

*Love's  
Labour's  
Lost*



STUDY GUIDE

2017

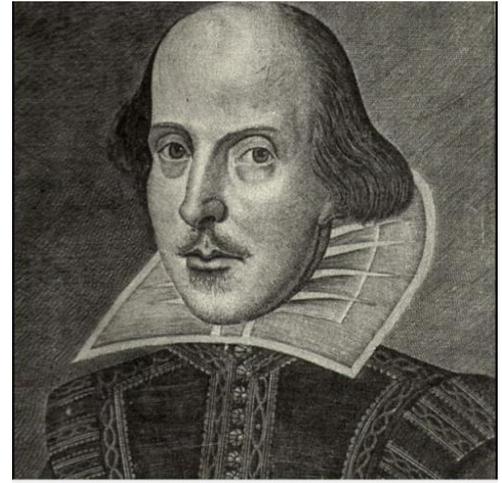


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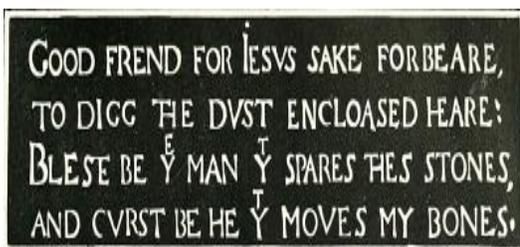
# About the Playwright

William Shakespeare's baptismal record is dated April 26, 1564. His actual birthday is unknown, but many historians believe that he was born three days prior on April 23, 1564, to parents John and Mary Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon. William, the oldest of the Shakespeares' four surviving children, also had four sisters who did not survive beyond infancy or childhood. John Shakespeare was a successful glove maker and held various local government positions



during William's early childhood. John's success likely contributed to the budding poet and playwright's grammar school education, where from between the ages of 7 and 15 William studied classical Latin literature, writing, and acting. In 1582, at around the age of 18, Shakespeare married 26-year-old Anne Hathaway, who was pregnant with the couple's first daughter, Susanna. Two years later, Anne gave birth to twins, Judith and Hamnet. Although William worked and eventually lived in London, Anne and their children spent their lives in Stratford-upon-Avon. Hamnet died in 1596 at the age of 11, but Susanna and Judith went on to marry a doctor and a vintner respectively—both of whom lived and worked in Stratford.

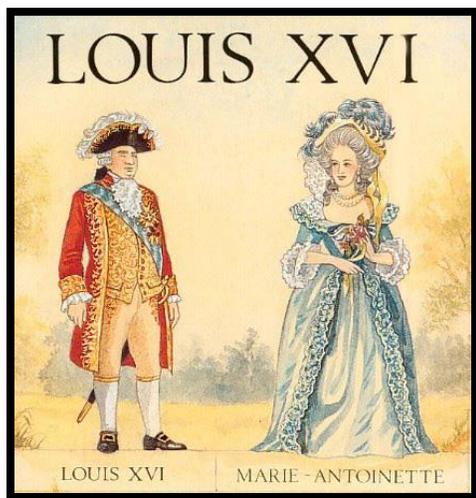
During his career, Shakespeare worked as an actor, playwright, and company shareholder on London's competitive theatre scene. During the reign of Elizabeth I, Shakespeare was part of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and later, under the rule of James I, he became part of the King's Men. Shakespeare wrote over 150 poems and



William Shakespeare's self-authored grave marker, located at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford.

at least 38 attributed plays during the span of his career. He died on April 23, 1616, at the age of 52 and is buried at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon. Shakespeare's lineage ceased with the deaths of his children and grandchildren, but his legacy lives on through his surviving works, which to this day are widely read, celebrated, and performed in countless languages around the world.

# Pre-Revolutionary War France



The French Revolution is epitomized in the opening lines of Charles Dickens' period novel *A Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness" (Dickens 1). The same eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy that led America to seek its independence from Britain inspired citizens all across Europe to do away with systems of monarchy and seek equality and democracy for their nations.

The reign of King Louis XVI is perceived by history to be oppressive because while many French subjects during this period went hungry

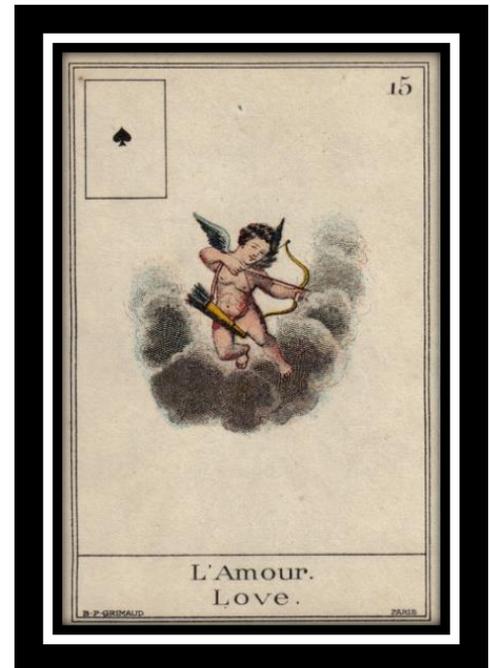
and without work, Louis and his queen, Marie Antoinette, were known for their excessive parties and extravagant spending. As the French economy continued to fail and national debt began to rise, the French became especially interested in the spending habits of their Austrian-born queen. In many ways, Marie Antoinette became a scapegoat for people's financial and political frustrations. In fact, despite being publically cleared of any connection to the fraud of the Diamond Necklace Affair, the Queen was still considered guilty by the masses of defrauding the French government of 2 million lire (\$14 million). However, there is no debating that she did order the construction of her personal 12-structure estate, the Hameau de la Reine, during this turbulent time, which cost the French government upwards of 500,000 lire or \$5 million. The Queen of France and Navarre was also known for the exuberant amount of money spent on her wardrobe, at times exceeding her annual clothing budget that equals \$3.6 million in terms of today's spending power. Historians still debate on whether or not the monarchs' spending hastened the revolution by enraging the masses, and perhaps in the Age of Enlightenment revolution was unavoidable, but the excess of the royal family during the country's time of need certainly landed Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette outside of their subjects' favor. The careless frivolity characteristic of the reign of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette parallels the divide between the noble class and rustics within this production of *Love's Labour's Lost*. The excess and extravagance of France in the 1780s also aligns with the overindulgent "feast of language" found within the play.

## About the Play

Just as the conflicts that led to the French Revolution simmered below the surface of a courtly life ordered around the pleasure of the society's most elite, so also does the conflict for the characters of *Love's Labour's Lost*. For the majority of the play, the stakes regarding the themes of love, social responsibility, education, and will seem low for the courts of Navarre and France. Unlike the rustics such as Costard and Jaquenetta, the lords and ladies are free to serve their own wills with no accountability. While the women are more socially responsible than the men, they still view most of their interactions as a game—a game of wit. Thus, the women's opponents in their verbal matches aren't limited to the men of Navarre's court and are at times extended to include their social inferiors. While clever games are great fun for the women, however, they can be humiliating for characters who don't possess the same freedom and skill.

The men sign an oath and the King proclaims a decree banning women from court in hopes of avoiding distraction, but once the men fall in love, they immediately break their vow and therefore the law that was created to bolster their study. The breaking of the same law for which Costard was punished earlier demonstrates how socially irresponsible the King is toward his subjects who aren't given an opportunity to take or deny the oath. It is the rustic characters who are forced to take the decree most seriously, presumably because they are the only group who will suffer the consequences for failing to uphold it. The King has the ability to change the laws to fit his will. This point is proven after the King and his men realize they are all forsworn, at which time the King concludes that they must “now prove / Our loving lawful, and our faith not torn.”

Although the nobility of France and Navarre are able to avoid accountability for the majority of the play, Mercade's news of the death of the Princess' father causes the characters to realize that a serious and inescapable life exists outside their games of wooing, wit, and courtship. Ultimately, *Love's Labour's Lost* becomes a realistic story of the serious responsibility of love and all that successful love entails—oath keeping, social responsibility, and the moderation of will through self-control.



A French playing card featuring Cupid. Love and wit are games for the ladies and a challenge to the men.

# Shakespeare's Language

Shakespeare gives language the starring role in *Love's Labour's Lost* and, in doing so, demonstrates his own understanding of the power and limitations of language. Some of his characters excel in their use of verbal communication and rhetorical wit while others abuse words so terribly that they cannot be understood. Language is necessary to connect and communicate with others, yet when misused it can be divisive (and even destructive). The following examples describe how language is used to sever connections more than establish them within the play.

## Education

The level of education among the characters is made obvious through their use and abuse of language. Holofernes, the grammar school pedant, uses language as a means to elevate himself above his social equals and sometimes even his social superiors, such as Don Armado. He intentionally uses Latin to talk above the educational level of his usual audience, and because of this he must use many words where one would do. In describing the death of the deer to Dull, for example, he refers to the ground as “the face of Terra, the soil, the land, the earth.” When Holofernes faces an audience who surpasses him in education during the pageant of the Nine Worthies, however, he is made to feel the same humiliation he has inflicted upon others. Nevertheless, although he is publicly shamed, it is unclear whether or not the teacher has learned his lesson.

## Wooing and Courtship

The men use both written and spoken language as a means to woo the ladies, but they are slow to realize that their already perjured word is not a comfort to their beloveds. Regardless of their true feelings toward their suitors, the women mock the sonnets they receive, and while they are given words of flattery and devotion from the King and his companions, they aren't provided with their true desire—accommodation. The men of Navarre's court aren't the only suitors unable to communicate their desire successfully, however; Don Armado himself also “turns sonnet” and writes a love letter to Jaquenetta, who can't read. The inability of these men to recognize how futile their attempts to woo are proves that language without accountability and consideration is useless, regardless of class or education.

## Display of Wit

King Ferdinand and his men consider themselves to be scholars and learned men, yet their verbal wit proves no match for the Princess and her ladies. The fact that women are excluded from court illustrates that the oath takers do not have a high opinion of feminine intellect. However, these ladies of France are drastically underestimated by the men and are more concerned with the sport of wit than with its study. The men fail to show the women common courtesy by welcoming them to court, and they likewise fail to show personal accountability when they dress up as Muscovites in order to woo the ladies.

The women, therefore, aren't obliged to show the men mercy as they meet them "mock for mock." Although the banter between the men and women is at times flirtatious, the wit is so sharp that it leaves little room for the reconciliation of relationships. This is likely intentionally protective on the part of the women. Throughout the play's conclusion, the women seem only willing to consider a relationship with men who prove themselves faithful before courtship and marriage.

*"Sweet smoke of rhetoric. . ."*

Don Armado,  
*Love's Labour's Lost*

# The Play's Conclusion and Female Agency

The choice of the women to leave the outcome of their futures open at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost* demonstrates female power within the tradition of courtship during Shakespeare's day. According to Ilona Bell's book *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship*, this freedom of choice based on personal desire was often an option for the upper two-thirds of Elizabethan women.

Court cases, medical records, and familiar letters confirm the fact that love and sexual attraction can exert an important role in marriage choices of women from the middling to the upper ranks of early modern society.

"In a 1565 court case Margaret Underwood testifies that she rejected Thomas Deynes' suit because he expressed a desire for her property, not her affection: "he said if he might enjoy the house and land in her mother's possession that he would be content to marry with her, wherefore that he would have had her for her lands sake as she conjectured, she made him an answer that she would no more talk with him in any matrimony [sic] matter" (Bell 44).

Bell admits, however, "that for many aristocratic Elizabethans, wealth and family connections are essential prerequisites for choosing a spouse, but nonetheless secondary" (Bell 44). For the Princess and her ladies that power is real, but unfortunately Jaquenetta can only imitate that power. John Alvis' article "Derivative Loves are Labour Lost" recognizes this by saying that "Jaquenetta resembles the ladies of the French embassy in postponing her acceptance of Armado's suit until he should prove the strength of his intentions.... the audience can hardly suppose this addict to aristocratic fashion will prove capable of fulfilling his vow any more than he has shown himself up to observing the original pledge to celibacy" (Alvis 5). The Queen of France and her ladies are free to choose any other suitor or celibacy themselves, but Jaquenetta, pregnant with Armado's child, has limited options if Armado chooses to once again break his oath. Because of the patriarchal system of this period, the Princess is now more powerful as the Queen of France than she would be as the Queen of both France and Navarre.

# Who's Who

## Navarre Academe

*Class of 1780*



*Princess of France*  
"Most Likely to Succeed"



*Catherine*  
"Most Likely to Hold a Grudge"



*Maria*  
"Best Dressed"



*Rosaline*  
"Wittiest"



*Jaquenetta*  
"Biggest Flirt"



*Ferdinand the King*  
"Most Ambitious"



*Berowne*  
"Most School Spirit"



*Longaville*  
"Most Athletic"



*Dumaine*  
"Best Looking"



*Moth*  
"Best Performer"



*Boyet*  
"Biggest Gossip"



*Don Adriano de Armado*  
"Most Dramatic"



*Costard*  
"Class Clown"



*Anthony Dull*  
"Best Personality"



*Sir Nathaniel*  
"Teacher's Pet"



*Holofernes*  
"Biggest Snob"

# Shakespearean Comedy

Shakespearean plays are traditionally divided up by genre and include comedies, tragedies, and historical dramas. *Love's Labour's Lost* falls into the comedic genre although it does not meet all of the criteria associated with the category. The following list details how the characteristics frequently associated with the genre of comedy compare to those of *Love's Labour's Lost*.

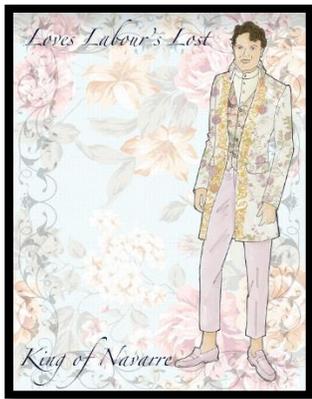
Conventions of Comedy	In <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>
The struggle of young lovers to overcome difficulties	The men take an oath to forswear women, causing personal conflict.
Wise elder who steers the young lovers toward one another	There is no obvious wise elder in this comedy.
A clever servant	Boyet serves the Princess and her ladies well and also displays his wit by exchanging jests with both groups.
Complex and multilayered plots	Beyond the plotline concerning the group of nobles, there is the love triangle of Don Armado, Jaquenetta, and Costard as well as the verbal contest of wit between almost all of the characters.
Characters are separated during the action and reunited at the play's conclusion	The opposite is true of this play. The characters are brought together in Navarre and separated by the news of the King of France's death just as the men's feelings are publically made known.
Mistaken identities, often involving disguise	Costard mixes up the men's love letters; The women wear masks and trade love tokens in order to trick the men because Boyet tells them that the men plan to dress up as Muscovites in order to deceive them.
Family tensions that are usually resolved in the end	The financial settlement between the two countries is not completely clear.
Resolution of the play comes through marriage, usually accompanied by dancing and singing	<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> defies this convention—be sure to watch and see how!

## Setting the Scene

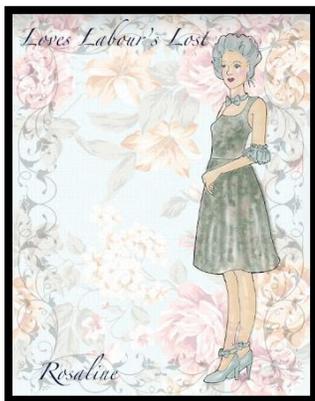
This production takes place at the University of Central Arkansas campus, on the lawn of McAlister Hall. The platform stage features multiple elevations and stairways, encased in a molding appliqué to evoke the palatial court of the Kingdom of Navarre. The edge of the stage is transformed into a beautiful garden flanked with potted trees from the campus nursery. The garden centers on Cupid's fountain, which makes the perfect gathering spot for characters to discuss wooing and courtship. Like in any palace garden, statues add art to nature, but in this "little academe" where learning reigns supreme, the featured statues are stacks of books topped with the busts of learned men. These statues signify the garden's end, the boundary beyond which no woman dare trespass "On pain of losing her tongue." Although the garden is classically structured in its appearance, the show's mood is light and comedic; therefore, the exterior of the stage, the color of the statues, and the verdure of the outdoor setting remain light and bright in contrast to the King and his lords' overzealous and somber oath. The characters themselves likewise bring added vividness to the stage, especially the women whose costumes, in a variety of pastels, reflect the playfulness of their discourse. The stage and setting represent the contrast of the attempted solemnity of the men and the vivacity of the women, especially when layered with the classical sounds of Mozart, Hayden, and Beethoven, as well as more rhythmic contemporary music. This production of *Love's Labour's Lost* is a feast of excess—language, sight, and sound!



# Creating the Look

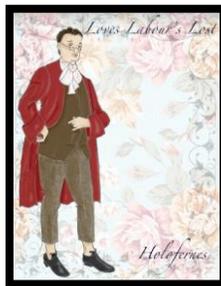
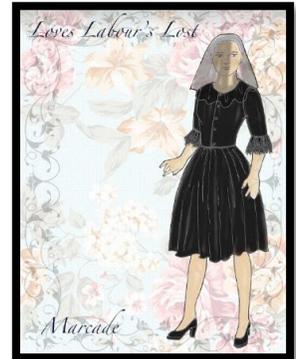
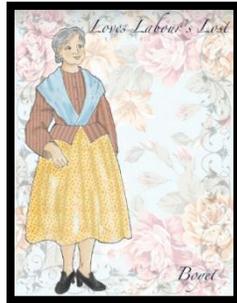


The designs of Sandra Spence bolster the divide between the social classes of the play's characters. The noble elite are dressed to display the beauty of a carefree life at court while the more subdued garments of the rustics speak to the rules of order imposed upon their personal lives and occupations by their social betters.



The costumes of the upper class in this production of *Love's Labour's Lost* evoke the French overindulgence of the 1780s combined with the style of the modern runway. The light pastels and decadent materials of the characters' attire speak to the mostly lighthearted and frothy playfulness of the production. Each lady's costume correlates with her suitor's, highlighting aesthetic symmetry when the characters are together on stage and intensifying the separation of the potential couples at the play's conclusion.





Although not a true rustic, Don Armado, as a Spanish guest of court, is still considered an outsider by the King of Navarre and his men. The dark colors of his attire contrast the light pastels worn in the court of Navarre. Not only do his garments lack lightness in hue, but the heaviness of his pants and boots also serves as the visual antithesis to the cropped pants and lightweight loafers worn by the King and his companions.

The apparel of the true rustics is reflective of their work. Costard's costume features patches, characteristic of a court clown or jester; Jaquenetta is dressed as a dairymaid; and Holofernes, Nathaniel, and Dull are also attired in the typical fashions of their respective professions. Marcade is dressed formally, but her black mourning dress serves as a visual representation of her role in bringing news of the King of France's death to the Princess. Even the costumes of Boyet and Moth, who have intimate relationships with their social superiors, are reflective of the disproportionate realities within the social hierarchy.



## Director Interview: Rebekah Scallet

**Q:** I've heard you say that you've been drawn to this play for a while. What aspects draw you in?

**A:** *There is so much fun in this play. I love the wordplay, I love puns. I love particularly Shakespeare's plays, the most famous of which is Much Ado About Nothing, where a couple has so much fun battling it out with wit*

*and you can see their compatibility in the way they share that language. In Love's Labour's Lost you have this times four. It is also something I've wanted to do because it's hard. I wanted the opportunity to open it up and make it accessible and fun. I have seen some productions that were great, and I have seen some productions that don't get past the dryness and difficulty of the language, so I was excited to take on that challenge.*

**Q:** The language within this play can be very dense. What will this production do to make the language more accessible to the audience?

**A:** *Every Shakespeare play contains language that has gone out of fashion, so the onus is on the physicality of the actors and text work to communicate meaning to the audience. We have worked on this a lot during rehearsals, and the more we continue work on these things the more clear they will become to us and enable the actors to make the meaning of the language clear to the audience.*

**Q:** Each group of characters has their own level of education (or lack thereof), and none seem to be without fault. Do you think Shakespeare is indicting education?

**A:** *I do think he is indicting education. One of the reasons people doubt Shakespeare's authorship is because of his lack of [higher] education, so it makes sense that he would make fun of it.*

**Q:** How does this production plan to evoke 1780s France while maintaining a modern feel?

**A:** *In terms of mannerisms and etiquette, the actors or characters are in the world of the 1780s. This play wouldn't work in an entirely modern setting because the women aren't accepted into the academic world, which doesn't match up with our reality in a modern college setting. However, the games that the couples play, the*

*way that they flirt, really haven't changed much in four hundred years. Also, the friendships within the play have a very modern feel to them—the King and his men are like bros!*

**Q:** This is an outdoor production, which seems to suit the text well. Does this grant the cast more freedoms or limitations?

**A:** *In general, I love doing the plays outside because it is closer to what plays would have been in Shakespeare's time; so many of them would have been done at the Globe or the Rose where you have that outdoor open-air experience. When you talk about being outside, you are outside, and you have that reality. It also tends to free up actors; it's a less normal situation because the audience is so close, and they're everywhere, so even when actors aren't on the stage, they are in character and they are able to interact with the audience and bring them into the overall experience. I really like the way we've done the set this year because we have McAlister Hall as the backdrop and it is able to serve as the King of Navarre's palace, so we are still in an outdoor setting but we can reference the indoors and the place that the women are able to go.*

**Q:** What do you hope the audience takes away from this production?

**A:** *I think so many of Shakespeare's plays show this magical love at first sight. You meet, you have a witty exchange, you fall in love, maybe there is an outside complication that gets in the way, and then at the end of the play you get married. This play doesn't do that; it subverts that expectation, and I think it's showing that love is harder than that, and in the end it's presenting a more mature view of love. Yeah, it's fun to meet, to flirt and play games with each other, but in the end true love, the kind of love that leads to a lasting marriage, requires more than that. While I want the audience to root for these characters to get together and fall in love, I also think it's great that they don't because they aren't ready yet; they each need to take more of a journey and go further in their development so that when it does happen it is right and won't flicker out in a couple days like Romeo and Juliet.*

# Swearing Oaths

The making and breaking of oaths provides a major source of conflict within *Love's Labour's Lost*. King Ferdinand and his men have each sworn an oath to devote their time and attention strictly to academic study. The pleasures they give up in this pursuit are food, sleep, and contact with women, but since food and sleep are necessities, these items will not be completely surrendered—only limited. Women, on the other hand, are decidedly disposable from society, as the men (excluding Berowne) consider their presence to be an unnecessary distraction from becoming the great scholars that three years of study will enable them to be. This seemingly noble pursuit is turned on its head when the Princess of France and her attending ladies arrive in Navarre to settle business between the two countries.

The men fall in love at first sight and are faced with the dilemma of choosing love or their own honor. As the hilarity of mixed-up love notes, gifts, and disguises ensues, Shakespeare's work begs the question: what good is an oath, and are vows actually doomed from the start? It is not until the men realize they are forsworn that they begin to have peace of mind. However, is it acceptable to break an oath because others are breaking it as well? And if so, are any oaths kept? The men pride themselves on their academic intelligence, but the women are wiser in the ways of the world. In the conclusion of the play, the new Queen of France makes it very clear how she feels about oaths when she says to King Ferdinand: "Your oath I will not trust, but go with speed / To some forlorn and naked hermitage/ Remote from all the pleasures of the world" (5.2 776-778). The Queen herself will be taking a serious oath soon, and presumably the weight of the monarchy obliges her to make sure that her potential partner is capable of actually keeping one as well.

# Before the Play

- Read a synopsis of *Love's Labour's Lost*. Understanding the plot before the show will allow you to focus on other aspects of the production. The language of this play is dense, so familiarizing yourself with the plot beforehand can be especially helpful.
- Check the theatre/company newsletter for any informative articles that might aid in your understanding of themes and devices specific to the production.
- Do some basic cultural research on Elizabethan England. Like in other Shakespeare plays, characters and plot points in *Love's Labour's Lost* are reflective of societal conflicts within the time period.
- Research the time period in which the production is set. This production is set in pre-revolutionary France during the 1780s. Knowing a bit about this time period will be helpful in identifying the significance of certain design elements such as costumes, props, and scenery. Sometimes an actor's gestures and mannerisms are also inspired by the period.
- If possible, read the play, look up the play's production history, or watch a movie version before the show.
- Before the performance begins, keep your eyes and ears open for any additional information that the director or company may provide about the production, such as a playbill or preshow.

# After the Play

What did you think about the play? How did it affect you? Use the following questions to help you explore your response to AST's *Love's Labour's Lost*.

## The Performance

- What scenes and characters surprised you?
  - Did you enjoy these surprises?
  - In your opinion, did these surprises enhance or distract from the scene/character?
- Were there any characters with which you empathized more than with others?
  - What were these characters like—gender, social status, talents, and faults?
  - Were there any characters you couldn't empathize with? If so, why?
- Which group seemed the most intelligent or witty in this production of *Love's Labour's Lost*?  
Why?
  - Men
  - Women
  - Rustics

## The Design: Scenic, Costume, Sound, and Lighting

- Were the choices consistent?
  - Did the props, scenic design, costumes, lights, and music all work together?
    - If not, what aspects of these elements fell short?
  - Did the similarities and differences in the characters' costumes tell you anything about the characters that the dialogue did not?
  - Did the music make sense in each scene?
  - Could you determine the color scheme?
  - Did the space seem too small or too large for the action?

## Other Thoughts:

- What elements did you want to see more or less of?
- What aspects were relatable to your own life?
  - What did you have trouble relating to?
- How did the ending feel?
  - Did the director's choices add more resolve or confusion to the ending?

# Attending a Play

1. Arrive early to choose your seat.
2. Plan on staying for the entirety of the production. Leaving early is both disrespectful to the actors who are still performing and distracting for those still enjoying the play.
3. Turn off your phone, watch alarms, and any other electronics that could disrupt the show.
4. Please do not photograph or record the show without permission.
5. Avoid talking during the performance.
6. Be aware of people with allergies and sensitivities by wearing a light perfume/cologne—or none at all.
7. Obey the Golden Rule; be polite and respectful to those around you!
8. If attending an outdoor show (such as Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre's production of *Love's Labour's Lost*), please remember that the same rules as those for indoor shows apply. Also, "outdoor" does not mean that smoking is permitted.
9. For an outdoor production, feel free to bring sunglasses to keep the sun out of your eyes, but leave items such as umbrellas and large hats at home since they could obstruct the view of others.



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