



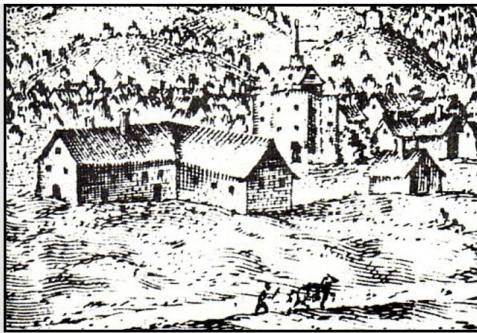
Oregon
Shakespeare
Festival

2017 Study Guide

Shakespeare in Love

adapted for the stage by Lee Hall

based on the screenplay by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard



Curtain Theatre circa 1600

Environmental concerns in a 16th-century comedy.

Cramped quarters, unsanitary living conditions and poor hygiene all contributed to an outbreak of the plague in London in the early 1590s.

Europe had been decimated by the Black Death back in the mid-14th century, and ever since then they took extreme measures to contain plague outbreaks.

Tightly packed public spaces, such as theatres, were shut down in 1592-1593, which is why Ned Allyn and his actors are away in the provinces and Henslowe is forced to cast tradesmen like his tailor in Will's new play.



William Shakespeare

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

- Born around April 23, 1564.
- Married Anne Hathaway at the age of 18. They had three children between 1583 and 1585.
- Became an actor and playwright for the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which became the King's Men when King James I was crowned in 1603. Wrote 37 plays, 2 epic poems and 154 sonnets over a 25-year career.
- Died in his hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon on April 23, 1616.
- Buried in Stratford's Holy Trinity Church.



2017 *Shakespeare in Love* costume rendering for Viola by Susan Tsu

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The character of Viola de Lesseps is named after Shakespeare's great heroine Viola, who has to disguise herself as a man in order to gain what she wants in the world. Furthermore, when Viola de Lesseps dresses as a man in *Shakespeare in Love*, she takes the name Thomas Kent. Kent is a character in *King Lear* who must disguise himself as someone of lower birth to serve the king.

Before seeing/reading the play

1. How did theatre companies operate in England in the 1590s? These and other websites provide information:
www.theatrehistory.com/british/bellinger001.html
<http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/uploads/files/2014/01/actors.pdf>
2. Research the history of blank verse in English literature, particularly how it was championed by Christopher Marlowe and then made immortal by Shakespeare. This and other websites provide information:
www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Blank_Verse
3. Research Elizabeth's patronage of theatre companies at court, and how her attitude contrasted to the Puritans' feelings about theatre. These and other websites provide information:
www.shakespeareinamericancommunities.org/education/elizabethan-theater
www.sparknotes.com/biography/elizabeth/section9.rhtml
4. What was the attitude toward women participating in Elizabethan theatre? This and other websites provide information:
www.bardstage.org/women-in-elizabethan-theatre.htm
5. Research Richard Burbage, Philip Henslowe, William Shakespeare, Sir Edmund Tilney and Edward Alleyn. These and other websites provide information:
<http://www.bardstage.org/richard-burbage-actor.htm>
www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/henslowe.htm
<http://www.folger.edu/shakespeares-life>
www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/tilney-edmund-1610
www.shakespeare-online.com/biography/edwardalleyn.html
6. Research class differences in Elizabethan England. What are some factors that determined an individual's status? These and other websites provide information:
www.thelostcolony.org/bringing-history-to-life/elizabethan-era/
www.walernelson.com/dr/elizabethan-society-gray-areas
7. Research the transition of *Shakespeare in Love* from Oscar-winning film to stage play. This and other websites provide information:
www.nytimes.com/2014/07/22/theater/shakespeare-in-love-makes-stage-debut-in-london.html?_r=0
8. Familiarize yourself with the plots and characters of Shakespeare's plays *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night*.


Other Resources

Films

Romeo and Juliet, Paramount Pictures, 1968
Twelfth Night, Fine Line features, 1996
Shakespeare in Love, Universal Pictures, 1998 (Rated R)

Easter Eggs

(Literary treats hidden in the play)

Thematically, the two Shakespeare plays that impact the plot of *Shakespeare in Love* are *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night*. But there are many other Shakespeare plays and theatre traditions tucked away in the play for astute theatre-goers to spot and enjoy. Look for the quill icon  to find some hidden and not-so-hidden gems in the play.



Marlowe: How are your marital relations?

Will: The Hathaways?

Marlowe is trying to ask about Shakespeare's relationship with his wife. Shakespeare thinks Marlowe is asking about his in-laws, the Hathaways.



Richard Burbage, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London



Burbage: I hear Anne Hathaway is a woman of property.

Will: She has a cottage.

Shakespeare's wife Anne Hathaway (no, not that Anne Hathaway!) grew up in a cottage that remained the residence of the Hathaway family until 1892. Today Anne Hathaway's cottage is a famous tourist destination in Stratford-upon-Avon. Tour guides will even show you the bench seat where they believe the 18-year-old Shakespeare "wooed" the 26-year-old Anne.



Burbage, referring to another actor's nervousness, says, "He's never played the Palace." This is a pun with a double meaning. On the surface, it means Whitehall Palace, but both England and America have theatres called The Palace. In vaudeville days, "playing the Palace" meant that you had made it to the top, because the Palace always booked the very best acts.



A despondent, writer's-blocked Will says, "Ask for me tomorrow and you will find me in a grave pit."

This will become Mercutio's "Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man."


After seeing/reading the play


1. What is writer's block? What is a muse? In what ways are the presence of one and the absence of the other keeping Will from realizing his goals and desires at the beginning of the play?
2. How is Christopher Marlowe a help to Will? How is he a hindrance?
3. Refer to your research on *Romeo and Juliet*. In what ways does Will and Viola's relationship reflect that of Romeo and Juliet? How is it different? How does Will take what happens in his life and transform those experiences into what occurs in *Romeo and Juliet*? What does he learn about the process of artistic creation?
4. Refer to your research on Shakespeare and the Elizabethan theatre. In what ways does the play accurately reflect the time? What elements are modern or fantastical?
5. Refer to your research on class differences in Elizabethan England. Compare the lives of the upper-class characters in the play to those in the middle or lower classes. What freedoms does each possess? What restrictions? How is this revealed in the play? Who holds on to the status quo? Who breaks class barriers? What are the results?
6. What does marriage mean to Viola? To Shakespeare? To Viola's father and Lord Wessex? To Romeo and Juliet? How do these different feelings about marriage impact the story?
7. Refer to your research on Sir Edmund Tilney and on Puritans. In what significant ways do the historical Tilney and the character in the play differ? How do these changes affect the story? What themes are brought out through Tilney's character as written?
8. What things would Viola most like to be? What is keeping her from realizing her goals and desires? What freedoms does she gain by disguising herself as a man?
9. Refer to your research on status and women on stage. Why can't Viola go on the stage? Considering Viola's status, what would it mean socially for her to be associated with the theatre? What does it say about her that she is willing to break that barrier?
10. Refer to your research on Queen Elizabeth. In what ways is Queen Elizabeth sympathetic to Viola's plight? In what ways does Elizabeth support the status quo?
11. What does Viola learn or gain by rehearsing the role of Romeo? What does she learn or gain by performing the role of Juliet? What does Will gain or learn by performing the role of Romeo? In what ways are they changed by the experience? How does playing those roles prepare them to move ahead in their real lives?


12. At the beginning of the play, what is more important to Will: love or art? In what ways are they reconciled or in balance by the end of the play?
13. In the play, Shakespeare says that "love denied blights the soul we owe to God." To what extent is this true in the world of the play? To what extent is denial of a love for someone or something noble and positive? What does Shakespeare learn about true love over the course of the play? What does Viola learn? How does this connect Viola to her namesake in *Twelfth Night*?



The Ermine Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I

 Much is made in the play of Henslowe and Queen Elizabeth both wanting another play with a dog, like *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Eventually he is referred to as "Kemp's dog." It is believed that the role of Launce in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* was written for Will Kemp, a famous actor and comic who was known for improvising on stage, sometimes with his pet dog. So apparently Shakespeare wrote a role for Kemp's dog, possibly to try to get him to say the lines as written instead of improvising his own.

 While performing *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Burbage needs a costume fix in a hurry and calls out, "Wardrobe Mistress, quickly!" If you are seeing the *Henry IV's* or *The Merry Wives of Windsor* this year, you will encounter Mistress Quickly at the Boar's Head Tavern. Incidentally, many scholars believe that the role of Falstaff in those plays was written for Will Kemp, but it has also been suggested that Falstaff was not a role tailor-made for Kemp and that he actually played Mistress Quickly! Apparently the female roles in Shakespeare's day were not always played by teenage boys. Some character roles were played by older men, in the same way you see Ralph playing the Nurse in *Shakespeare in Love*.

 Marlowe hiding under the balcony feeding Will things to say is an homage to Edmund Rostand's famous wooing scene in *Cyrano de Bergerac*.



Christopher Marlowe, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge



2017 *Shakespeare in Love* set model. Designed by Rachel Hauck.



Will: What happens to Ethel?

Marlowe: Marries a moor and is strangled with a handkerchief?

This exchange is said jokingly, as if it is the most preposterous idea imaginable. But 10 years later those elements will appear, slightly rearranged, in Shakespeare's *Othello*.



John Webster wrote two very bloody and violent melodramas for the English stage; *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. *Shakespeare in Love* gives us an imaginary peek at what kind of child young Mr. Webster might have been in the 1590s.



Young John Webster exchanges the script he is reading for the one Burbage is trying to steal, sending Burbage off with a play called *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. This is one of the first comedies ever written for the stage in England, and was performed at Cambridge University in 1566. It is known for its surprising (to a modern audience) use of some very earthy and profane language.

Listen for these lines to pop up through the course of the play.

Remember that the conceit of the play is that young Will Shakespeare catalogues all these lines in his memory, later putting them into some of his most famous works.

Out, damn spot!	(<i>Macbeth</i>)
That is the question.	(<i>Hamlet</i>)
Tomorrow and tomorrow...	(<i>Macbeth</i>)
Oh, brave new world...	(<i>The Tempest</i>)
The course of true love never did run smooth.	(<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>)
Truant disposition	(<i>Hamlet</i>)
Out, vile jelly!	(<i>King Lear</i>)
The play's the thing!	(<i>Hamlet</i>)
Avaunt and quit my sight!	(<i>Macbeth</i>)
Oh, you are sick of self-love.	(<i>Twelfth Night</i>)
Angels and ministers of grace defend us.	(<i>Hamlet</i>)

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