical enough to make provisions for their journey to the forest, quite as susceptible to love, e quickly falls in love with the reformed Oliver and marries him in the end.

## **12. Phebe**

Phebe a vain, coquettish shepherdess, fails to understand true love of Silvius, audacious enough to fall in love with Ganymede.

## **13. Audrey**

A country wench who keeps goats. She is unlikely object of Touchstone's passion.

Along with the other loving pairs, they are happily married in the end.



### 1.2.3 Check Your Progress

#### A. Multiple Choice Questions

1. *As You Like It* is a romantic comedy that belongs to the ..... phase of Shakespeare's dramatic career.  
a. first                      b. third                      c. second                      d. fourth
2. The comedy *As You like It* is based on the play *Rosalynde* (1590), a prose romance written by Thomas Lodge.  
a. Thomas Lodge                      b. Thomas Kyd  
c. Christopher Marlowe                      d. George Chapman
3. .... is the hero of the comedy *As You like It*.  
a. Oliver                      b. Jaques                      c. Orlando                      d. Ganymede
4. Phebe discards the love of .....  
a. Ganymede                      b. William                      c. Silvius                      d. Touchstone
5. The play *As You Like It* was first published in the First Folio of ....  
a. 1645                      b. 1623                      c. 1652                      d. 1665

#### B. Match the Pairs

##### A

- a. Phebe
- b. Celia
- c. Rosalind
- d. Audrey

##### B

- a. Oliver
- b. Orlando
- c. Touchstone
- d. Silvius

## **1.3 Plot of the Play**

### **1.3.1 Actwise Summary of *As You Like It***

#### **ACT-I**

##### **Scene i**

The opening scene introduces some characters, including the hero Orlando. It has been told that Sir Rowland de Boys have three sons Oliver, Jacques and Orlando. Orlando complains to his faithful old servant, Adam that Jacques has been sent by Oliver to study at a university and he is treated even worse than a beast of burden. Oliver appears on the stage. As Oliver is haughty and rough-tongued a hot quarrel takes place between the two, Adam tries to reconcile the two brothers. Orlando leaves the stage only when Oliver unwillingly promises to give him his legal share of patrimony. As soon as they depart a court wrestler, Charles arrives into the scene. Charles tells Oliver that Orlando has challenged him to fight before the Duke and that he does not wish to injure Orlando but he will be forced to do if Orlando persists in his challenge. In fact Oliver wishes to harm his brother for his rebellious attitude. So to get rid of Oliver he cleverly prejudices Charles's mind against Orlando and advises him to use foul means to destroy Orlando. Charles promises the same to Oliver and goes away.

##### **Scene ii**

Rosalind and Celia talk on the topics such as love and fortune. The court jester Touchstone joins them. He lightens the serious tone of their conversation. Le Beau informs them about the wrestling match in the court. He also describes the pathetic scene of how an old man has lost three sons who had come to challenge the Duke's wrestler. Rosalind and Celia accompany Le Beau to watch the wrestling match. Both the ladies and the Duke try to dissuade Orlando from his decision to fight with Charles. But Orlando doesn't pay heed to their advice. He fights with Charles and wins the match. As Sir Rowland is the enemy of the Duke, he is not happy with Orlando's Victory. Rosalind falls in love with Orlando and gifts him her necklace as a token of love. The duke is not only displeased by Orlando but by Rosalind also.

##### **Scene iii**

Rosalind talks with Celia about her love for Orlando. At that time the Duke comes and declares that Rosalind is no more wanted in the court and she is banished.

This is a great shock to both the sisters. They plan to leave the court without informing anyone. They plan to go disguised as a young hunter and his sister. They also take Touchstone along with them for his entertaining companionship. They feel that touchstone would be of immense help to them in their journey to the Forest of Arden.

## **ACT-II**

### **Scene-i**

This scene introduces us to the Forest of Arden. The exiled Duke has taken shelter in this forest. He is attended by his followers. The scene describes the ideal, poetic and arcadian life which this Duke is leading in the refreshing Nature. The Duke praises the overwhelming Nature which is free from the cruelty of courtly life. He gives an inspiring and interesting talk to his followers. One of the followers named Jaques is a melancholy fellow. He is disgusted by the rustic life.

The scene closes with the Duke proceeding to find out Jaques.

### **Scene-ii**

The Duke comes to know that Celia has also run away with Rosalind and Touchstone. He is angry and suspects that Oliver must be knowing where they have gone for, he is told that Orlando was praised by the two girls. The Duke is informed that Orlando has accompanied them. So, he sends a call to Oliver to enquire about the whereabouts of his brother Orlando.

### **Scene-iii**

In this scene, Adam the old servant of Orlando advises him to leave the house in order to save his life because he has come to know that Oliver is planning to burn the lodge where Orlando sleeps. Adam offers all his money to help his young master and also accompanies him. The two of them set off from the court in order to escape the evil intentions of treacherous Oliver.

### **Scene- iv**

In this scene Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone reach the Forest of Arden. They are disguised but completely exhausted and depressed due to the journey through the rough and thorny paths of the forest. However Touchstone tries to relieve their physical fatigue by his wit and delightful fancy. On the way they meet two

shepherds, Corin and Silvius. They come to know that Silvius is in madly in love with a shepherdess called Phebe. In the meantime Celia gets weak and wants some food and rest. Silvius's plight reminds Rosalind of her own passion for Orlando. Touchstone as usual makes fun of the passionate feeling of Silvius. Rosalind asks Touchstone to enquire if they could get food for money. Corin informs that his master is a miserly fellow and has decided to sell away his estate. Rosalind and Celia decide to buy the place. They ask Corin to help them to do this work.

#### **Scene-v**

This scene opens in the other part of the Forest of Arden where Jacques is seen in melancholy mood. Amiens is singing the praises of pastoral life. He sings of the value of quiet carefree life of the forest. Such idyllic life is available for anyone who has given his ambition and loves the company of Nature. Jacques does not agree with Amiens. He feels sad over these songs. Jacques adds a stanza of his own. In that he calls a man, who leaves wealth and ease and embraces hardship is an ass. In an indirect attack on the Duke he calls him a fool. Amiens informs him that the Duke wishes to see him but he refuses to meet him. Amiens leaves him to this melancholy and goes to announce that the feast is ready.

#### **Scene-vi**

Orlando and Adam are in the Forest of Arden. Old Adam is too tired to walk a step further. He requests Orlando to go ahead, leaving him where he is to die. Orlando loves his servant. He carries Adam to a shade under a tree, places him there and leaves in search of food. He feels that to provide food and rest to Adam is his responsibility.

#### **Scene-vii**

The Duke is looking for Jaques for they have not met for some time. A lord informs him that Jaques was at the very place a few minutes ago. He tells how he was pleased by a song. The Duke is surprised to know that Jaques was pleased and smiling. In the meantime Jacques meets the Duke. Jacques is in hilarious mood in spite of his usual gloom and melancholy, for he has met a fool. He loves the freedom of the fool. He asks to provide him a motley coat as he proposes to use his satire against anybody as a clown. He hopes to reform the world by his satiric comments. The Duke is doubtful of his ability to reform the world. But before he could say so clearly, a rude man enters with a drawn sword in his hand. This rude person is

Orlando. He shouts that no one should touch food until the hungry, needy are fed. The Duke agrees to Orlando's wish. He is surprised by this civility, He begs the Duke's pardon for his rudeness and admits that mistake was due to the experiences in the past days, which made him feel that the world is without any goodness, and gentleness. Here Jaques moralizes on life by singing a song. Orlando is invited to join them. He tells them of Adam his old servant who would die if gets no food. The Duke asks Orlando to bring Adam immediately. Orlando returns carrying Adam. The Duke welcomes them and invites them to join the food. To make the atmosphere easy the Duke requests Amiens for a song. Amiens sings a song comparing Man and Nature.

### **ACT-III**

#### **Scene-i**

Oliver is in front of Duke Fredrick. Fredrick asks him to find out his brother Orlando and bring him to the Court alive or dead. He gives him a period of one year. Till then all the land and property of Oliver is to be seized and if he fails, he must never return to the Dukedom. In fact Duke Fredrick would have executed Oliver for letting his brother escape but as he is a man of kind and gentle heart, he has spared his life.

#### **Scene-ii**

At the beginning of the scene Orlando is found pasting verses on trees and carving the name of Rosalind on the tree-trunks. All the poems, of course, are love poems and they are addressed to his beloved Rosalind. They praise her beauty, her bearing, her qualities her speaking, her voice etc. As Orlando leaves, Touchstone enters with Corin. Corin wants to know how touchstone liked the life of Shepherds. Touchstone confuses him by telling him at one and same time how it is good and how it is bad. Corin admits that his simple wit cannot face the wit of a court -man. Touchstone asks him if he was ever in the court. When Corin says no, Touchstone remarks that no court life means no education in manners. So Corin's manners ought to be wicked.

Rosalind appears there with a paper in hand. She reads aloud one of the poems written by Orlando. Touchstone finds it so says that he can go on like that endlessly. He even gives a specimen of his instant poetry. Celia comes there from other side. She has another poem addressed to Rosalind. Rosalind calls it an ordinary sermon.

She wants to talk in privacy and sends Touchstone and Corin away. Celia has seen the man pinning those verses on trees. She tells Rosalind that the man had a chain around his neck which Rosalind used to wear. Rosalind blushes but pretends that she does not understand Celia's words. She wants her to name him, and on hearing Orlando's name finds herself in a tight spot. There is her lover and surely he loves her. But how can she meet him as Rosalind with her male attire? Jacques and Orlando appear there. Both of them dislike each other but exchange greetings out of civility. Actually Jacques is looking for a fool. Orlando asks him to look for a fool in a pool.

Rosalind and Celia come forward from behind a big tree when Jacques departs. Rosalind is highly pleased on seeing Orlando. But being in disguise that is as Ganymede she cannot talk to him as a lover. She asks what time of the day it is and he replies there is no clock in the forest. Rosalind replies that it means there is no lover in the forest. Orlando claims that he is a lover and the poems are his writing. Rosalind refuses to believe him for she finds no signs of a lover in Orlando. When asked what those signs are, she explains that lean cheek, pale eyes, sulky appearance, untidiness in dress and make up are the signs of a man in love. She says that love is madness that needs psychological cure. She adds that if he is ill with love, she can cure him by administering a remedy. She asks him to imagine that Ganymede (disguised Rosalind) is his Rosalind and come to woo her every day. Orlando is not interested in her cures. But agrees to the proposal because by wooing Ganymede as his Rosalind he would keep her memory fresh and alive till they actually meet.

### **Scene-iii**

Touchstone's love for Audrey, an ignorant rustic girl has ripened fast and he is determined to marry her. He invites Sir Oliver Martext, the priest of the next village, to meet him here. Till the priest arrives Touchstone spends some time speaking with Audrey. But his witty talk is beyond the capacity of Audrey's understanding. Touchstone says that God has made her poetical. She doesn't understand "what is Poetical"? Audrey hates dishonesty, she is not fair, and she wishes God should at least make her chaste, honest and faithful. Jacques, who hears the conversation from behind a tree, enjoys it. Sir Martext arrives there. Touchstone wants him to marry them under a tree. Martext has no objection. He does not insist on going to church. But he insists that he would not marry them, if there is none to give the girl Audrey away. Touchstone refuses to take her as a gift and Martext would not proceed. Now

Jacques comes forward and says that he would give away Audrey. But he insists that they must be married in a church. Otherwise, it would not be a true marriage. Touchstone postpones his marriage and sends Martext away.

#### **Scene iv**

Rosalind disguised as Ganymede and Orlando decide to meet to practise wooing but Orlando fails to come. She is upset that Orlando did not come to meet with Ganymede. She becomes nervous and wants desperately to weep. Rosalind compares Orlando's hair to Judas who betrayed Christ. Celia says that Orlando's hair is browner than Judas's hair. Rosalind tries to convince herself that her lover is not a traitor. Corin enters and interrupts the women's conversation. He explains that the young shepherd, Silvius, whose complaints about the tribulations of love Rosalind and Celia witnessed earlier, has decided to woo and win Phoebe. Corin invites the women to see how a hopeless lover is trying to win over the love of scornful shepherdess Phebe. But he is insulted for that. Rosalind determines to do something more than to only watch. She plans to intervene in the affair.

#### **Scene-v**

Silvius -Phebe dialogue is nothing but torture to Silvius. Each of her sentence, addressed to him, has a sting. Silvius begs not to hate him and says that the hangman also begs the pardon of a prisoner to be executed and then hangs him. Phebe is very rude towards him. All this becomes unbearable not to Silvius but to Rosalind. Rosalind disguised as Ganymede comes forward and takes Phebe to task for treating Silvius so heartlessly. She advises Phebe to marry Silvius whose love is very true and she will never get a man better than Silvius. Rosalind becomes aware that Phebe has fallen in love with Ganymede her male disguise. So, she leaves warning Phebe to stop treating Silvius with disdain. After Rosalind has gone away Phebe sympathizes with Silvius, speaks in gentle words and requests him to take her taunting letter to the proud youth that is Ganymede. Silvius is eager to carry the letter for Phebe. But Phebe warns him not to expect any reward for his service.

### **ACT-IV**

#### **Scene-i**

Jacques is drawn by Rosalind's wit and looks. He wants to make friendship with her. But Rosalind is not interested because Jacques is a melancholy fellow. Jacques

explains that his melancholy is effect of his experiences in life and his travelling. Rosalind is surprised to know that travel has made Jacques melancholy.

Orlando comes there and on seeing him Jacques takes leave of Rosalind. Rosalind pretends to be angry with Orlando for being late. She refuses to talk to him. He asks her to forgive him and promises to be punctual. At first he says he is a little late. Rosalind retorts that it means he does not love his Rosalind. According to her a lover he or she awaits eagerly to meet the other and here Orlando is late by two hours and he is without remorse for that. Rosalind that is disguised Ganymede asks him to woo her. He wants to begin wooing by a kiss. But Rosalind does not allow him to do so. She tells him to talk about love and when his wooing is exhausted, she may allow him to kiss her.

Here Orlando expresses his genuine love for Rosalind and says that he would die if Rosalind rejects his love. After this talk Orlando leaves Rosalind as he has to attend the Duke. He promises to meet in two hours.

#### **SCENE-ii**

The Duke and his followers have hunted down a deer. They are in a mood to enjoy the feast. Jacques enquires who killed the deer. One of the Lord proudly comes forward but Jacques suggests in a sarcastic manner that the lord should be presented before the Duke. But the Duke like Victorious Roman General, the horns of the deer placed on his head in his honour. No one gives importance to his words. He sings a song related to the incident of the killing of the deer.

#### **SCENE-iii**

In spite of Rosalind's warning Orlando is late. Rosalind is worried and Celia gets a chance to tease her. At that Silvius arrives with a letter from Phebe for Ganymede. It is a love letter. Silvius is unaware of the content. Rosalind feels pity for Silvius. She reads Phebe's letter in such a way that it would injure Silvius the least. Silvius gets the meaning and gets ready to accept his fate. In reply Rosalind sends back a clear message to Phebe to accept the love of Silvius.

As Silvius leaves Oliver arrives on the scene. He is total stranger for Rosalind and Celia. But he enquires where Ganymede and Aliena live. He has come as a messenger of Orlando with a message for Ganymede whom he calls Rosalind. In fact



he himself is the cause of Orlando's delay. Oliver had Orlando's handkerchief soaked in blood. Rosalind demands an explanation of it. Oliver narrates the event.

Orlando left Ganymede with a promise to return in two hours. On his way to the Duke he saw a man in rags sleeping under a tree, His hair and beard were wildly grown. Orlando noticed that a serpent had coiled around the neck of the sleeping man. His hood was raised to sting the man. But on seeing Orlando the snake uncoiled itself and disappeared into the thick bushes. Behind the bushes was a hungry lion ready to pounce on the man. Orlando saw the danger and thought of saving the man. But when he looked at him closely he found that the man was his brother Oliver. He remembered his evil plans. So he decided not to save Oliver. But he could not resist his good instinct to save a man in danger. Orlando drew his sword and attacked the lioness. The fight woke Oliver. Oliver was shocked to see that Orlando had saved him though he had been cruel towards him. Orlando repented his behavior and begged pardon of Orlando. Both of them went to see the Duke. The Duke was pleased at Orlando's noble act. After that they went to the cave. Orlando fainted due to the blood Loss. Oliver brought him back to senses. Orlando asked him to carry the blood-soaked handkerchief to Rosalind and explain the cause of his failure to keep the promise.

Rosalind faints at the sight of blood handkerchief. Oliver says that some people cannot tolerate the sight of blood. When Rosalind recovers, she looks pale. But she does not admit that she had fainted. She wants Oliver to tell Orlando how she acted wonderfully. But Celia knows the truth.

Celia has heard about Oliver. She knows him as an evil person, she asks him if he is that same hateful man. Oliver admits that he is same man who had evil intentions towards his own brother. But his brothers good act has changed him and he has realized the value of brotherly love. Oliver and Celia help Rosalind to go in the house. The effect of this meet is that Celia falls in love with Oliver at first sight. Oliver too likes Celia.

## **ACT- V**

### **Scene-i**

Audrey is eager to get married with Touchstone and become a lady of the court. She feels that Touchstone has lost the chance by sending Martext away. According to her he was a good priest. But Touchstone disagrees and calls him a vile man. In the

meantime, Touchstone comes to know about a shepherd named William who claims to marry Audrey. But Audrey is not interested in him. Coincidentally William appears there and Touchstone baffles him by number of questions and argument. Finally Touchstone threatens to kill him if he does not give up the thought of Audrey. William leaves hastily. Touchstone and Audrey decide to get married the next morning.

### **Scene-ii**

Oliver tells Orlando that he and Alena have fallen in love with each other at the first sight. He wishes to get married the next morning. Oliver also tells Orlando about his decision to hand over all the belongings to Orlando and live a life of a shepherd in the forest with Aliena. Orlando congratulates his brother for his success in love and promises to make necessary preparations for the marriage and to bring the Duke for the ceremony. But he also feels bad of his own fate.

Orlando comes to meet Ganymede to continue his task of wooing Rosalind. He tells Rosalind that he is fed up with this fake love drama and yearns to meet real Rosalind. assumes the role of a skilled magician. She tells Orlando that she knows little magic which she had learned while working as an assistant of a real magician. If he really loves Roslind and has faith in her skill, she will fulfill his wish. She can bring real Rosalind to the forest and they can get married the next day.

Phebe and Silvius appear on the scene. Phebe is angry as Ganymede had disclosed her letter to Silvius. She retorts Phebe for not accepting the true love of Silvius. Phebe questions Silvius if he knows what is true love. Now Silvius declares his passion for Phebe, Phebe for Ganymede, Orlando for Rosalind and Rosalind for no woman. Finally Rosalind promises to all that each will be satisfied tomorrow. Orlando will get Rosalind Silvius would get his wish, Phebe marries Ganymede, if Ganymede marries any woman and if Phebe would not marry Ganymede , she would have Silvius as her man.

### **SCENE-iii**

As Touchstone and Audrey think of their marriage next day and as Audrey sees herself as the Court lady, two page-boys of the Duke arrive there. Touchstone welcomes them. They sit on his sides and straight away sing a song. Instead of admiring it, Touchstone finds faults with it and calls it out of tune and devoid as matter. He sends them away without rewarding for their trouble.

#### Scene iv

Rosalind reminds the Duke, that is her father of his promise, that if she (Ganymede) succeeds in bringing his daughter to the Forest of Arden, he would give her to Orlando. She also reminds Orlando to accept his Rosalind, if she really comes there. Turning to Phebe she says that she has promised to marry Ganymede and in case she refuses to do so, she would marry Silvius. All agree to abide by their promises and Rosalind leaves with Celia.

At that very moment Touchstone arrives there with Audrey. The sight of Touchstone makes Jaques happy and he introduces the fool to the Duke who has been a courtier. Touchstone offers to prove that he has seen court. He tells the Duke that he has danced as a courtier, complemented a lady, has been crafty with his friend, pleasant with his enemy, ruined three tailors, had four quarrels and has returned from the brink of the fifth. Touchstone says that the seventh cause stopped him from the fifth quarrel. Touchstone explains the six causes, they are: polite reply, mild joke, rude reply, sharp rebuke, provoking challenge, lie conditional, Lie direct. The seventh cause is to challenge for duel. Touchstone avoided it. Jaques again appeal to the Duke to take the fool.

Now the marriage time has come. Hymen, the god of marry the leads in Rosalind (now in her normal woman's costume) and Celia (now as Celia without her disguise). The Duke recognizes his daughter and welcomes her. He also welcomes his niece Celia. Phebe also to learns that the person she fell in love with was not boy but a disguised girl. She bids farewell to her love as she cannot marry a girl and accepts Silvius with a promise to love him. Four pairs of lovers are married in the forest that day by Hymen, who blesses them. The Duke blesses them too and orders for entertainment, where all the newly married couples would dance and sing. Hymen joins the joy by singing a song of blessings to all.

In addition to this joy, a stranger comes there with a message from Duke Frederick. He introduces himself as Jaques, the second son of Sir Rowland de Boys. That means he is the brother of Orlando Oliver and unknowingly but coincidentally he has brought a wonderful present for his married brothers.

His message is thus: Duke Frederick became uneasy and angry by the fact that all his important and valuable men were leaving the court and taking shelter in the Forest of Arden, where his deposed brother lived a contented life. So he proposed to

invade the forest, capture the senior Duke and put him to death. He collected a big army and started for Arden. When he reached the outskirts of the forest, he met a religious man. The discussions with the sage and the advice he gave changed his mind. From a cruel, selfish tyrant he was converted into a selfless, loving gentleman. He decided to give up powers and return the Dukedom to his brother from whom he had usurped it. He also has returned all the properties to the Lords, who accepted wiling banishment with the Duke. He has decided to stay with the sage and lead the remaining life in seclusion.

That was really a good news to all. All of them except melancholy Jaques accept it whole-heartedly. Jaques would not return to the court-life. He would rather seek Frederick and live with him in the cave vacated by the Senior Duke.

## **2. Analysis of the Play *As You like It***

*As You Like It* belongs to the second or middle period of Shakespeare's comedies. It is a typical Shakespearean comedy. The setting of the play is romantic. Most of the play takes place in the imaginary forest of Arden. *As You Like It* is the most popular play of Shakespeare. The pastoral background of display ensures its interest and popularity. The Play is a comedy of love. In it the main motive of love runs from the beginning to the end. There are four pairs of lovers in the play namely Rosalind and Orlando, Oliver and Celia, Phebe and Silvius, Touchstone and Audrey. All the four pairs are happily married at the end of the play. Cheerfulness has a strong influence on the play. It appeals to the audience. All the main characters of the play *As You Like It* are victims of a sorrowful destiny and yet all of them try to sustain their sorrows with something like cheerfulness and hope of better day to come. The Senior Duke a virtuous and simple soul is banished out of his rightful state by his own brother and forced to lead a life of extreme body suffering and pain in the forest. Similarly Orlando a young and noble man is also the victim of undesirable sorrows. He is denied the inheritance of his share in the family estate by the tyranny of his brother. Hence he is a forced to wander away from the society and seek refuge in the forest. Rosalind the heroine of the comedy is perhaps the most innocent of victims of misfortune in this play. Repentance and Reconciliation is provided in the final resolution of the plot of the play *As You Like It* . It may be described as an illustration of the principle that repentance and reconciliation are better than Vengeance and Retribution. The principle of reconciliation is worked out in a different way. Oliver, Orlando's elder brother becomes aware of brotherly love

when Orlando saves him from the clutches of hungry lioness. He rents and hands over everything to Orlando. Duke Fredrick sets towards forest of Arden to crush his elder brother. But he meets a holy man. The holy man advises him not to proceed and to repent his evils. Duke Fredrick repents by returning the dukedom to the rightful duke. The plot of *As You Like It* has been borrowed from the novel of Thomas Lodge. But Shakespeare's care and skill fuses the different elements of his stories into an organic whole. The play is made up not of one action but many actions. There is a main plot, a sub plot and many episodes. The pastoral setting dominates the play. The greater part of the play is associated with the forest. The pastoral life stands in contrast with the courtly life and manners. The pastoral setting represents pure, honest and peaceful life whereas the courtly life represents life full of jealousy, intrigues and plots. But these settings are far removed from reality. The settings in romantic comedies are imaginary, fanciful and ideal. The ideal and poetic version of the pastoral setting is represented in the songs. These songs provide a natural and forceful expression to the spirit of the pastoral setting. The spirit of pastoral has the power that inspires people to escape from humdrum routine of artificial life. Shakespeare has here painted realistic and vivid picture of simple, natural mode of life bright and fresh. Refreshingly, earthly smell of woods is everywhere.

The play is full of mirth and jollity. It is sweet and merry. Its aim is not satiric but to create laughter, more laughter and nothing but laughter. The foolery of Touchstone, the wit of Rosalind, the wooing of Audrey, the Duke Senior's followers fleeing time singing and dancing, the mock love play of Ganymede and Orlando etc contribute to the merry atmosphere of the play. The play ends with ringing of marriage bells.

### 1.3.2 Check Your Progress

1. The play *As You Like It* is written by .....
  - a) William Shakespeare.
  - b) Charles Lamb.
  - c) Christopher Marlowe.
  - d) R. B. Sheridan.
2. The play *As You Like It* is a.....
  - a) Tragedy.
  - b) Comedy.
  - c) Farce.
  - d) Historical play.

3. The name of the person who usurped the dukedom of his elder brother is .....  
a) Frederick.                  b) Orlando.                  c) Oliver.                  d) Orsino.
4. The lawful Duke was the usurper's .....  
a) father.                                  b) younger brother.  
c) elder brother.                          d) cousin.
- 5) The banished Duke went to live in.....  
a) the Birnam woods.                      b) the Forest of Arden.  
c) Africa.                                  d) England.
- 6) The banished Duke went to the forest with his .....  
a) faithful followers.                      b) daughter  
c) wife.                                  d) younger brother.
- 7) The wrestling match was won by .....  
a) Orlando.                                  b) Oliver.  
c) the practiced wrestler.                  d) Frederick.
- 8) Orlando was the son of .....  
a) Duke Frederick.                      b) Sir Rowland.  
c) Oliver.                                  d) the banished Duke.
- 9) Sir Rowland was the banished Duke's .....  
a) elder brother.                      b) younger brother.  
c) cousin                                  d) friend.
- 10) Frederick was angry at the sight of Orlando because.....  
a) he was jealous of Orlando.  
b) Orlando once attacked the Duke.  
c) it reminded him of the banished Duke's many friends.  
d) Orlando was ugly.



powerful. It is this which drives him seeking after her like a madman in the forest of Arden. He is so thoroughly saturated with the sentiment of true love that he goes on doing things which appear insane and whimsical.

Orlando is true lover. His love for Rosalind is spontaneous, firm and faithful. His passion for Rosalind is pure and powerful. His passion drives him like a madman to seek Rosalind in the Forest of Arden. His steadfastness and loyalty in love makes him do many absurd things. His writing verses and cutting words on the barks of trees reveal the state of his mind and his genuine passion.

Thus Orlando the hero of *As You Like It*, the most popular of Shakespeare's heroes has many more qualities than those of a popular lover. He is such a piece of young manhood that is brave, gentle, modest and magnanimous.

## **2. Rosalind**

Rosalind, the daughter of Duke Senior Fedrick and cousin of Celia is the heroine of the play. She is considered as one of Shakespeare's most delightful heroines,. She is independent minded, strong-willed, good-hearted, and terribly clever She is charmingly beautiful lady. The beauty and grace of her personality attracts everyone. So Orlando falls in love with her at the first sight. Rosalind's love for Orlando is also firm and faithful. When Orlando defeats the court wrestler Charles she gifts him her necklace as a token of love.

Innate resourcefulness under adverse condition is a praise worthy trait found in Rosalind. As soon as she is banished by her uncle, she decides to go the Forest of Arden. She disguises herself as Ganymede—a handsome young man—her sister Celia as Aliena and plans to take the court fool Touchstone along with them for entertainment. In the forest with the help of Corin she manages to buy the pastoral land. Rosalind is witty and humorous. Her sense of humour is exhibited when she talks with Orlando. She takes the advantage of the Orlando's ignorance for the purpose of her own enjoyment of the situation. Rosalind uses her wit and humour with perfect mastery and subtlety. She offers herself as a tutor in the ways of love to her beloved Orlando, Rosalind's talents and charms are on full display. Of all the characters in the play only Rosalind is fully aware of the foolishness *and* the delights of romantic love. She teaches those around her to think, feel, and love better than they have previously. She is the leader of the plot and finally the resolution of the lovers is brought about through her.



### **3. Oliver**

Oliver in *As You Like It* has been portrayed as a villain, He is such mean fellow who plots against the life of his own brother. He is a coward, envious, bragging and intriguing. No human sentiment, no fraternal feeling stands in the way of his villainy. Villainy is deep-rooted in his temperament. He uses his intelligence for evil purpose. He is jealous of Orlando's popularity and goodness. So plots and intrigues to take the life of his brother, Orlando. He is cunning at the same time. Instead of dissuading Orlando from the challenge to fight with Charles, he instigates Charles to use foul means to crush Orlando in order to grab his share of the paternal estate. Oliver is a great hypocrite.

But he has to pay for his immoral behaviour. His estate has been confiscated by the officers of the Duke. He is forced to go in exile. While wandering in the forest, poverty and hunger makes him realize the insecurity of life. When Orlando saves his life from the hungry lioness, he feels ashamed for his behaviour. As repentance for his wrong doings he hands over all the Parental estate to Orlando and plans to live a simple life of a shepherd in the forest of Arden. At the end of the play he reconciles with Orlando, and marries Celia. Thus, it is seen that Oliver's villainy carries him to a point where it brings a moral shock from which he survives as a reformed character. Through his character it is exemplified that repentance and forgiveness are better than vengeance and retribution.

### **4. Duke Frederick**

Duke Fredrick is the usurper, Celia's father, Rosalind's uncle, and Duke Senior's younger brother. He is a selfish, whimsical and hot tempered person, who does what he wills. In the end he repents and restores all estates and possessions to the rightful duke and other owners and goes with a sage to lead the life of a hermit.

### **5. Amiens**

A lord attending the banished Duke. A man of sweet voice and loves singing. Songs given to him are good and simple but meaningful.

### **6. Jaques**

A lord attending the banished Duke and a very melancholy fellow he has followed the banished Duke into the Forest of Arden. He is the critic of the Duke and his life. He calls the Duke a greater usurper, who has usurped the land that belongs to

the wild beasts. He tells Rosalind that his melancholy is affected. He is the only person who does not return to the civilized life.

#### **7. Adam**

A servant to Oliver, he leaves his cruel master to follow Orlando into exile, asking nothing more than to be a servant. He offers all his savings to Orlando. He is an example of faithfulness in the world of intrigues and selfishness.

#### **8. Touchstone**

A fool or court jester in Duke Frederick's court. He leaves with Celia and Rosalind when they flee to the Forest of Arden. He is more, however, than the average fool, and through his satirical wit exposes the follies of life. He courts Audrey and in the end is happily married to her. His wit and resourcefulness with language add a lot of humour in the play. His speeches are worth studying and comparing with the comments of Jaques.

#### **9. Corin**

An old, gentle shepherd and a native of the forest. On the point of losing his job, he meets Rosalind and others and they also find shelter in the unknown forest because of him.

#### **10. Silvius**

A shepherd, unlike Corin, patterned after those of pastoral romances. He knows little of livestock, and his job is not to tend the flocks, but to be livestock. He adores Phebe and in the end takes her as his wife.

#### **11. Celia**

Daughter of Duke Frederick and niece of Duke Senior. She is inseparable friend of Rosalind, loyal even to the extent leaving her father and the court to be with her in the Forest of Arden. Many of her qualities, such as kindness, sympathy and womanliness, are like Rosalind. But she lacks Rosalind's flow of spirits and seems a quieter personality. She is practical enough to make provisions for their journey to the forest. She is quite as susceptible to love, as shown when she quickly falls in love with the reformed Oliver and marries him in the end.

#### **12. Phebe**

Phebe is a vain, coquettish shepherdess. She fails to understand true love. She doesn't care for the pain she inflicts by abusing Silvius, who is in love with her.

On the contrary she is audacious enough to fall in love with Ganymede, write a love letter to the new lover and send it heartlessly to him through Slivius. However in the end she marries Silvius.

### **13 . Audrey**

A country wench who keeps goats. She is unlikely object of Touchstone's passion.

Along with the other loving pairs, they are happily married in the end of the play.

## **1.5 Major Themes**

### **1. *As You Like It* as a Romantic Comedy**

Romantic Comedy as part of dramatic literature flourished and developed during the Elizabethan period. It is combination of the romantic and comic elements. The romantic elements delight, thrill, and appeal the heart whereas the comic elements make the audience laugh. Romantic Comedy also appeals the imagination. It is emotion-based providing a sense of humour. Generally, this type of drama ends on a happy note uniting the couples.

*As You Like It* is Shakespeare's happiest comedy. Characteristically, it is a romantic comedy. In the play, no one suffers intensely, it has no tragic element, it is full of comic and lively spirit. Characters like Touchstone and Jaques without any indirect intention provide the best of comic elements to the play. The elements of romance and comedy have been blended together by Shakespeare. The only feature common between them is love. Love reigns supreme in the comedies of Shakespeare. The basic recognition underlying Shakespeare's golden comedies is love that is transformed into the multiple marriages at the end. The love between Rosalind and Orlando is real and genuine. There are four couples in love in the play. A suitable background and congenial atmosphere is created in the play for the development of the love. As there are no obstacles in the forest of Arden the love runs smooth. Orlando writes poems on the bark of trees in praise of his sweetheart, Rosalind, and hangs them on the trees. And Rosalind teaches him how to woo. More over music being the food of love, there are so many lovely lyrics sung by Amiens. So, there is everything romantic in a play. There is love story, the distance of time and space, a heroine and a hero, and a fool, and magic atmosphere and songs.

The world of Romantic Comedy is a lovelier world of ideal atmosphere different from the actual world. In *As You Like It* the romantic elements transport us to a land of ideal habitation. The Forest of Arden creates an atmosphere suitable for love and romance. It is the place where the love between Rosalind and Orlando, Oliver and Celia, Touchstone and Audrey, prosper.

As in a Romantic Comedy, all the couples are happily married life. The separated lovers are united at the end of the play. All the loose threads are finally connected in the romantic bosom of the Forest of Arden. In this way, *As You Like It* can be called a romantic comedy.

## **2. *As You Like It* as a Pastoral Play**

A Pastoral drama or poem is a literary genre which deals with the characters belong to rustic life, preferably life of shepherds and shepherdess who dwell in the idyllic surroundings and lead a happy and peaceful life. The Forest of Arden forms the backdrop of the play. The setting of rural or rustic life makes the play pastoral. The play has twenty-two scenes in all. Six of them are located in and around the palace of Duke Frederick. The other sixteen are in different parts of The Forest of Arden. Most of the actions in the play take place in the Forest of Arden. The spirit of pastoral bliss is principally communicated through the shifting scenes of the Forest of Arden with its brooks and trees, its sheep-cotes, shepherds, its sylvan retreats and rural setting.

The songs in the play have a major contribution in making the play pastoral. The catching charm and cheer in the songs convey the impression of pastoral serenity. The songs like “Under the Greenwood Tree” provide a natural and forceful expression to the spirit of pastoral theme of the play. The pastoral bliss makes the setting free from ills of human nature.

The banished Duke and his followers, Rosalind, Celia, Orlando and Oliver go to the Forest of Arden but the true natives of the forest: rustic folk, shepherds and shepherdess with their flocks of sheep, pastures fresh and green make the play pastoral. These characters are Corin, Silvius, Phebe, Audrey, William and Sir Oliver Martext.

In the forest, Duke Senior as well as his followers love the life in the forest. After repenting for their wrong doings and evils Duke Fredrick and Oliver also decide to live in the forest. Shakespeare uses the simplicity of the pastoral world to

fit the primary emotion of love and comedy in its elementary mood. *As You Like It* is a dramatic presentation of a pastoral world.

### **3. Theme of Love in *As You Like It***

The comedy of *As You Like It*, the most popular play of Shakespeare is a comedy of love. It is observed that the main motive of love runs from the beginning of the play till the end. Love seems to be the ruling deity of the play. Shakespeare is more interested in love between a young man and a young woman. But he has not disregarded the other aspects of love, like love between two friends, parents and children, sisters, brothers, master and servant and so on. As far as the youthful love is concerned love at the first sight dominates his comedy. There are four pairs of lovers in *As You like It* and in each case, it is invariably love at the first sight. The pairs are namely Orlando and Rosalind, Oliver and Celia, Touchstone and Audrey, Silvius and Phebe. The love forms the principal theme of the play. Such conception of love is romantic one, and it has been freely employed in all literature in fiction and drama alike. Shakespeare has employed a convention which was favourite with the romantic writers and has employed it for no less than four pairs of lovers two from higher and two from lower class of society. But in addition to it we see devoted love of Adam for Orlando, the genuine sisterly love between Rosalind and Celia, love as devotion again in the lords for the banished Duke and also of Touchstone.

The journey of love in a Shakespearean comedy is not smooth. Love is tested. There are separations, pangs, difficulties, problems etc. These all are found in the case of Orlando and Rosalind.

Songs and music are said to be the diet of the lovers. There are songs in nearly every comedy of Shakespeare. But this factor dominates in *As you Like It*. In this play there is shower of songs coming from Amiens, Orlando, Jacques and even Touchstone. Most of them add to the effect of romance in their own way

### **4. Theme of Repentance and Reconcile.**

The theme of repentance and reconciliation is depicted in the final scene of the play. It may be described as an illustration of the principle that repentance and reconciliation is better than vengeance and retribution.

Oliver the elder brother of Orlando plans to murder Orlando to grab his share in the parental estate. Adam the faithful servant of Orlando informs him about Oliver's

conspiracy. So both of them flee to the Forest of Arden. Accidentally Orlando sees a man in rags sleeping under a tree. A snake is coiled around his neck and a hungry lioness is awaiting to pounce on him. Orlando recognizes that the man is none other than his cruel brother Oliver. For a moment he decides to leave him on his fate. But the innate goodness in Orlando forces him to risk his own life by fighting with the lioness. He saves Oliver from the clutches of death. This unexpected return of good for evil overpowers villain like Oliver who understand the value of brotherly love and from that moment becomes a good character and is married to Celia the daughter of the usurping Duke. He hands over everything to Orlando and decides to live a simple life in the forest.

In the same way the villainous Duke deprived his elder brother of his legitimate estate and banished him into exile, starts to crush his elder brother in the Forest of Arden because he feels that his life is unsafe as long as his brother is living. On his way he meets a holy man who advises him not to proceed against his brother and to repent his evils. The holy man's advice changes the vicious Duke from a cruel, selfish tyrant into a selfless, loving gentlemen. He decides to give up the powers and return the Dukedom to his elder brother from whom he has usurped it. He also returns all the properties to the lords who accepted willing banishment with the Duke and decides to stay with the sage and lead the remaining life in seclusion.

The repentance and reconciliation reveal the absolute faith in the essential goodness of human nature and in the final overthrow of evil by good.

## **1.6 Short Notes**

### **1. The Forest of Arden**

In the play *As You Like It* the dramatist takes the spectator to the imaginary Forest of Arden where tropical trees like Olive and animals like lioness live side by side with western deers, sheep and shepherds. The play has twenty- two scenes in all. Six of them are located in and around the palace of Duke Frederick. The other sixteen are in different parts of The Forest of Arden. .

The Forest of Arden is not described in detail by Shakespeare. The references to it, scattered throughout the play. The oaks with roots peep out of the ground. Trees are covered with moss. The water of gentle brooks is flowing gently and clearly. The

shadowy glades, thick brambles and hawthorns, hollow caves, merry-throated birds, serpents, lions, deers etc.

The rustic shepherd live a slow, timeless life without activities. The people from the Court of Duke Frederick become a part of the forest living a carefree, contented life of little action and a lot of fun, joy. Arden is, thus, a mixture of the imaginary and the real. The native people of the forest are simple rustics whose main occupation is to tend sheep for wool and food. They have their own beliefs and superstitions. They are free from selfishness, jealousy, intrigue and other vices of the Court life. There is no evil except what the nature offers in the shape of “winter and rough weather”.

The Forest of Arden provides a pastoral, idyllic backdrop to the play. It is quiet, charming and beautiful place ideal for love. The forest of Arden provides an ideal setting for romance.

## **2. Humour in the play *As You Like It***

Shakespeare is one of the greatest humorists in English literature. The humour presented in three-fold manner forms the most interesting and prominent feature of the comedy. The action of Rosalind, Touchstone and Jaques creates humorous situation in the play. The humour represented by Rosalind is sprightly, natural and healthy. The humour is spontaneous and unsophisticated it arises from her gay and sprightly character. Rosalind's sense of comic is human and kindly. Her laughter does not hurt or make one feel this disdained. There is no bitterness or scorn in her laughter. The humour helps her to remain cheerful and gay in all adverse conditions. Touchstone's humour is professional artificial and he has consciously adopted the motive to unmask the folly and expose human absurdism. Touch stone is a court fool. He is well aware of his limitations while offending anyone. Touchstone's humour has a satirical tone. Jaques humour is in contrast to that of Rosalind. It has a melancholic tone that takes him to extreme. The humour of Jaques is the result of his life wasted in dissipation and and the life that has been a total failure. His humour displays his deep sensitivities and discontent with this world. He is disillusioned with this world so anything witty and humorous he utters; it comes out in a tiresome manner.

### 3. Setting of Play *As You Like It*

Shakespeare's *As You Like It* as a representative play of the Elizabethan times is set in 16th century England. Its setting holds a mirror to the Elizabethan mode of living. The primary two atmospheres of the play are courtly England and a more ideal, the Forest of Arden.

The play begins with Orlando who is facing unjust treatment from Oliver. The incident when Orlando surprises Oliver by defeating Charles in the wrestling match shows the most popular sports setting of Elizabethan times. The music, songs and the tendency to disguise were intrinsic part of Elizabethan social life. Geographically, the play is set in Arden, Warwickshire. The Forest of Arden is set against the courtly life. It provides a foil to the ills found in court.

Duke Senior is banished into the Forest by Frederick, his brother. He learns to love the forest as something honest than the flattering nature of the court. The setting of forest can be imagined from what Charles said regarding Duke Senior's life in the forest that "*they live like the old Robin Hood of England.*" The Forest of Arden is a pastoral setting. Arden is probably a combined word created from Arcadia and Eden. Arcadia means an earthly paradise while Eden is the biblical one. Shakespeare adopted the pastoral as a chance to deal both humorously and seriously with his two themes of brotherly betrayal and doting love. Indeed, the play has more songs in it than any other Shakespearian drama, a sign that Shakespeare enjoyed the pastoral genre he was using for the play. The forest of Arden where the characters all end up, turns out to be very similar to other forests: it causes fear through the wild animals but provides the right atmosphere for healing to occur.

### 4. Significance of the title of *As You Like It*

All the works of William Shakespeare bear appropriate titles. The title *As You Like It* is also significant and apt to the content and development of the play.

Shakespeare was a genius who borrowed the elements from others and turned it into something appreciating by his contemporary audience. He writes it in such a way and it feels like saying to the audience that the play is exactly "*as you like it.*" *As You Like it* is a fantastic romantic comedy. The title of the play is very suggestive. In general people like something good and the play *As You Like It* fulfils the demand of the people.



The play begins with an unjust brother Oliver who plans to get rid of his own youngest brother for the sake of share in family fortune and an unlawful Duke Frederick who banished his brother Duke Senior the lawful Duke from the Dukedom.

The Duke Senior and his followers go to forest of Arden to seek a peaceful life. Similarly Orlando also flees to forest of Arden to save himself from his brother's evil plans. Rosalind the daughter of banished Duke is also asked to leave the court. Celia the daughter of Duke Frederick and Rosalind along with Touchstone decide to go to the forest of Arden. Rosalind disguises herself as young lad Ganymede and Celia as Aliena a shepherdess. Before going to forest of Arden Rosalind and Orlando had fallen in love with each other but they were not able to express it to each other.

Hence all the major characters are in the Forest of Arden where everything is away from the evil of society. Here Touchstone falls in love with Audrey. There is a shepherd pair Silvius and Phebe. But Phebe is adamant and is not ready to accept Silvius love. Instead, she wants Ganymede as her husband. Later on Oliver and the Duke Frederick repents by renouncing everything and gives it to Duke Senior while Oliver accepts brotherly love and returns the parental Estate to Orlando. Celia falls in love with reformed Oliver and on being disclosure of Ganymede's reality Phebe is ready to marry Silvius. In the end all the four pairs are happily married. The evil characters are reformed and turn good. So, the play is a very cheerful play, full of light comedies. The audience like music. It is provided through several songs throughout the play. In the same way stories are provided generously. The main love story is the affair between Rosalind and Orlando, but even Touchstone has his love story. There is a combination of love and comedy. All sorts of funny dialogue and comical situations make the audience laugh. The play is quite adventurous when we see Rosalind and Celia in danger, Orlando is in danger etc. Life in a forest is in itself adventurous. Happy endings are always a welcome and Shakespeare wraps up his complex story with happy endings for all concerned. The title of the play suggests this nature of that it is exactly the way we like it.

##### **5. Significance of the Songs:**

The Elizabethans loved music. Shakespeare also loved music too. Moreover, Music is considered as the food of love, Therefore Shakespeare has introduced songs in *As You Like It*. The play is one of his happiest and romantic comedy. So it becomes essential to introduce songs in the play. The theme of love dominates the play. The

songs create an atmosphere which helps the theme of love to run smoothly and help the progress of the action. The songs also provide a diversion for the audience or the readers from the tense situation and thus provide them relief. *As You Like It* has many songs. The love for music in the play is so intense that even Jaques begins to sing ‘Ducdame, Ducdame, Ducdcime.’ The songs enhance the lyrical quality of the play. The first is “Under the green wood tree. This song is sung by Amiens. It strikes the keynote of the life of idyllic simplicity and uninterrupted freedom in the Forest of Arden. It portrays the golden age in which men were lived their lives carefree. The second song is ‘Blow, blow, thou winter wind’. This song is also sung by Amiens. It contrasts between the idyllic beauty and innocence of nature with the ingratitude of man. It expresses how persons forget the little unremembered acts of kindness and of love. The cold wind may be biting and its sting may be sharp, but it does never deceive. The third song strikes a humorous and realistic note. The horns of the deer provide an ancient joke about the cuckolds who wear horns because their wives were unchaste. The fourth song is artificial. It is sung by the mythological figure of Hymen. Thus these songs create a romantic atmosphere and make the play cheerful. They are the soul of comedy and love. They are the loveliest lyrics. They possess divine clarity, simplicity and sweetness. Some of them are very touching. They have the sweetness of the singing birds and rhythm of the flowing streams.

## 1.7 Summary

This unit gives in detail analysis of William Shakespeare’s play *As You Like It*. The students will come to know about the life and works of Shakespeare. They will study the play act wise, characters, various themes, and aspects depicted in the play

## 1.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 1.1.3 Check Your Progress:

1. c. eight
2. D. 26
- 3.a. 1598
4. b. 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1616
5. b. The Globe Theatre
6. A. The two Noble Kinsmen
7. A. romantic comedy
8. a. 1600

### 1.2.3 Check Your Progress:

- A 1. c. second
2. b. Thomas Lodge
3. c. Orlando

4. C. Silviu      5. B. 1623

B. 1. a-d      2. b-a      3. c-b      4. d-c

### 1.3.2 Check Your progress

1. a) William Shakespeare
2. b) Comedy
3. a) Frederick
4. b) younger brother.
5. b) the Forest of Arden.
6. a) faithful followers.
7. a) Orlando
8. b) Sir Rowland
9. d) friend.
10. c) it reminded him of Orlando's father faithful to Senior Duke
11. d) assist Rosalind to the Forest of Arden.
12. b) country lad

## 1.9 Exercises

### A. Answer the following questions in about 450-500 words.

1. Discuss in detail the development of the plot of the play *As You Like it*.
2. *As You Like It* is Shakespeare's popular romantic comedy. Elaborate
3. Discuss in detail the theme of love in *As You Like It*.
4. Account for the appropriateness in the title "*As You Like It*"
5. Discuss in detail the song "All The World's a Stage".
6. Write in detail note on Repentance and Reconciliation in the play *As You Like it*.

### B. Write short notes in about 300-350 word.

1. The Forest of Arden
2. The character of Orlando
3. Ganymede and Orlando
4. Character-sketch of Rosalind
5. Humour in *As You Like It*

6. The Pastoral Setting of *As You Like It*
7. The relationships between Rosalind and Celia

### **1.10 Books for References:**

Shakespeare, William, (1993). *As You Like It*. UK: Washington Square Press.

Prof. Apte V. G., (2005). (Ed) *Shakespeare's As You Like It*. Kolhapur: Phadke Prakashan.

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Unit-2

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)  
*Much Ado About Nothing* (1598)

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**Contents**

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
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  - 2.3.1 Check Your Progress
- 2.4 Themes, Style and Other Aspects in *Much Ado About Nothing*
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 2.7 Exercises
- 2.8 Further Readings

**2.0 Objectives:**

After completing the study of this unit, you will

- know about Shakespearean comedy
- know the plot summary of the play *Much Ado About Nothing*
- learn about the characters in *Much Ado About Nothing*
- learn the themes, style and other aspects in *Much Ado About Nothing*
- be able to answer the questions on the play *Much Ado About Nothing*

**2.1 Introduction:**

Scholars agree that *Much Ado about Nothing* was written and first performed sometime between late 1598 and 1599. Shakespeare's play, *Much Ado about Nothing*, has been described as a comedy which, despite its surface gaiety and occasional slapstick comedy, is also serious and even profound in its implications. It

has also been considered an enjoyable but problematic play. Assessments of it have varied, but most commentators agree that *Much Ado about Nothing* is a comedy of manners – a play that gently pokes fun at the manners and conventions of an aristocratic, highly sophisticated society. True to this form, *Much Ado about Nothing* features the war of the sexes, instances of eavesdropping, mistaken identities, misunderstood communications, and a tangle of subplots all ending in the pairing off of marriage-able couples, the downfall of a scheming villain, and the happiness of a wedding dance. Many readers of Shakespeare's works today would probably agree that *Much Ado about Nothing* is one of the foremost comedies of manners in Western literature, one that speaks with wisdom about humanity.

This unit presents the detailed summary of Shakespeare's famous comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*, the analysis of the characters in the play and the critical commentary on the themes, motifs and symbols used in the play.

## **2.2 Plot Summary of the play *Much Ado About Nothing*:**

### ***Act I, Scene i***

*Much Ado about Nothing* opens in Messina, Italy. Leonato, the governor of the town, is with his daughter Hero, and Beatrice, his niece. A messenger arrives, telling Leonato that Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon, an old friend of the governor's, is coming back from an unnamed war. With Don Pedro is Count Claudio, a young lord from Florence. Signior Benedick of Padua is also in the group of returning soldiers.

When Beatrice hears the name of Benedick, she mocks him and everything the messenger says about Benedick. Leonato explains that there is a war of wits between his niece and Benedick.

The prince enters with his men and greets Leonato. Benedick and Beatrice exchange witty barbs, not wasting any time with niceties. Leonato invites the men to spend the month at his estate. As the men enter the grounds, Don John the Bastard, an illegitimate brother of the prince, appears. There is tension between Don John and Don Pedro, the prince, but Leonato invites Don John to stay with him, hoping to resolve the strained feelings between the brothers.

Claudio mentions to Benedick that he is attracted to Hero, Leonato's daughter. Benedick makes fun of Claudio for falling in love and considering marriage. Benedick claims that marriage is to be disdained. Women are for entertainment, not

love. When Don Pedro, the prince, learns that Claudio is in love, he offers to woo Hero for Claudio and then gain permission from Leonato for Hero's hand.

### *Act I, Scene ii*

Leonato's brother has overheard the conversation between Don Pedro and Claudio and tells Leonato to prepare to answer the prince and agree to give Claudio Hero's hand. Leonato goes to Hero and prepares her for the proposal, telling her to accept it.

### *Act I, Scene iii*

Don John, the prince's illegitimate brother, also hears of this plan. He decides to set up a deception that will wreak havoc with Claudio's intentions. Don John is jealous of Don Pedro's attention to Claudio. Don John schemes with Borachio and Conrade, two men who arrived at Leonato's place with Don John.

### *Act II, Scene i*

Beatrice tries to imagine the best man who could possibly exist on earth. She takes part of one man and places it on another, trying to conjure someone she might be interested in marrying. Then she drops the subject, stating that she will never marry.

Meanwhile, Leonato counsels his daughter, telling her to listen carefully to what the prince is about to say to her. Don Pedro approaches Hero, and they leave the scene, taking a walk so they can talk to one another. While they walk, the other characters in the play dance, their faces masked. Beatrice ends up dancing with Benedick. It is not clear if she knows it is he, but she tells him that Benedick is a fool. Benedick is offended, but he does not unmask himself or reveal his identity.

Don John approaches Claudio and pretends he does not recognize him. Instead, he asks if Claudio is Benedick. Claudio tells him that he is. Don John then tells Claudio/Benedick that he is concerned that Don Pedro has fallen in love with Hero and is, at that moment, asking for her hand in marriage. Don John says that if the prince goes through with it, he will be marrying beneath his social status. Of course, Claudio is furiously jealous, believing that Don Pedro has tricked him. Instead of wooing Hero for Claudio, he believes the prince is wooing her for himself. Claudio asks Don John how he knows Don Pedro is doing this. Don John says that the prince confessed his love of Hero to him. After Don John leaves, Claudio runs away.

Beatrice finds Claudio and brings him to Don Pedro, who tells Claudio that Hero has been won and Leonato has agreed to marriage. Hero will marry Claudio. Then the prince and Beatrice talk. Don Pedro tells Beatrice that she has a merry heart. He then asks if she would marry him. But Beatrice turns the prince down, stating that he is too fancy for her.

Beatrice and Benedick once again turn on each other, Benedick declaring that he wishes the prince would send him far away so that he will not have to deal with Beatrice any longer. Then Benedick and Beatrice leave, and the prince suggests that Leonato, Hero, and Claudio help him put together a plan to bring Benedick and Beatrice together.

### *Act II, Scene ii*

Don John and Borachio hatch another scheme to thwart the marriage of Hero and Claudio. Borachio, who has been having an affair with Margaret, one of Hero's ladies-in-waiting, says that he can be in Hero's bedroom at any time at night. He tells Don John to be at the window of Hero's bedroom that night and all Don John has to do is to make sure that Don Pedro and Claudio see what is happening at that window.

### *Act II, Scene iii*

Still in the afternoon, Benedick is sitting in the garden when he sees Don Pedro, Leonato, and Claudio approach. Benedick decides to hide. He wants nothing to do with any talk of love from Claudio. In an aside, Benedick states that he will never have anything to do with marriage.

The prince and the other men have seen Benedick and know that he is hiding from them. They call for a troubadour to sing a song about love. Then they talk about how they have heard Beatrice declare her love of Benedick. Benedick, of course, is caught completely off guard. But the more he hears, the better he likes it, however, he is not sure they are telling the truth. He listens to more and decides that if Leonato is saying that Beatrice loves him, then it must be true. Of course, Beatrice is in love with him, Benedick finally realizes. How could she not be?

The men leave and send Beatrice to fetch Benedick for dinner.



### *Act III, Scene i*

While Benedick waits, he tries to rationalize having changed his mind about marriage. When Beatrice appears, she is her usual self, but Benedick has changed. He does not argue with her. Instead, he keeps turning some of her barbs to his advantage, reading into them something pleasant, finding signs of love hidden inside them.

On her way back to the house, Beatrice overhears Hero and her other lady-in-waiting, Ursula, talking about how they have heard Benedick saying that he loves Beatrice. It does not take long for Beatrice to admit to herself that, in fact, she does love Benedick.

### *Act III, Scene ii*

Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato observe changes in Benedick. Benedick says it is because he has a toothache, but the other men say it is because he has fallen in love. They tease him about how he now brushes his hair and is concerned about his looks. Benedick, they say, is now even taking baths and wearing perfume. Benedick tires of the teasing and asks Leonato to walk with him, because Benedick has something to tell him.

Don John appears and asks to speak to the prince. Claudio is standing there, but Don John says he can stay as what he is about to say involves Claudio's future. Don John then tells them both that he has proof that Hero has been unfaithful to Claudio. She has been having an affair with another man. Don Pedro and Claudio cannot believe this. So Don John tells them that he can prove it to them. They are to meet him that night, under the window to Hero's bedroom. They will see for themselves that Hero is not worthy of marriage.

### *Act III, Scene iii*

The town's constable, Dogberry, a man of words that never quite make sense, appears. Dogberry is coming to Leonato's house to check on the watchmen, who are standing guard outside. Dogberry gives them orders, asks them questions, and corrects their answers, but none of his orders, questions, or corrections are rational. He tells them, for example, that they are to remain silent, which the watchmen interpret to mean that they can go to sleep, and which Dogberry appears to confirm. He also tells them to make sure that any drunkards are told to go home – unless they

do not respond to the orders. In that case the guards are to leave them lie where they find them. Before leaving, Dogberry warns the men to keep a close watch on Leonato's house because there is to be a big wedding in the morning.

While the watchmen stand guard and are about to fall asleep, Borachio and Conrade appear. The guards hide and listen, sensing that they are about to hear the details of a scheme. Borachio, unaware that anyone is listening, brags about how he has deceived Don Pedro and Claudio. Borachio has wooed Margaret, Hero's lady-in-waiting, in front of Hero's bedroom window, pretending he was wooing Hero.

Don Pedro and Claudio fell for the trick, believing that Hero was unfaithful. When the guards hear this, they arrest Borachio and Conrade.

### *Act III, Scene iv*

Hero, Margaret, and Beatrice get ready for Hero's wedding. When Beatrice says that she feels ill, Margaret teases Beatrice about being in love. Ursula, Hero's other lady-in-waiting, comes in and calls them out to the wedding. Everyone is waiting for them.

### *Act III, Scene v*

Dogberry comes to Leonato to tell him about Borachio and Conrade's scheme. But Dogberry is not very clear about what has happened, and Leonato loses all patience with him. Dogberry says that he has captured two scoundrels, but he fails to tell him what the scoundrels are accused of. Leonato tells Dogberry that he is very busy right then because of the wedding and that Dogberry should examine the men's story himself. A messenger then appears and tells Leonato that it is time to get to the church for his daughter's wedding.

### *Act IV, Scene i*

Everyone is standing before the friar, who is prepared to marry Claudio and Hero. When he asks Claudio: "You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady?," Claudio surprises everyone by responding, "no". Leonato tries to clarify the situation, insinuating that the friar has asked the question incorrectly. Leonato says: "To be married to her". In other words, the friar is marrying them. But Claudio is being married to Hero. The friar then turns his question to Hero, who responds with the appropriate answer, "I do". The tension is released for a few seconds, until the friar asks if either of them knows any reason why they should not be wed. Instead of

answering, Claudio turns to Hero and asks her directly if she knows any reason they should not be wed. No one understands why Claudio is acting so strangely, except, of course, Don Pedro. When Leonato asks why Claudio is acting the way he is, Claudio says that he will not be wed to an “approved wanton”.

At first, Leonato thinks that it was Claudio himself who was responsible for Hero’s losing her virginity, if that is, in fact, what has happened. Claudio denies this. Then he turns on Hero, saying that she is like “pampered animals/ That rage in savage sensuality”. Leonato turns to Don Pedro for help, but the prince stands by Claudio, declining to allow Claudio to be linked to “a common stale”, a reference to a low-class prostitute. Claudio then bids farewell to Hero, calling her “most foul, most fair”, exposing what he thinks of her now compared to what he used to think of her. Upon hearing this, Hero collapses.

Beatrice calls for help, but Leonato says that, for her shame, Hero is best left dead. If she does wake up from the faint, Leonato swears he will kill her.

The friar asks for their patience, stating that he thinks there is a scheme in all this. He suggests that they all pretend that Hero has, indeed, died. In this way, her shame will die with her, the truth will be found out, and then Hero can be reborn.

Everyone leaves but Benedick and Beatrice. Benedick professes his love of Beatrice. However, Beatrice is so overwrought about Hero that she has trouble returning Benedick’s love. Eventually she reveals that she too loves Benedick, but she wants him to swear his love to her not in words but in actions. When Benedick asks how he might do this, Beatrice tells him to kill Claudio. Benedick refuses. Beatrice says that Benedick’s refusal to do this kills her. She proclaims: “O, that I were a man!” (a line that is often quoted from this play). She goes on to say that if she were a man, she “would eat his [Claudio’s] heart in the marketplace”.

Benedick pleads with Beatrice to be reasonable. Beatrice says that Hero is “wronged, she is slandered, she is undone”. Benedick asks Beatrice to think deeply about this. Does she really believe that Count Claudio has done this to Hero? Beatrice replies, yes. If that is so, Benedick says, then he will challenge Claudio to a duel.

#### *Act IV, Scene ii*

In a courtroom-like scene, Dogberry and his assistant Verges appear before the town sexton. The watchmen, as well as Conrade and Bora-chio, are there. Dogberry stumbles through his accusation of crime against Conrade and Borachio, as the sexton tries to assist Dogberry in the examination procedures. Eventually the truth comes out. Then the sexton tells Dogberry and everyone else in the room that he has just heard that Don John has run away and that the marriage between Hero and Claudio has been called off, and Hero, lost in her grief, has died.

#### *Act V, Scene i*

Leonato is overwhelmed by grief and confusion. His brother tries to comfort him, but Leonato states that it is easy, when you are not the one that is stricken, to tell another to ease up on his pain. Then the two brothers see Don Pedro and Claudio and pursue them. Leonato accuses them of ruining Hero's good name. He tells them that he is not too old or lacking in energy to challenge them. Before leaving, the brothers say they will have their revenge.

Benedick appears. Don Pedro and Claudio are happy to see him. The prince is planning to leave with Claudio and assumes Benedick will be coming with them. Benedick says that because of what they have done to Hero, Benedick will no longer be traveling with them. He tells them that Hero has died and Don John has run away. Then Benedick accuses Claudio of slandering Hero and thus killing her. For this, Benedick says, he challenges Claudio to a duel. Benedick leaves, saying he will wait for Claudio's answer.

Dogberry then appears with Verges, the watchmen, and Borachio and Conrade. Borachio admits what he has done. Don Pedro and Claudio realize their mistake and the consequences it has caused. When Leonato and his brother reappear, the prince and Claudio beg for forgiveness. Claudio says he is willing to accept any punishment from Leonato for having been the cause of Hero's death. Leonato tells Claudio to go throughout the city and claim Hero's innocence. Then Claudio needs to write a poem about Hero and sing it in front of her grave. Finally, Leonato tells Claudio that his brother has a daughter, almost the image of Hero. Leonato asks that Claudio marry his niece in place of Hero. Claudio consents to all that Leonato has demanded. Leonato then has Borachio and Conrade taken away.

### *Act V, Scene ii*

Benedick is seen, attempting to write love poetry to his Beatrice. He fails miserably, deciding that he is not a writer. Beatrice appears and the two admit their love, once again, and flirt with one another. Ursula enters, announcing that Borachio has admitted his scheme. After once again admitting their love to one another, Beatrice and Benedick leave to find all the other members of the household.

### *Act V, Scene iii*

Claudio is at Hero's tomb. He reads the poem that he has written about Hero's innocence and the "slandrous tongues" that have caused her death. A song is sung that reflects these same sentiments. Then Claudio promises to visit her tomb each year.

### *Act V, Scene iv*

Everyone has gathered for the second wedding of Claudio and Hero – everyone but Don Pedro and Claudio. Margaret has been questioned about her part in the scheme and is believed when she says that she did not realize that Claudio and the prince were being tricked by her actions with Borachio. Benedick is happy with the turn of events, because now he does not have to kill his friend Claudio. Benedick then takes Leonato to the side and asks for Leonato's permission to marry his niece, Beatrice. Leonato approves.

Leonato tells Hero, Beatrice, Margaret, and Ursula to leave and when he calls for them, they are to return with their faces masked. After the prince and Claudio appear, Leonato calls for the women. Hero steps forward when asked to. Claudio wants to see her face but Leonato says not until Claudio vows to marry her. Then Hero lifts the mask and Claudio realizes it is Hero.

As they all prepare to leave for the party to celebrate the marriage, Benedick asks them all to stop. He then calls out for Beatrice and asks her to profess her love for him. Beatrice denies loving him more than as just a friend. So Benedick denies loving Beatrice. But Claudio and Hero display copies of the love poems that both Benedick and Beatrice had tried to write to one another. Benedick and Beatrice realize that they can no longer deny their love and promise to marry. When Benedick is teased about all those things he had previously said against love and marriage, he says he does not care about how he felt in the past.

A messenger appears with the news that Don John has been found and captured. Benedick tells the prince to put off thinking about his brother's punishment. Benedick will help him think up something appropriate tomorrow. Then they all leave to enjoy the music and dance.

### **2.2.1 Check Your Progress:**

**Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.**

1. What is the name of Don Pedro's bastard brother?
2. What are names of Hero's ladies-in waiting (maidservants)?
3. Who believes that instead of wooing Hero for Claudio, the prince is wooing her for himself?
4. Who is jealous of Don Pedro's attention to Claudio?
5. Who makes fun of Claudio for falling in love and considering marriage?

## **2.3 Major and Minor Characters in *Much Ado About Nothing*:**

### ***Antonio***

Antonio is Leonato's brother. He is present throughout the play but becomes most prominent after Claudio accuses Hero of being unfaithful to him at the wedding. Antonio tries to calm his brother but nonetheless joins his brother in confronting the prince and Claudio, willing to fight them for Hero's honor. Leonato later tells Claudio that his brother Antonio has a daughter who looks just like Hero and asks Claudio to marry her. Antonio gives Hero (who is masked) to Claudio at the final wedding scene, with Claudio believing she is Antonio's daughter.

### ***Balthasar***

Balthasar is an attendant to Don Pedro, the prince. It is Balthasar who sings the melancholy love song, "Sigh No More, Ladies, Sigh No More," in act II, scene iii, as the prince, Leonato, and Claudio trick Benedick into believing that Beatrice is in love with him.

### ***Beatrice***

Beatrice is Leonato's niece and Hero's cousin. She is a strong-willed woman who knows her mind and is not afraid to speak it. She is content, or so she says, to remain unmarried, suggesting a Shakespearean link, as some scholars have theorized, to Queen Elizabeth I, who never married. Beatrice demonstrates her intelligence through witty barbs that she uses against Benedick from the beginning to the end of the play. Although she uses these barbs to prove that she has no feelings for Benedick, it becomes clear that her feelings for him are strong. She is merely afraid of showing them for what they are, so she masks them with her wit.

Even after Benedick confesses his love for her, Beatrice, unlike Hero, does not immediately give in. She wants proof of Benedick's love and issues Benedick a big challenge. She asks him to kill his friend Claudio, for having shamed Hero. Beatrice tests the love that Benedick claims, rather than just accepting his words. Benedick passes the test by accepting the challenge, because he does truly love Beatrice.

Even at the end of the play, when Benedick asks Beatrice to tell everyone that she loves him, she refuses to go first. She does not want to be humiliated, in the event that Benedick is setting her up. Once Benedick has been exposed publicly, however, Beatrice gives in.

### ***Benedick***

Benedick is a young lord of Padua. One of Don Pedro's soldiers, he is a confirmed bachelor who initially sees in Beatrice only a verbal sparring partner; each tries to outdo the other in expressing mutual disdain, though they eventually agree to marry.

One of Don Pedro's trusted comrades-in-arms, Benedick possesses a brisk, bouncing nature and ready wit. He is a self-confessed bachelor who would prefer to enjoy life while keeping women at arm's length – especially Beatrice, for whom he has a particular, antagonistic regard. His disdain for women, it has been suggested, masks his wary respect for Beatrice, with whom he might have been once involved romantically. As evidence of this, critics note the giddy, schoolboyish behavior Benedick exhibits upon being tricked into believing that Beatrice loves him, rationalizing that Beatrice's scorn is really a facade that covers her deep affection for Benedick.

Benedick's newfound passion is put to the test severely after Hero's humiliation by Claudio. Beatrice commands Benedick to kill Claudio. Benedick is torn between his love for Beatrice and his loyalty to his army comrade. Ultimately, love for Beatrice wins out, and Benedick coldly and insistently challenges Claudio to single combat. All seems headed for a sad and violent parting between the two friends, until Borachio and Conrade confess their guilt in shaming Hero.

At the end, Benedick is reconciled with Claudio and engaged to Beatrice, with whom he has a final, friendly skirmish of wit. Critics note that when all of the principal characters are on stage together, the major interest of the audience is not the love-at-first-sight relationship that develops between Hero and Claudio, but rather the merry war between Beatrice and Benedick.

### ***Borachio***

Borachio is a follower of Don John, the prince's illegitimate brother. Borachio is having an affair with Margaret, one of the ladies-in-waiting to Hero. It is Borachio who comes up with the plan to trick the prince and Claudio into believing that Hero is unfaithful. Borachio purposely places Margaret at Hero's window and then calls out Hero's name, making it look like Borachio is having an affair with Hero. Later Borachio is arrested and tried for his crime. It is his admission that makes Claudio and the prince realize that they have misjudged Hero.

### ***Count Claudio***

Claudio is a count from Florence who has been fighting at the side of Don Pedro, the prince. He has fallen in love with Hero upon seeing her at Leonato's. Claudio is shy and unsure of himself and allows Don Pedro to woo Hero for him. Hero also gains permission to marry Claudio from Leonato. However, Claudio is easily tricked by Don John, who informs Claudio that Don Pedro, the prince, is after Hero for himself. Although this deeply hurts Claudio, he says nothing of it to Don Pedro, willing, like Hero, to accept whatever is dealt him. Claudio, who claims to be head-over-heels in love with Hero, nonetheless falls for another trick by Don John. The only time Claudio shows any gumption is when he accuses Hero (mistakenly) of cheating on him. He shames her in front of everyone, calling her horrible names and wanting to have nothing to do with her. Even when he hears that she has died, he shows no feelings.



Upon learning that he has been set up by Don John and that Hero was innocent, Claudio displays not so much emotion or regret but rather conforms to the role that a count should play. He asks for forgiveness and accepts his punishment, which includes marrying another woman, or so he thinks. When Claudio discovers that the other woman is Hero, he immediately falls back in love with her, forgetting all the negative feelings he so easily succumbed to before.

Claudio is one of the military heroes of Don Pedro's victory over Don John's forces. He is an impressionable, unimaginative young man who is somewhat out of place in the lively, witty society of Messina. He falls in love with Hero upon first laying eyes on her, believes immediately in her unfaithfulness upon witnessing Borachio's deception, immediately agrees to marry another woman sight unseen, and then unapologetically enters into marriage with the so-called resurrected Hero. Not surprisingly, critics have described Claudio as one of the least likable lovers in Shakespeare.

### ***Conrade***

Conrade is a follower of Don John, the prince's brother. Conrade is with Borachio when the watchmen hear Borachio boasting of how he has fooled the prince and Claudio. Conrade is arrested with Borachio.

### ***Dogberry***

Dogberry is the local constable who has trouble speaking clearly. Dogberry is in charge of the watchmen who overhear Borachio confess that he has tricked the prince and Claudio into believing that Hero is having an affair. Dogberry becomes flustered when he approaches Leonato with the news that he has caught Borachio. Leonato, who becomes impatient with Dogberry, shoos the constable away, thus setting into motion the catastrophe at Hero's wedding. Later, Dogberry returns to Leonato's and tells everyone what Borachio has done.

### ***Friar Francis***

Friar Francis represents the church and officiates at the wedding of Claudio and Hero, both times. It is also Friar Francis who tries to calm Leonato, when Hero is accused of being unfaithful, telling Leonato that he suspects that someone is scheming. Friar Francis also suggests that Hero pretend that she is dead.

### ***Hero***

Hero is Leonato's daughter. She is young and innocent and falls in love with Claudio. After her marriage is arranged, Hero focuses on her cousin, Beatrice, tricking Beatrice into admitting that she is in love with Benedick. On the day of her wedding to Claudio, Hero enters the church as innocent and pure as ever. However, Claudio has changed and Hero is at a loss as to why this has happened. When Claudio accuses Hero of being unfaithful to him, Hero faints. She is shamed in front of her community and cannot handle it. She complies with the friar, then, and fakes her death. After the scheme to slander her has been revealed and Claudio makes amends, Hero is willing to take Claudio back and marries him without much being said between them, as if nothing had happened. In comparison to Beatrice, Hero is weak and too willing to get married. This makes her love appear thin and shallow, and makes it appear that she is marrying in order to be married instead of because she loves Claudio. It has been said often that Hero is, for the most part, a sweet but colorless young woman who is not so much a three-dimensional character as an entity existing to fill a place in the drama. She and Claudio mechanically go through the motions of betrothal, with no development of interest, no initial conflict, nor even any wooing of Hero on Claudio's part.

### ***Don John***

Don John is listed as Don Pedro's bastard brother. Don John is the villain of the play, an undeveloped character who causes trouble, sometimes with little result, and by the end of the play is caught. His presence in the play is felt in his absence almost as much as when he is on stage, which is not often. He has no redeeming values and does not change throughout the play.

Considered one of the more problematic figures in the play, Don John is a snake-in-the-grass. The bastard half-brother of Don Pedro, he is a rebel and presumably a traitor whose armed uprising results not in his deserved death but in an attempted reconciliation between himself and the perhaps overly kind Don Pedro. The latter fails to see that Don John has a deep-seated grudge that leads him to try to destroy the happiness of the principal figures who defeated him: Don Pedro and Claudio. Don John is thus allowed enough freedom by his captors that he nearly wrecks several lives. Don John is considered, by many critics, to be a cardboard villain, not a well-drawn character.

### ***Leonato***

Leonato is the governor of Messina, the father of Hero, the uncle of Beatrice, and the brother of Antonio. It is at Leonato's house that most of this play takes place. He is a loving father and uncle, who wants to see both women married. He is also a gracious and generous host, inviting the group of soldiers with the prince to stay with him for the month.

Leonato changes, however, when his daughter is publicly shamed at her wedding to Claudio. He takes the side of the accusers, at first claiming, when Hero faints, that he hopes she dies. If she does not die, Leonato says he is willing to kill her. Once his rage subsides, however, he goes after her accusers, telling them that he will get to the bottom of their accusations. If they had any hand in setting this scheme against her, he is willing to challenge them to a duel.

When the mystery is solved, Leonato then returns to his loving self and instantly forgives the prince and Claudio.

### ***Margaret***

Margaret is a lady-in-waiting to Hero. Margaret is having an affair with Borachio but she is innocent of the scheme that Borachio hatches to make the prince and Claudio believe that Margaret is Hero. Later, Leonato questions Margaret to make sure that she did not know what Borachio was up to. Margaret is quickly cleared and is brought back into the fold of the family.

### ***Don Pedro***

Don Pedro is the prince of Aragon, the brother of Don John. The prince has led his soldiers in a battle and comes to Leonato's house at the beginning of the play. The prince is a friend of Leonato's. It is because of this relationship that Leonato invites all the soldiers to stay at his house for the month.

Don Pedro is very much involved in the lives of his soldiers, especially Claudio's and Benedick's. First the prince woos Hero in Claudio's name and gains permission from Leonato for Claudio to marry Hero. After the prince asks Beatrice if she will marry him and Beatrice refuses, the prince schemes to bring Benedick and Beatrice together. The prince gathers several of the people at Leonato's house and has them plant little tidbits of information in the minds of Benedick and Beatrice,

pretending that they have heard both of them expressing their love for one another. The trick works, and Benedick and Beatrice finally admit their love.

Despite the fact that there are bad feelings between Don Pedro and his brother Don John, the prince is easily fooled by his brother. He does not question the actions of Don John when he is brought to the window of Hero the night before Claudio's marriage to her. Instead, he joins in accusing Hero of being equal to a prostitute. The prince is forgiven by the finale of the play, which Benedick ends on a cute note by telling the prince to get himself a wife.

### ***Ursula***

Ursula is another of Hero's ladies-in-waiting. Ursula helps Hero trick Beatrice into believing that Benedick is in love with her.

### ***Verges***

Verges is the inept assistant to the constable, Dogberry. He and Dogberry represent comic relief in the midst of the more tense parts of the play.

## **2.3.1 Check Your Progress**

**Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.**

1. What is the name of Leonato's daughter?
2. Who demonstrates her intelligence through witty barbs that she uses against Benedick from the beginning to the end of the play?
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the local constable who has trouble speaking clearly.
4. Who comes up with the plan to trick the prince and Claudio into believing that Hero is unfaithful?
5. Who sings the melancholy love song, "Sigh No More, Ladies, Sigh No More," in act II, scene iii (in *Much Ado about Nothing*)?

## 2.4 Themes, style and other Aspects in *Much Ado About Nothing*:

### I. Themes

#### **War of the Sexes**

The differences between men and women – how they relate to each other, how they misunderstand each other, how they love and repel each other – is a common theme in motion pictures, comics, television shows, and world literature. It also appears throughout Shakespeare's comedies as well, and *Much Ado about Nothing* is no exception to the pattern. In this play, much of the conflict between the sexes concerns Beatrice and Benedick, with their relentless disdain for each other. Each tries to outdo and out-duel the other in crafting the cleverest and most deflating remarks, and the impression is given that their sparring has a long history, one that precedes the action of the play. The goal of each is not to deliver the most crushing, hot-blooded blast but to offer the most coolly disdainful and witty remarks possible.

After Benedick and Beatrice actually admit the love they have been hiding under their masks of disdain for one another, the tragedy of Claudio and Hero's separation causes a different type of war between Benedick and Beatrice. The sudden and newfound tenderness that Benedick and Beatrice have shared reverts to a heated, near-frantic rage on the part of Beatrice, after Benedick hesitates at her command to kill Claudio. Here she turns from employing wit to questioning Benedick's manhood. In one of the most-often quoted sections of *Much Ado about Nothing*, she declares, "O that I were a man for his sake! Or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake! But manhood is melted into curtsies, valor into compliment, and men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones, too. He is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie and swears it. I cannot be a man with wishing: therefore I will die a woman with grieving." This sentiment is one with the words of Balthasar's song, from act II, scene iii: "Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,/ Men were deceivers ever/ One foot in sea, and one on shore,/ To one thing constant never." This song, one of the loveliest in all of Shakespeare's plays, describes the war between the sexes, set to poetic phrases.

#### **Appearance versus Reality**

The theme of appearance versus reality has long been considered central to this play's structure and tone. All of the main characters deceive or are deceived by

others at some point during the play. There is the masked ball, during which Beatrice reveals her feelings to Benedick, not knowing that she is speaking directly to him because he wears a mask. There is also the masked bride at the second wedding at the end of the play, so that Claudio does not know what woman he is marrying until Hero reveals herself.

There are many other forms of deception, such as the schemes of Don John as he tries to trick Claudio, first, into believing that the prince is wooing Hero for himself, and then that Borachio is making love to Hero. When Friar Francis has Hero pretend to be dead, he enters into deception as well. On this theme of deception, many critics have observed that the title of the play contains an Elizabethan pun on the word *nothing*, with Shakespeare playing off the word *noting*, which means “eavesdropping.” However, other critics believe that the key to the play’s unity lies in equating the word *noting* with the meaning “to observe.” In this view, the title suggests that one take note of a situation and make judgments based on observation. In *Much Ado about Nothing*, there is a failure, some critics argue, to observe and to act sensibly. This is very true in the case of the prince and Claudio failing to grasp the lack of integrity in Don John, who had tried to deceive them before his ultimate trick of making both men believe that Hero was unfaithful. Why do the prince and Claudio not see Don John’s true nature? Why are they so easily duped by Don John?

### **Love and Marriage**

There are grand discussions of love and marriage throughout much of this play, especially by Beatrice and Benedick who swear against both love and marriage, at least at first. They claim they do not believe in such foolishness. For example, when Claudio admits that he has fallen for Hero, Benedick cannot believe him. Benedick tells Claudio if it is love and marriage that Claudio wants, he should go do it. However, Benedick warns Claudio that love and marriage are like putting one’s “neck into a yoke,” and then wearing that yoke for the rest of one’s life. If Benedick ever makes the mistake of falling in love, Benedick tells the prince to “hang me in a bottle like a cat and shoot at me.”

Later, in Act II, Beatrice has her own way of explaining that she will never marry, until “God make men of some other metal than earth.” In other words, there is no man on earth that attracts Beatrice enough to cause her ever to think about marriage. Although these two characters make their gestures against love and mar-

riage, Shakespeare's play does not turn in that direction. Shakespeare does, however, create the opposite type of couple, one that falls madly in love without knowing much about one another and not really caring about that detail. Claudio and Hero are infatuated and that is enough to lead them to the altar.

Of course, Shakespeare makes it quite clear that Beatrice and Benedick are not as hardened in their commitments to stave off love as they sound, but quite the contrary. They just do not believe they can ever find someone who will meet their standards, which are very high. On a subconscious level, both Beatrice and Benedick know that they have met someone whom they could fall in love with – namely one another – but they cannot admit this to their rational minds. They have to be tricked into it. They both want the other person to admit it first. Once Benedick believes that Beatrice has admitted loving him, Benedick gets just as mushy inside with infatuation as Claudio did earlier. Likewise, Beatrice has a similar reaction. Before the end of the play, a double wedding is in order, thus bringing the play's theme of love and marriage to its fulfillment.

However, Shakespeare is a master of representing opposites. And this play is no exception. Don John represents the other side of the love-and-marriage issue. Don John is completely void of love. Having him called the bastard brother immediately puts Don John at a disadvantage, insinuating that lust replaced love and marriage at his conception. It is because of this lack of love that he attacks the prince and tries to destroy the love Claudio has for Hero. However, Shakespeare does not allow his play to turn on Don John's misery. Love and marriage, rather, are what hold this play together.

### **Loss of Honor**

A woman's loss of honor has significant consequences in this play; even the thought or suspicion of it is devastating for Hero. A woman must be married a virgin, or if that cannot be attained, it is her soon-to-be husband who must have taken her to bed, an act, which Leonato suggests, can be pardoned. As Leonato tries to understand why Claudio is hesitating in the first marriage scene in act 4, he implies that maybe Claudio has been with Hero, and Shakespeare insinuates that Leonato is about to forgive Claudio for this. "Dear my lord," Leonato says, "if you in your own proof/ Have vanquished the resistance of her youth,/ And made defeat of her virginity – ." But Claudio denies this, saying quickly that he knows what Leonato is about to say,

but this is nowhere near the truth of the matter. “I know what you would say: if I have known her, You will say she did embrace me as a husband,” Claudio says. This would be approved, in other words. But the fact that Hero might have had sexual relations with a man other than Claudio is unthinkable. One of the reasons for this is that inheritance was passed down from the father to the firstborn son. In order to prove that the firstborn son was indeed a creation of the husband’s, the newlywed wife had to be a virgin. No matter how much Claudio might have been in love with Hero prior to this knowledge, he can no longer love her, cannot marry her. And not only this, Hero is so publicly shamed by this accusation that her own father is willing to kill her. One could almost forgive Claudio for no longer wanting Hero, at least back in the sixteenth century; but for her own father to want to murder his daughter after obviously loving her from the time of her birth is unforgivable by twenty-first century audiences.

It is from these attitudes of Leonato’s that modern audiences can sense how important a woman’s virginity was in Shakespeare’s time. The loss of virginity appears to be a worse crime than murder. There is no mention of a similar pressure on men. Benedick mentions brothels, which implies that he has visited them; and Borachio mentions having an affair with Margaret, Hero’s lady-in-waiting. So the standard of chastity seems to apply only to women of the upper classes.

Although the character of Beatrice could easily be likened to modern women in that she speaks her mind, she is not concerned about having a husband to make her whole and challenges Benedick to prove his love instead of just taking him at his word, there still remains in this play the double standard for men and women, as seen in the emphasis put on a woman’s loss of honor.

## **Villainy**

Shakespeare has created much better villains in plays other than *Much Ado about Nothing*. For example, the character Iago in *Othello* is probably the best villain Shakespeare ever created. It is not only the level of villainy that makes a character like Iago different from Don John, the villain in this play, it is the development of the role. Don John is villainous, but his character is very thin. The audience knows very little about him. Things like hints about what drives him, where his anger is coming from, and what pleasure he derives from his misdeeds are all missing from this play. Audiences can assume some things, such as jealousy because he is illegitimate and



therefore unable to ever rise to the level of the prince. He may not be as good as Claudio in warfare and maybe that is why he lost his battle against the prince. He may even wish that he could woo Hero for himself; but none of these motives are provided by Shakespeare. The audience, at best, has to speculate. The only thing interesting about Don John is that he is able to pull the wool over the prince's and Claudio's eyes two times in a row. However, that makes Don John less believable, not more so. Don John's character therefore stays on the surface. Don John represents villainy but only through two meager tricks, which are quickly uncovered and, in the end, cause no long-lasting harm.

## **II. Style and Other Aspects**

### **Song**

Some critics claim that the song sung in Act II, scene iii in *Much Ado about Nothing* is one of Shakespeare's most beautiful. The title of the song is "Sigh No More, Ladies, Sigh No More", and its words tell of the inconstancy of men. The song is written in alternating rhyming verse. There are two verses, and the last two lines of the first stanza are repeated in the last two lines of the second stanza. Each line is written in what is termed heptameter, or seven beats to a line, with each line containing an end rhyme. Each stanza contains eight lines, which means that each stanza is called an octave. The song is rather lighthearted, especially in its refrain of "Into Hey, nonny nonny", which suggests that women should make light of their sighs and not get lost in the gloom of their emotions, which are aroused by men being difficult, and which cause women pain.

### **Witty Linguistic Competition**

People in the upper classes of Elizabethan England displayed their education and intelligence through witty conversations. In this play, Beatrice and Benedick are champions at this type of wit as they banter back and forth, each one trying to outwit the other. The wittiness of their dialogue does two things, besides showing off their intelligence: it helps them to keep their true feelings hidden and acts almost like a competition between them, as if one of them can win it and then walk away from the other, claiming victory. Beatrice even comments on this in act I, scene i, when she says: "You always end with a jade's trick. I know you of old." She says this to Benedick, when he ends the witty dialogue too abruptly. A jade is an untrustworthy horse that tricks its rider, possibly by pulling up short when the rider least suspects it,

thus throwing the rider from its back. Beatrice is in the throes of her conversation with Benedick and wants it to continue because she wants to outsmart Benedick. However, he silences her with a remark that leaves her nowhere to go. Thus, Benedick claims victory for having delivered the last witty line.

### **Tragicomedy**

Technically, *Much Ado about Nothing* has all the elements of a Shakespearean comedy: It contains at least one journey of a young woman from the virginal state to that of matrimony, or the journey of a young woman out of her family's control into marriage. The trip is seldom smooth: obstacles are presented as the young lovers attempt to reach the day of their wedding. A comedy also requires some form of deception or the wearing of masks. And a comedy ends with a wedding. This play meets those criteria, but there is more. There is, for instance, the villainy of Don John to consider, as well as the shame of Hero and her supposed death. Because of these elements some scholars have labeled this play a tragicomedy, a cross between a tragedy and a comedy. By adding the tragic elements, in some ways hinting at Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, especially in the parallels between the friars and the mock deaths of Juliet and Hero, Shakespeare adds depth and tension to his comedy. Likewise, the addition of Don John and his tricks makes the audience question whether Hero and Claudio will ever really wed. Another tragic element is Beatrice's request that Benedick prove his love to her by killing Claudio and thus avenging the awful shame and ruin of Hero's reputation.

### **Animal Imagery**

Shakespeare uses a lot of animal imagery in this play, making references to animals to more fully define a person or a person's actions. For example, in the opening lines of the play, the messenger, who announces to Leonato that the prince and some of his men are coming, describes Claudio as "doing in the figure of a lamb the feats of a lion." In just a few words, the messenger describes Claudio's character, his psychology, and his actions. Shakespeare uses animal imagery here to give his audiences a mental picture to help them immediately grasp the significance of Claudio and what he has done. Claudio seems like a very mild-mannered young man, meek, and a good follower. However, when Claudio had to face battle, he must have surprised his fellow soldiers with his fierce attitude, slaughtering his enemies as fiercely as a lion.

Animal imagery works because everyone knows the general traits of certain animals, such as the sheep and the lion. The contrast between these two animals is dramatic. In addition, Shakespeare's audience would have been familiar with Biblical references to the lamb and the lion. By using the lamb and the lion to describe Claudio, Shakespeare has told a significant background story about Claudio in just a few words.

### **Plot and Subplot – Which Is Which?**

It is not clear, and this is unusual for Shakespeare's plays, which is the plot and which is the subplot. There are two sets of lovers, not unusual in Shakespeare's comedies, but what appears to be the main focus of the play, the relationship between Hero and Claudio, is easily overshadowed by the relationship between Beatrice and Benedick.

Since Hero is the daughter of Leonato, whereas Beatrice is only his niece, it would seem that Hero's love affair would take center stage. However, Hero's and Claudio's lines are less entertaining, and some critics have even come right out and said they were dull. This is far from the praise that the dialogue between Beatrice and Benedick has received, going back as far as when the play was first introduced. At one point, the play was even retitled *Beatrice and Benedick*.

However, it is Hero's and Claudio's relationship, dull though it may be, that drives the plot forward. Most of the action is dependent on what develops between them. Don John, for example, does not plot against Benedick but rather against Claudio. Benedick does not defile Beatrice's reputation as Claudio does Hero's, thus leading to the challenge against Claudio, the faked death of Hero, and finally, the wedding that closes the play. But if Beatrice and Benedick were removed from the play, chances are the play would completely disintegrate. Claudio and Hero's affair is not enough to carry the play on its own. First of all, they are not very funny; and since this is a comedy, they should at least be entertaining. There is little passion behind their words; and they take what is given to them and barely question it. On the other hand, the meat of the story, the part that draws audiences in and keeps them awake, is the sparring, and finally the coming together, of Beatrice and Benedick, the true heroes of the play.

## Wordplay to Create Laughter

Shakespeare uses wordplay to make his audience laugh. His characters take turns playing on one another's words, such as Beatrice does in the opening scene of the play when the messenger arrives, announcing the approach of the prince and his soldiers. For example, when the messenger says of Benedick: "And a good soldier too, lady." Beatrice turns the messenger's words around so that rather than meaning that Benedick was good in war, it sounds like Benedick was good in bed. Beatrice takes the word *too* that the messenger has spoken and replaces it with the word *to*. Beatrice says: "And a good soldier to a lady, but what is he to a lord?" By making this play on words, Beatrice has wiped out all of Benedick's military conquests and brings the conversation down a few notches, wrapping the message in sexuality.

When the conversation continues, Beatrice turns the messenger's words again. "A lord to a lord, a man to a man, stuffed with all honorable virtues," the messenger says. In other words, he is saying that Benedick can stand as an equal to any lord or any man. However, Beatrice focuses on the word *stuffed* and changes the whole perception. "He is no less than a stuffed man," she says, implying that either Benedick is full of himself or is a replica of a human being but not completely real.

## Italy as Setting

There is no real significance to having this play set in Italy. There are wars in England as well as Italy. Likewise, the villainy of Don John could easily be found in Shakespeare's country. So why is this play set in Italy? One reason might be to give the audience a distance from their English reality. It is so much easier to laugh at people of another culture. So in placing this play and all the deception, misunderstanding, and social behaviors in a foreign country, the English audience members of Shakespeare's time could enjoy a good laugh without feeling self-conscious or defensive. These are someone else's problems, they could say. These are someone else's foibles. No self-examination is necessary because the playwright is depicting someone else.

## Prose instead of Poetry

Many of Shakespeare's plays are written in blank verse, a type of poetry that is characterized by measured lines of five pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables with no end rhymes. However, *Much Ado about Nothing* is written mostly in prose, which means there is no ordered form but rather normal conversational patterns. Often,

Shakespeare uses blank verse to elevate a character's lines, such as a military leader, like King Henry V, talking to his troops before a war; or Marc Antony delivering a speech upon the death of Julius Caesar. *Much Ado about Nothing* has no grand speeches such as those. Most of the dialogue is among peers, in the form of couples or very small groups. The atmosphere is relaxed and, for the most part, very lighthearted. There are exceptions though. When Shakespeare writes in prose for the majority of the lines then switches to verse, it is done to call attention to whatever is being said. An example occurs in Act I, scene i, when Claudio talks about his feelings for Hero. This is an important part of the play. Claudio's speech touches on the main theme of the play, which is love and the relationship between a man and a woman. Claudio's lines, as well as those of Don Pedro's, are written in verse. The verse is set off from the regular prose dialogue in several ways. First, the right hand of the text does not reach the full right-hand margin. This is because each line contains only ten syllables. Second, each line starts with a capital letter even when that word does not begin a new sentence. If the verse is read out loud, the meter or beat of the line becomes noticeable, with each line's beat matching the others. From line 284 in Act I, scene i, to line 323, Don Pedro and Claudio speak in verse, as if their combined conversation were one poem.

## 2.5 Summary

Evidence indicates that *Much Ado about Nothing* enjoyed considerable popularity during Shakespeare's day and throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, critics identified Ludovico Ariosto's Italian Renaissance epic poem *Orlando Furioso* (1516) as one of *Much Ado about Nothing's* principal sources. These early critics also introduced several thematic and technical issues – questions regarding how true to life the characters' words and actions are, as well as examinations of Shakespeare's use of language – that were to become very important in later studies of the comedy. In *Much Ado about Nothing*, Shakespeare tightened the action for dramatic effect, drawing in elements from Ariosto's version of the tale, along with some hints from Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590), a major influence on Elizabethan writers.

The language of *Much Ado about Nothing* is accessible even for modern audiences, except for that of Dogberry, the comical Constable. But then, Dogberry probably was hard to understand even in his times. Dogberry lives in a world of his

own, while the topic of conversation among the other characters focuses on various aspects of love and relationships, which translates well into any culture of any century. Shakespeare's genius is the understanding of human psychology which, despite all the advances in other fields, remains fairly constant throughout the years, making *Much Ado about Nothing* as relevant today as it will be tomorrow.

In this unit, you have read/ studied: the plot and characters in Shakespeare's comedy, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and also various themes, style and other aspects presented in this play.

All these points, no doubt, would be helpful to you to understand the comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*. They will enhance your understanding of the play. **For better understanding of this play, it is essential to read the original text.**

## **2.6 Answers to Check Your Progress:**

### **2.2.1 Answers to Check Your Progress**

- |             |                      |            |
|-------------|----------------------|------------|
| 1. Don John | 2. Margaret & Ursula | 3. Claudio |
| 4. Don John | 5. Benedick          |            |

### **2.3.1 Answers to Check Your Progress:**

- |             |              |             |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Hero     | 2. Beatrice  | 3. Dogberry |
| 4. Borachio | 5. Balthasar |             |

## **2.7 Exercises:**

### **A) Answer the following:**

1. Discuss the significance of the title *Much Ado about Nothing*.
2. Discuss Shakespeare's use of humour in *Much Ado about Nothing*.
3. Do you agree with the view that "Don John is villainous, but his character is very thin". Justify your arguments with appropriate illustrations.
4. Elucidate 'loss of honor' as one of the prominent themes of *Much Ado about Nothing*.
5. Consider *Much Ado about Nothing* as an instance of Shakespearean comedy.

6. Illustrate the theme of ‘appearance versus reality’ in *Much Ado about Nothing*.

**B) Write short notes on:**

1. The character of Beatrice.
2. Shakespeare’s use of ‘animal imagery’ in *Much Ado about Nothing*.
3. The theme of ‘appearance versus reality’ in *Much Ado about Nothing*.
4. The character of Count Claudio.
5. The theme of ‘love and marriage’ in *Much Ado about Nothing*.
6. The character of Benedick.

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