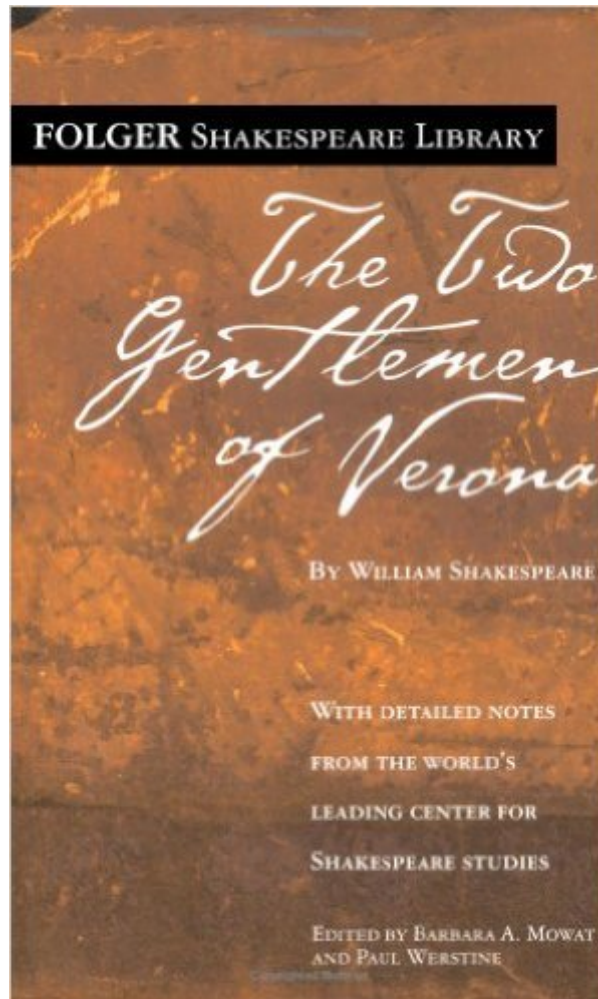


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The Two Gentlemen Of Verona (Folger Shakespeare Library)



Synopsis

While the word "gentlemen" suggests that its heroes are adults, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is more intelligible if we think of them as boys, leaving home for the first time. One has a crush on a girl, Julia, though he hasn't yet told her. Sent to court to learn to be "perfect gentlemen," Valentine and Proteus are derailed by their attraction to Sylvia, the ruler's daughter.

Valentine's mental denseness does not deter Sylvia from returning his love, but he is caught, and banished, when he tries to elope with her. Proteus's desire for Sylvia wipes out his former love, leading him into despicable acts that win scorn from Sylvia and wound Julia, who has pursued him disguised as a boy. When Sylvia follows Valentine into banishment, Proteus follows Sylvia, and Julia follows Proteus, the stage is set for a disturbing ending. But the stage is also set for the "gentlemen" to take small steps toward maturity. The authoritative edition of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* from The Folger Shakespeare Library, the trusted and widely used Shakespeare series for students and general readers, includes:

- Freshly edited text based on the best early printed version of the play
- Full explanatory notes conveniently placed on pages facing the text of the play
- Scene-by-scene plot summaries
- A key to the play's famous lines and phrases
- An introduction to reading Shakespeare's language
- An essay by a leading Shakespeare scholar providing a modern perspective on the play
- Fresh images from the Folger Shakespeare Library's vast holdings of rare books
- An annotated guide to further reading

Essay by Jeffrey Masten

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Customer Reviews

As with all Shakespeare, this play is very prettily written, even if the language IS archaic enough to give most modern readers a bit of difficulty without a good set of notes. As with most Shakespeare, particularly those Shakespearean plays that deal at least peripherally with romance, the plot is less than ideal. In this case, my objection is not the one I usually have; he actually DOES recognize that love is not a magical, all-encompassing thing that involves being immediately besotted before one even knows the other person's name; Valentine's friendship for Proteus is shown to be stronger than his "love" for Sylvia. OK, fine as far as it goes. Still, the ending scene in which this is revealed is flawed beyond belief by every OTHER action in it. First of all, Proteus's friendship for Valentine is NOT strong enough to keep him from betraying him in order to try to win Sylvia's love. OK, so Valentine is a better friend, and a better person, than Proteus. That's fair. But Valentine goes from declaring flatly that he can never trust Proteus again once he learns of this, to forgiving him entirely just because he says he's sorry moments later. OK, Valentine is just a sucker for Proteus, and can't stay mad at him no matter what. That makes the character rather weaker and stupider than I think he's supposed to be perceived as, but let that slide. He then yields any interest he has in Sylvia to Proteus for friendship's sake, in spite of the fact that he'd just come upon Proteus trying to rape her. This makes him both an idiot and a worthless lover; it's one thing to count friendship higher than romantic love; it's another to subject your love to rape for friendship's sake.

Back around the turn of the 21st century, I ran an used bookstore, mainly mysteries, in a small Southern town and often wished someone would write book and play reviews for our weekday local newspaper. We had a glorious and intimate opera house that had been renovated to maintain its late Victorian structure. We had a director who was well aware that even though small in population, the presence of a four-year liberal arts college provided an audience for Shakespeare plays. To increase the attendance, the editor of the local paper suggested that I write previews of plays for the local community. Here is my preview of Shakespeare's THE TWO GENTLEMEN FROM VERONA. March 20, 2006. The Acting Company of New York is returning to our town---the touring repertory featuring talented young actors and artists that performs each year in over 50 cities of America. The Company is presenting this year a classical production of Shakespeare's THE TWO

GENTLEMEN OF VERONA. The distinguished actor, John Houseman, founded the Company in 1972 along with the current Producing Director Margot Harley and members of the first graduation class of Julliard's Drama Division. Their season performance of Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona will be at the Newberry Opera House on March 22 at 8pm. It is their only performance of the play in South Carolina. If ever a Shakespeare play needed to be seen rather than read, it is this play, declared Helen Garlington at the local library's monthly book discussion several weeks ago. Garlington, a local thespian, had seen Two Gents at Stratford on her last trip to London and peppered her talk with readings, stage drawings, and reminisces.

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