

# AS YOU LIKE IT | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shakespeare's language can seem scary, but give it a try! *Go at your own pace, and have fun!*



SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S  
SIGNATURE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

In our last activity pack, Rosalind (disguised as a man called Ganymede) told off Phebe for being a jerk to Silvius (who is in love with Phebe) AND Silvius (for being in love with Phebe). But Phebe doesn't exactly respond the way Rosalind intended... or the way that Silvius hopes.

Keep in mind: *As You Like It* is a comedy!

## The Shakespeare

### PHEBE

Think not I love him though I ask for him.  
'Tis but a peevish boy—yet he talks well.  
But what care I for words? Yet words do well  
When he that speaks them pleases those that hear.  
It is a pretty youth—not very pretty—  
But sure he's proud, and yet his pride becomes him.  
He'll make a proper man. The best thing in him  
Is his complexion; and faster than his tongue  
Did make offense, his eye did heal it up.  
He is not very tall, yet for his years he's tall;  
His leg is but so-so, and yet 'tis well.  
There was a pretty redness in his lip,  
A little riper and more lusty red  
Than that mixed in his cheek. 'Twas just the difference  
Betwixt the constant red and mingled damask.  
There be some women, Silvius, had they marked him  
In parcels as I did, would have gone near  
To fall in love with him; but for my part  
I love him not—nor hate him not. And yet  
I have more cause to hate him than to love him,  
For what had he to do to chide at me?  
He said mine eyes were black and my hair black,  
And now I am remembered, scorned at me.  
I marvel why I answered not again.  
But that's all one—omittance is no quittance.  
I'll write to him a very taunting letter  
And thou shalt bear it. Wilt thou, Silvius?

### SILVIUS

Phebe, with all my heart.

### PHEBE

I'll write it straight.  
The matter's in my head and in my heart;  
I will be bitter with him and passing short.  
Go with me, Silvius. *Exeunt.*

## The Translation

### PHEBE

Don't think I'm in love with him just because I'm asking about him. He's an irritable boy, though he speaks well. But what do I care about words? And yet, words are a good thing when the man speaking them is pleasant to listen to. He's good-looking, but not too good-looking. He's awfully proud, but his pride suits him. He'll grow up to be a proper man. The best thing about him is his complexion: as fast as he offends me with words, his pretty face heals the wound. He's not very tall, but he's tall enough for his age. His legs aren't great, but they're alright. His lips were nice and red, a little more lively and passionate than the red that was in his cheeks—one was pure red and the other more pink. There are women out there, Silvius, who would have nearly fallen in love with him after inspecting him as closely as I have. But I don't love him or hate him—though I suppose I have more reason to hate him than love him. What right did he have to scold me like that? He said my eyes and my hair were black and, now that I think of it, he scorned me. I'm surprised I didn't bite back. But no matter—I'll get back at him soon enough. I'll write him a taunting letter, and you can deliver it. Will you do that for me, Silvius?

### SILVIUS

With all my heart, Phebe.

### PHEBE

I'll write it right now—the whole thing is pressing on my mind, and on my heart. I'll be bitter toward him, and curt. Come with me, Silvius.

*They exit.*

Phebe goes back and forth a lot between talking about how great Ganymede\* is, then on second thought how totally normal and *not at all great* he is. BUT: it's clear to the audience that she's fallen in love with this dude.

So how do we know? Phebe uses just as many mean words as nice words here. How do we know that she's fooling herself?

Is she fooling herself? Or is she fooling Silvius? Or the audience? Who does she think she's fooling?

\*er.... Rosalind. But Phebe doesn't know that, so... yeah. Ganymede.





## SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S  
SIGNATURE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

# AS YOU LIKE IT | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

You can respond to these in any way you choose:

Write

ACT IT OUT

Talk about it

Draw

THINK ABOUT IT

... up to you!

HOLY  
BEAT CHANGES,  
BATMAN!

If you thought Benedick's and Rosalind's monologues had a lot of beat changes... you clearly hadn't met Phebe yet! Let's combine the exercises we did with them and see how they work for her.

Remember: each beat is a small unit of text where a character uses a specific tactic to try to achieve their objective. Usually a beat is one complete thought, BUT sometimes a character only gets partway into a thought before "changing direction." You can tell when this happens from punctuation—they often *literally* interrupt themselves.

Mark the end of each beat with a slash. Finding the best places for changes is easiest if you read aloud (even quietly), but in your head works, too!

Which beat changes come from Phebe's inner conflict? Which does she say for Silvius' benefit—or directly to Silvius? Switch things up and see how that changes things!

NOW read Phebe's speech in your head (or have someone read it to you) as if you were Silvius. How do you react to each beat? Are you hearing what you want?

Phebe literally *just* met Ganymede.\* Even with a little Shakespeare-magic, that's a *very* short courtship. Can Phebe actually be in love? How deeply? Does that even happen that fast? If it does, can you trust it?

Bitter and passing  
short... hmm...



If you were Phebe, what would you write in your letter to Ganymede?\* If you were Rosalind, how would you react?

This little scene is a great example of the importance not only of speaking the lines, but of *listening* to them.

Phebe, with all  
my subtext!

Subtext is a theatre (and literary) term that refers to "the lines between the lines" or "the true meaning under the lines."

When Silvius says, "Phebe, with all my heart," is he saying what he truly means? If not, what does he truly mean? Try thinking of a few different options, and then try saying the line once or more for each option. How does each work?

Now... if Silvius is too obvious with his subtext, Phebe will pick up on it. Does she? How does that change her next line? How does that change the scene?

With all the beat changes and subtext and comedy (oh my!), this scene has a LOT of possibilities for staging. How would you direct it? What notes would you give each actor? What notes would you give to them as a team? And what does the whole thing look like?

