

AS YOU LIKE IT

Character Notes

ROSALIND

Rosalind is fearless and independent. She is the daughter of the rightful Duke Senior who has been deposed by his younger brother, Duke Frederick. Since her father is in exile in the Forest of Arden, Rosalind is in the uncomfortable position of having to live with her uncle, Duke Frederick. The situation is made tolerable by the fact that she is extremely fond of her cousin Celia who returns the affection. At a wrestling match at the start of the play, Rosalind falls for Orlando, the disinherited son of the late Sir Rowland de Bois who was a friend of her father's and an enemy of Duke Frederick. Orlando is the under-dog and expected to lose. When he defeats Charles, the professional wrestler, she introduces herself but has no time to convey her feelings for him. That same afternoon Duke Frederick orders her to leave his house and an outraged Celia offers to go with her. They decide to try to find Rosalind's father in the Forest of Arden. Taller than her cousin, Rosalind suggests that she should dress up as a man so that she will be able to protect her. She disguises herself as the handsome Ganymede. In the forest she meets up with Orlando who fails to recognize her. He confesses that he is love-sick for a girl named Rosalind, and, in order to spend more time with him, she offers to cure him of his love-sickness by explaining how fickle women are. The love-affair has a happy ending.

ORLANDO

The youngest son of the late Sir Rowland de Bois and the younger brother of Oliver. Oliver has had control of the family fortune and has refused to spend money on Orlando's education. He takes on the professional wrestler, Charles, at the start of the play as a way for him to make a name for himself and earn some money. It is during this fight that Rosalind falls in love with him. Orlando is true hero material. He's strong but also cares for the aging family retainer Adam. In return Adam warns Orlando that his brother has plans to burn the house down with him in it. This prompts them to flee to the Forest of Arden. There he meets Rosalind disguised as a young man and finds himself surprisingly attracted to him. Towards the end of the play he risks his life to save his brother from a hungry lioness.

DUKE SENIOR

Rosalind's father, older brother to Frederick, and the rightful ruler of the kingdom. A fair-minded and kind ruler. He has been banished, along with a retinue of men including Lord Amiens and Jaques, by his usurping brother, and lives in exile in the Forest of Arden. He has come to appreciate the simple life in the forest, where he claims to be able to learn as much from stones and brooks as he would in a church or a library.

JAQUES (PRONOUNCED JAKE-WEEZE)

A member of Duke Senior's retinue, in exile in the Forest of Arden. Jaques is an example of a stock character in Elizabethan comedy, the man possessed of a hopelessly melancholy disposition. His famous monologue "All the world's a stage..." is the speech of someone who is provocatively pessimistic and contrary. The more Duke Senior extols the virtues of living in the woods, the grumpier Jaques becomes. When the King says how much he enjoys hunting, Jaques sides with the deer; when Orlando falls in love, Jaques ridicules him; when the reformed Duke Frederick hands back the crown and goes off to pursue the life of a monk at the end of the play, Jaques decides it would be more interesting to follow him and deserts Duke Senior.

DUKE FREDERICK

The younger brother of Duke Senior and usurper of his throne. He is full of hate for his enemies, amongst them the father of Orlando and Oliver (Sir Rowland de Bois), and his older brother Duke Senior. He is furious when Orlando defeats his strongest wrestler at the start of the play. He had hoped that his wrestler might succeed in killing Orlando. His cruel nature and volatile temper are displayed when he banishes his niece, Rosalind. She is the daughter of his brother and is taller and possibly more striking than Celia so he fears that Celia is overshadowed by her. When he hears of his daughter's flight to the Forest of Arden he mounts an army in order to defeat his exiled brother once and for all. However, after an encounter with an old religious man at the edge of the wood he aborts his vengeful mission. He repents and leaves to pursue a life of contemplation, confident that Duke Senior will take better care of Celia than he did of Rosalind.

CELIA

The daughter of Duke Frederick and close friend to her cousin Rosalind. When her father banishes Rosalind (because he fears that she might be prettier and cleverer than Celia), Celia insists on going with Rosalind to find her father in the Forest of Arden. She is not afraid of standing up to her jealous father. She is impetuous, loyal and loving. She disguises herself as a simple shepherdess for the duration of their stay in the forest and calls herself Aliena. When she meets Orlando's reformed brother Oliver, she falls instantly in love, and he with her.

TOUCHSTONE

A professional fool (clown or jester) in Duke Frederick's court who insists on going with Rosalind and Celia to the Forest of Arden when he learns of their plans. By doing this he is defying his employer, Duke Frederick, and making it clear that he finds the Duke's behaviour unacceptable. In this abridged script Touchstone has few lines. His general demeanour however, like that of all Elizabethan professional fools, is critical of the people who employ him. It was the role of the fool to keep the aristocracy grounded in reality – to point out anything foolish or hypocritical in their behaviour. However, since Rosalind and Celia are paragons of virtue, he is more or less out of a job and takes to criticising the rural inhabitants of the forest instead. Determined not to return to Duke Frederick he marries Audrey, a goatherd. Those who know him fear that he will soon become frustrated by her lack of education.

OLIVER

The oldest son of Sir Rowland de Bois and sole inheritor of the de Bois estate. Oliver is jealous of his younger brother, Orlando, and has refused to pay for his education. He plans to burn down the house that Orlando is living in and him with it. Consequently when Orlando risks his life to save Oliver from a lioness in the Forest of Arden, he is humbled into asking Orlando to forgive him. When he falls in love with Celia, and she with him, Orlando and Rosalind wish them both well.

ADAM

The ancient former servant of Sir Rowland de Bois who has been dismissed by his former master's heir, Oliver, but refuses to leave his young "master", Orlando. Adam warns Orlando of Oliver's plan to burn him in his bed and offers to go with him into exile in the Forest of Arden. He offers Orlando his life savings. Orlando returns the affection.

LORD AMIENS

A faithful lord who accompanies Duke Senior into exile in the Forest of Arden.

CHARLES

A professional wrestler in Duke Frederick's court.

SILVIUS

A young shepherd who is desperately in love with the proud and disdainful Phoebe. He tries to woo her with poetry but she is having none of it because she has fallen in love with Ganymede (Rosalind in disguise).

PHOEBE

A young shepherdess pursued by Silvius but who falls in love with Ganymede (Rosalind in disguise). Phoebe treats Silvius so badly that she runs the risk of ending up without a husband. Seeing this, Rosalind determines to trick Phoebe into marrying Silvius before it is too late.

CORIN

A shepherd. Corin attempts to counsel his friend Silvius in the ways of love, but Silvius refuses to listen.

AUDREY

A simpleminded goatherd who agrees to marry Touchstone, despite the fact that she understands very little of what he says.