Nicholas Allen

I recognize the characters of Touchstone and Rosalind. You get off some good lines. The stilted English is probably a mistake: a little of this goes a long way and I frequently had a hard time deciphering the meaning. But do "do" a little of this to set the tone. The chief item to work on, though, would be to develop an argument. Sure, the characters argue, but they don't develop a point about the play—the abuse is sometimes funny, but it doesn't go anywhere. When Shakespeare breaks up the brawl it gives the game away: it is just brawling. The characters should give Shakespeare something to work into his next comedy! You work in many themes from the play, which shows that you've read with understanding. But the dialogue meanders around and doesn't develop. Reasons! Give reasons (or, as Shakespeare puns, "raisons"). Perhaps you concentrate on one particular scene in the play, like the wrestling match, and have one of your characters praise it, and the other damn it. They give reasons for their opinions in accordance with their characters. Then, also in accordance with their characters, you work out in appropriate conclusion to the argument. By having the characters comment *on the play* "reading" comes to the fore, and that's the point of the exercise. Your conclusion could work better were the argument more consistently about social status: perhaps the thing to do would be to start *there* and work backwards, possibly concentrating on the wrestling match as a way at getting at the relationship between argument, rudeness, and social class. Grade: B

Brayden Burleigh

This is getting there. This is good commentary on the scene, and you make a stab at using the dialogue to illustrate the play by calling attention to the social hierarchy in the Globe theater. To get this up to the next level: play with it! The two characters should be more differentiated and closer to their equivalents in the play. Develop some tension between them? Or perhaps they wonder why Shakespeare would misrepresent them? Since you are using your dialogue to comment on politeness, rhetoric, and social status, why not, if only briefly, introduce a "groundling"—say Touchstone—to interrupt the discussion and add a little drama to your dialogue, and another layer of commentary on the play? You have good things to work with; compress what you have and use the space to do something with the dialogue as a literary form, applying what you've learned from Shakespeare to your own "argument." Good start. Grade: B+

Andrew Wimbish

This is getting there. You do the right thing to zero in on one issue and then work it hard. One is left appropriately dizzy. From here, improvement is chiefly a matter of style and presentation. The argument goes on longer than it needs to, so I'd trim it back and use the space to add a little more dramatic business. I like the idea of the sylvan theater, but don't think you've exploited the possibilities yet. You could let the other theater patrons speak to add a little drama (and you could make them characters from the play too). It would be a good idea to work in more lines from the play, just to stay on point. As it stands, this is a good working draft. Add more wit, do something more with the characterization of your speakers, and this could be very fine. Grade: B+

Joon Seo

I enjoyed this. This scenario is well chosen, and it's obvious that you've followed the play attentively. I particularly like your Rosalind, who has not a little self-knowledge.

Some things could be done to improve this. Punctuation, obviously. Using quotation marks would make the dialogue much easier to follow since it would be immediately apparent when one character stops talking and the other begins. The alternative would be to use the play format, beginning a new paragraph every time the speaker changes (your paragraphs are too long, anyway). We don't write dialogue very often these days, do we?

There are some things that could be done to spice it up. Make more of the dramatic situation, letting the play enter into the dialogue through quotations, and the action ("look! Jaques just made a fool of himself again…") You could let Shakespeare put some words in the mouths of your characters. Since the form is so artificial to begin with, you can get away with some craziness so long as it has a point. Pruning the dialogue a bit might also make your points more "pointed." Sometimes hedge-clippers can be handy in a forest.

You have much to work with. I particularly liked you sly allusions to the other plays: that's the spirit! Grade: B+

Maegan Stebbins

I like this much. This best thing is the way you play with the characters of the speakers … of course Rosalind will get the best of it! It's a good idea to bring in the art versus reality business too. This is a bit hard to manage, but it would be worthwhile to carry the theme throughout, as the characters criticize mirrors of themselves. Once the mirror-game gets going, there are several twists and turns that could be taken. To improve on this, you could develop a theme more thoroughly. You get the back-and-forth just fine, but can't develop an interpretation of the play very far because there are several topics. The gender business would do the trick I imagine. To imitate Shakespeare, you could throw a twist into things by introducing some gender ambiguity into your dialogue itself. I wonder if that could be done without compromising Rosalind's feminism? Sprinkling a little Shakespeare into your prose might have a good effect too: familiar words in a new context. You've got the necessary things down; from here you can begin to play with the play. Well done! Grade: A-

Ryan Stebbins

What you do really well—better than any dialogue I've read thus far—is to develop the dramatic situation between your speakers. The way you do it makes for an apt interpretation of the play, just by imitation. Nonetheless, I think you could gain something by introducing more in the way of criticism, letting your dramatic characters reveal themselves through comments on the play, as opposed to, say, asides to the audience. I like the way you develop Rosalind. Perhaps she could reveal her intellectual superiority by asking Orlando a few pointed and teasing questions about the play, which, with his answers, could feed back into your dramatic dialogue. Do the two characters watching the play understand the motives of their doubles on the stage? What if they don't? Your dialogue works best in its moments of Rosalind-ambiguity. To the extent that you can maximize ambiguity without sewing mere confusion or blur, you succeed. If you could work (ambiguously) the off-stage, on-stage dichotomy into the love-dialogue, so much the better. Well done. Grade: A-

Benjamin Welch

You get off some good lines here. But to improve on this, you'd want to provide more in the way of argument—reasons and examples—to develop your theme. As it stands, the dialogue is a little too sketchy and superficial for comfort. Read the play! Or, rather, have your characters read the play. You might fasten on a particular scene or piece of dialogue and have your characters critique it—while in their characters. One of the love-dialogues might serve, since the natural-artificial business comes thick and fast there. Jaques and Rosalind would have different outlooks on love, so you would have both "matter" in the play to discuss, and "matter" between your characters to dramatize. Go after the details, as in any close-reading assignment, linking the little things in the play (and in your own writing) to a larger point. There are things to work with in your essay, they just need to be elaborated and illustrated. Grade: B

Jacqueline Bailey

You've made a good choice of scene and characters, setting the thing up nicely. The dialogue improves as you go along, and you keep a good eye on the play, which not everyone does. The analysis is serviceable, but since it is mostly paraphrase it doesn't take us very far. I think you need a twist. Since the topic here is "all the world's a stage," and you characters are talking in a theater well, why not go with it? One thought that comes to mind is that you could have them comment not just on the play, but on the audience in the Globe watching the play. You have this nicely set up in your opening. How might the audience react to Jaques's big scene? And how might Jaques and the Duke react to that reaction? Inserting a bit more of the theatrical dimension might open up some possibilities for reading the scene and taking on Jaques's argument. You're off to a good start. Grade: B

Jay Laiche

This is a good pair of characters to work with, and I like the way you take your dialogue from a particular scene. What tends to get lost in the translation, though, is the irony with which Shakespeare treats this "matter": this is not a simple court versus country business since the play is busy conflating one with the other, not least in the scene you are starting from. For example, wrestling is a country sport that Shakespeare has ironically transported to the court, just as he has carried courtly manners into the country. You should pick up on this.

For example, by setting your dialogue in the Globe, you have translated your scene from the country to the city. Why not play with this, adapting the Shakespeare scene to the new surroundings? If Corin has never seen a play before, he would likely be confused, mistaking the show for real life. Touchstone, naughty clown, might confirm him in his mistake. Or you could reverse the two roles: in the original, Touchstone insists that the court is just like the country; in your dialogue, Corin could make that argument as Touchstone insists that country ways wouldn't suit the court. And so on: pick up on some of Shakespeare's irony and ambiguity and your dialogue will be "reading" the play more closely. Good start. Grade: B

Emily Walter

This is a thoughtful response to the play—excellent! Your reader can sense the wheels turning. I'm impressed, too, that you can stay on your point for so long, looking at it from different perspectives, finding new examples. I think it could be done even better with some re-working. There are places where the characters shift sides with respect to artifice. That's fine, since Shakespeare's play is filled with such reversals, but if this is intentional you need to signal it in some way so that it is obvious that the characters are becoming confused and not the writer. I think I'd try to make the two characters more distinct too: don't just tell us that Jaques is "depressive," show us. Touchstone could be a little more witty and clownish. It wouldn't take much to effect this: once you have the shape of the dialogue down, a few characteristic "touches" would do the trick. You could also work in a phrase or two from Shakespeare—a lazy way of accomplishing the same thing, but one that would keep you closer to the text of the play. Which would be a good thing in a close reading assignment. You're off to a good start here: grade: B+

Reece Prothero

You win the contest for the best Touchstone. It is not very easy to mimic his character and wit, but you do a very creditable job of catching his mannerisms and indeed the bantering tone of the play generally. So far, so good. To get this up to the next level you would need to work something of substance into the argument so that the dialogue would begin to comment on and interpret the play. I'm not sure how I would go about it, since the hanging "leaves on leaves" joke, while very apt for the imagery of the play, perhaps doesn't lend itself to an obvious topic for argument. The point might be whether or not writing poems is an expression of love or a way of avoiding it—perhaps what you are getting at with the action versus intention theme (very Hamlet, that). Perhaps this topic leads into a discussion of whether and when wit can be erotic, and whether this "romantic comedy" is more comic than romantic. One thing you might do is to have Touchstone and the Duke comment not just on the play but on the responses of the imaginary audience to the play. That might lead into some analysis of how the play works as drama, with the Duke supplying a more sentimental and the fool a more satirical reading of how this play "plays." It's clear from your imitation that you get what's going on. Well done! Grade: A-

Christa Hoeffler

You stay on topic throughout, which is good—I notice that many of the dialogues tend to wander. But the topic never really takes flight: the points tend to be rather pedestrian. How to jazz it up? Perhaps you stay with the "all the world's a stage" theme, but apply it to other scenes in the play. I'm thinking that love (about which we hear so much) might be a good place to test the thesis since there is so much about sincerity and artifice in the lovers' wooing. Are the characters "acting"? When? How can we tell? If the characters in your dialogue were a pair of lovers from the play, there would be an opportunity to dramatize the subject in your speakers' words—and keep everybody guessing. If one of them were Rosalind, she would have something more to do than just get annoyed at Jaques. Perhaps you compose a dialogue between Rosalind and Phoebe? (That could get wild.) Or you could do something with your imagined performance to develop the theme—perhaps something goes wrong on stage, or in the audience (making a "scene"?), to call forth some commentary from your speakers.

So long as you keep one eye on the play, a little silly extravagance might be just the thing. Since you're writing prose rather than verse, there's no reason to format the dialogue in lines. Grade: B

Amelia Speirs

You pick up on a number of themes in the play, which you plainly understand well enough. I think you get crossed up by trying to mimic Elizabethan English: the dialogue doesn't make grammatical sense in places and I fear you've gone to a lot of needless trouble. I like the idea of the little off-stage drama in which the two lovers carry on their relationship. Poor Phoebe is indeed the clever one, as you have her, and Silvius hopelessly simple. I would condense what you have, which is longer than it needs to be, using a few pointed remarks (perhaps with some quotations from the play) to telegraph your points.

It stands to reason that our two country lovers would misunderstand the play (presumably not having seen one before). I wonder whether you could allow them to make some "simple" or "foolish" remarks of a sort that would slyly illustrate how the play works and your own understanding of it? That would be a bit of a trick, but I expect that you could pull it off—Phoebe being clever when simplicity is called for, and Silvius mistaking theatrical artifice for nature. One wouldn't want them to be simple idiots, of course, but a little humor at their expense might be in the spirit of the play, especially if their mis-readings illuminate Shakespeare's meanings and lead to a happy conclusion for your dialogue. Grade: B

Beth Cameron

I liked this much: you have me, equal parts, cringing and laughing out loud: which is, I take it, how a play or a dialogue like this ought to work. Your edginess is on point, as is your characterization of the two speakers. The Tiresias gambit is a very thought-provoking response to the play.

Curious, isn't it, that cross-dressed Shakespeare productions have become so common as to be a snooze, but imagining those original boy-actors can still shock. Now you have me imagining Tiresias playing Rosalind, which is more shocking still.

You could make this better in revision. The dialogue goes on longer than it needs to; condensation would make your points more pointed. You could throw in some lines from the play at apt moments. Tinker with the prose: it could do with more rhythm and flow to get the syntactic emphasis right, the literary equivalent of comic timing on stage. A little bit of syntactic patterning at key moments, just to give a hint of how Touchstone and Rosalind speak? It would be tedious to do the whole dialogue that way, but it might give your punch-lines more punch.

Well done! Grade: A-

Conner Fowler

I think you get Shakespeare right, and supply plenty of evidence to support the argument. You stay on point throughout. I think you could improve on this by doing more with the dialogue form. For example, you could give the Courtier a few good points, only to have the Peasant triumph in the end. Or else you could make him really odious, giving the reader more pleasure in his defeat—either way would add a little drama.

Better yet, you could do what the assignment called for, and adapt speakers from the play. These could be the "real" Corin and Touchstone commenting on their dialogue in the play. Or it could be a peasant (Adam, Sylvio, or Audrey) and a courtier (Jaques, or one of the Duke's men). This would complicate matters in a way that would add interest. Have your characters quote lines from the play: it would both add liveliness and evidence for your points.

This is a fine topic, and a good reminder that Shakespeare was equal parts country boy and courtier: no wonder he writes well on this topic! Grade: B+

Samantha Freeburn

The thing I like best about this, apart from the interpretation of the play, is the way your characters actually argue—taking sides and giving reasons. It's not just simple banter. These are good points to argue, too. To get this up to the next level, you could attend more to execution. I'd make Jaques more Jaques-like. He needs to be more gloomy and sardonic. Rosalind could be more teasing and witty. As it stands, they are not differentiated enough for the dialogue to be properly dramatic. While you're at it, you could strive to make the dialogue a little less stilted and more colloquial, and perhaps the whole would benefit from being condensed a bit. Adding some appropriate quotations from the play would add sparkle as well as serving as evidence for your points. These quibbles all have to with execution: you have the substance down. Grade: A-

Kendall Pace

You set this up nicely, adding narrative interest to your dialogue. I'm glad you selected this pair of characters, though admittedly it's a little hard since we don't see so much of Oliver. I have some suggestions. The argument gets a little fuzzy in places (not surprising!). I think it could be managed better if you were to stay with the substance of the opening scene and cast your dialogue specifically in terms of the "birth" versus "fortune" argument, using these concepts to frame later events in the play as they would appear to your two characters … who could be differentiated a little more, perhaps? An optimistic Orlando and gloomy Oliver at first, though changing their tone as events unfold and each learns to qualify their initial views: Orlando acknowledging that natural gifts require a bit of luck, and Oliver that the gifts of fortune ought sometimes to yield to natural ties. It does get tricky as circumstances shift throughout the play, but I think you come out in the right place. It would take some tinkering with the draft to clarify matters, but if nothing else, your dialogue can illustrate how the first scene does in fact frame the later action. Good start! A-

Angela Romaine

I liked this! Just the sort of thing I had in mind. You manage the characterization and dramatic setting nicely, and obviously have put some thought into the responses. I'm guessing that the dialogue could be made even better were you, at least at the end, to come back to the play—as opposed to treating the theme in the abstract. For example, there's the issue of whether role-playing gets tiresome and inhibits liberty. Does Shakespeare take this up in the play? I think maybe he does when Rosaline and Orlando get tired of their wooing-games and seek to get on with life. Just in time, no? For the audience might be getting tired of the role-within-a-role complexity, and longing for a happy resolution. Were you to illustrate your points with similar examples from the play, you could use the "all the world's a stage" scene as a kind of frame for As You Like It at large, reading the play through the lens of this one exchange. The business about going through "stages"—do you find examples of *that* going on in the play? I think you get the characters of your characters down, but perhaps they could be a little more highly colored? Sardonic Jaques versus the ebullient Duke. You are in the right groove; I think you are entitled to play with things a little more than you do. I like the puns. Grade: A-

Jonathan Wolfe

Well (peering from behind my rock), it seems to me that this is a very sensible discussion and that it touches on an important theme in the play. So far so good. You could get more mileage out of it were you to spend more time discussing the play, or rather, having your characters discuss the play. Draw your examples from Shakespeare's story: why talk about peasants when you can talk about Corin, or courtiers when you can talk about Jaques and Touchstone? Test these sensible thoughts against the zaniness of the play. Are we happier just being ourselves, or being some sort of imaginary version of ourselves? Does one answer to this question work for all, or is it different with different persons (like the characters in the play)? What does Shakespeare think? It's usually pretty hard to tell, but perhaps Orlando and Duke Senior might have some ideas on the subject. You are on the right track, but work with the challenges posed by your text. There's Jaques, for instance, who is plainly happier being himself, which is to say, happier being unhappy. Discuss! Grade: B