



# Exploring Gender and Shakespeare

**Prof. Alexa Alice Joubin**  
**Prof. Jyotsna Singh**

**Director Jonathan Goad**

**Actors Maev Beaty and Graham  
Abbey**

**CBC host Philip Coulter**

## CBC Ideas Week: Exploring Gender and Shakespeare 2023

Good afternoon! We've assembled a pair of Shakespeare scholars, a stage director and two actors to discuss the question of the progress in getting Shakespeare from the page to the stage: from the meaning of what's on the page -- what the head understands to the types of meaning we can get in performance -- what the heart understands.

Shakespeare comes back again and again to ideas about people - who they are, how and why they act - in his plays. Today -- the theme of **gender relations** and roles -- how men and women act toward each other, and the often-ambiguous identities we inhabit. That's a theme in many plays, and we've picked three.

First up, let's look at some scenes from *Twelfth Night*, a play from around 1601 that tells the story of a shipwrecked young woman, Viola, who dresses as a boy and goes to work for Duke Orsino. She quickly falls in love with him, but (a) he thinks she's a boy, and (b) he's in love with his neighbor Olivia who promptly falls in love with the quote unquote boy. Much hilarity ensues, but all of course ends happily.

Next, we shall explore gender roles in *Troilus and Cressida*. This is a play about the Trojan Wars, in which the Greek warrior Troilus falls in love with Cressida. Unfortunately, Cressida gets traded to the Greek camp, where she becomes the lover of the Greek soldier Diomedes. It's a play about small human tragedies against the big tragedies of war. This is the scene where Troilus and Cressida are introduced to each other, where they fall in love, and swear eternal faithfulness.

Our final case study is *The Taming of the Shrew*, a problematic play. The impoverished charming bully Petruccio marries the brash, smart and eternally angry Katherine for her money. Determined to make her a nice subservient wife, he spends the entire play humiliating and belittling her. Katherine for her part gives as good as she gets, but somewhere in all this they find true love, and by the end, she has at least the outward appearance of the good wife. But it's still a problem play.