

EDUCATION PROGRAM WEEK 4: Race and Gender

Shakespeare is not without its faults. Alongside these gendered stereotypes we worked through in Week 3, there is a race component to the show that can be erased by colorblind casting. Keep in mind, in *As You Like It*, Silvius and Phoebe are shepherds, while Celia and Rosalind are the daughters of dukes, belonging to two different social classes as well as physical locations in the dukedom. As you read through the scene below, note how the characters are described.

RESOURCES:

- For more critical analysis on race in Shakespeare: The Globe has some great resources.

(<https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/blogs-and-features/2018/09/28/such-stuff-s1-e4/>)

- For reading, a wonderful book to read would be “The Great White Bard” by Farah Karim-Cooper.

ACTIVITY:

READ THIS SCENE AND DISCUSS.

SILVIUS

Sweet Phoebe, do not scorn me. Do not, Phoebe.
Say that you love me not, but say not so
In bitterness. The common executioner,
Whose heart th’ accustomed sight of death makes hard,
Falls not the axe upon the humbled neck
But first begs pardon. Will you sterner be
Than he that dies and lives by bloody drops?

Enter, unobserved, Rosalind as Ganymede, Celia as Aliena, and Corin.

PHOEBE

I would not be thy executioner.
I fly thee, for I would not injure thee.
Thou tell'st me there is murder in mine eye.
'Tis pretty, sure, and very probable
That eyes, that are the frail'st and softest things,
Who shut their coward gates on atomies,
Should be called tyrants, butchers, murderers.
Now I do frown on thee with all my heart,
And if mine eyes can wound, now let them kill thee.
Now counterfeit to swoon; why, now fall down;
Or if thou canst not, O, for shame, for shame,
Lie not, to say mine eyes are murderers.
Now show the wound mine eye hath made in thee.
Scratch thee but with a pin, and there remains
Some scar of it. Lean upon a rush,
The cicatrice and capable impressure
Thy palm some moment keeps. But now mine eyes,
Which I have darted at thee, hurt thee not;
Nor I am sure there is no force in eyes
That can do hurt.

SILVIUS

O dear Phoebe,
If ever—as that ever may be near—
You meet in some fresh cheek the power of fancy,
Then shall you know the wounds invisible
That love's keen arrows make.

PHOEBE

But till that time
Come not thou near me.
And when that time comes,
Afflict me with thy mocks, pity me not,
As till that time I shall not pity thee.

ROSALIND

, *as Ganymede, coming forward*

And why, I pray you? Who might be your mother,
That you insult, exult, and all at once,
Over the wretched? What though you have no
beauty—
As, by my faith, I see no more in you
Than without candle may go dark to bed—
Must you be therefore proud and pitiless?
Why, what means this? Why do you look on me?
I see no more in you than in the ordinary
Of nature's sale-work.—'Od's my little life,
I think she means to tangle my eyes, too.—
No, faith, proud mistress, hope not after it.
'Tis not your inky brows, your black silk hair,
Your bugle eyeballs, nor your cheek of cream
That can entame my spirits to your worship.—
You foolish shepherd, wherefore do you follow her,
Like foggy south puffing with wind and rain?
You are a thousand times a properer man
Than she a woman. 'Tis such fools as you
That makes the world full of ill-favored children.
'Tis not her glass but you that flatters her,
And out of you she sees herself more proper
Than any of her lineaments can show her.—
But, mistress, know yourself. Down on your knees
And thank heaven, fasting, for a good man's love,
For I must tell you friendly in your ear,
Sell when you can; you are not for all markets.
Cry the man mercy, love him, take his offer.
Foul is most foul, being foul to be a scoffer.—
So take her to thee, shepherd. Fare you well.

PHOEBE

Sweet youth, I pray you chide a year together.
I had rather hear you chide than this man woo.

ROSALIND

,[⌈]as *Ganymede*[⌋]

He's fall'n in love with your
foulness. ([⌈]To *Silvius*.[⌋]) And she'll fall in love with

my anger. If it be so, as fast as she answers thee with frowning looks, I'll sauce her with bitter words. (To Phoebe.) Why look you so upon me?

PHOEBE

For no ill will I bear you.

ROSALIND

, as Ganymede

I pray you, do not fall in love with me,
For I am falser than vows made in wine.
Besides, I like you not. If you will know my house,
'Tis at the tuft of olives, here hard by.—
Will you go, sister?—Shepherd, ply her hard.—
Come, sister.—Shepherdess, look on him better,
And be not proud. Though all the world could see,
None could be so abused in sight as he.—
Come, to our flock.

She exits, with Celia and Corin.

WRITE:

- List the words, phrases, or sentences that describe the characters above.
 - Who are they mainly referring to?
 - What can we infer about these characters based on their descriptions and their livelihoods, what biases do you think Shakespeare is pointing out here?
- If you could rewrite this scene, what words would you use? What words would you replace, change, or leave the same?
- Additionally, if you could fan-cast this show using pop-culture icons, who would play these characters and why? How can casting help make scenes like this less derogatory?
- Present your fan casting and alterations to the class. Explain your changes. Do they reflect a more inclusive and powerful Shakespeare?