

# Fall in love with *Shakespeare in Love*

by Deanna Symoski  
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I would like to say it was those thirteen Oscar nominations that sent me scrambling to see *Shakespeare in Love* last weekend, but it was actually the extra credit I could earn by bringing my ticket stub to art history class. Hey, whatever gets you through the door. Once inside, however, I was treated to an enchanting story of love, laughter and life.

The setting is sixteenth century England and our struggling playwright (Joseph Fiennes) has set out to pen a comedy tentatively titled "Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate's Daughter" for the Rose Theater. Problem is, he's been lacking in the love department lately and without a beautiful woman to unlock his passion for life, he is plagued by an intolerable case of writer's block. Enter Viola.

Played by Gwyneth Paltrow, the Madame De Lesseps is a huge fan of Shakespeare's plays, but when the two lock eyes for the first time at her parents' party, she realizes Will ain't half bad himself. Although she is betrothed, the two carry on an amorous affair until (oops!) he discovers she's been masquerading as Thomas Ghent, the young actor who landed the part of Romeo in his play. Oh well, nobody's perfect. The affair continues and ends up shaping Will's comedy into a tragic love story. A few minor changes to the title and the rest is history.

The dialogue sounds like a Shakespearean play, but it is 1593 after all, and people really did talk that way. Fiennes and Paltrow both deliver wonderful performances, making a difficult string of words sound

like everyday language, while still maintaining the poetry that makes this film so delightful. That is not to say that you do not need to pay close attention—you do. I understood most of it and still managed to lose track of who was feuding with

an air of sophistication to the entire production, played Queen Elizabeth I for a total of nine minutes and still managed to snag a vote for Best Supporting Actress. Geoffrey Rush, best known for his work in *Shine* and a nominee for Best Supporting Actor,

those high school horror melodramas. It seems Hollywood has developed a new formula that doesn't assume all moviegoers under the age of twenty-five are indifferent serial killers or prom queen sluts. Thanks for noticing. Instead, they are making an ap-



Gwyneth Paltrow, Joseph Fiennes and a cast of others star in *Shakespeare in Love*, the Miramax film which has already won three Golden Globe Awards including best comedy, and is nominated for 13 Academy Awards including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Original Screenplay.

whom. The story, like the play, is rampant with ticked-off lovers and dueling swordsmen: a welcome attraction so long as you remember who's who.

And the story isn't all a lighthearted jaunt through jolly old England, either. While it is mostly humorous, there are some darker scenes that demand much more from the actors than a typical romantic comedy. It's unfortunate that with so many Academy nominations, Fiennes is somehow overlooked. It seems a poet is no match for a soldier (Tom Hanks for *Saving Private Ryan*) or a reformed skin head (Edward Norton for *American History X*).

The supporting actors did not go unnoticed, however. Judi Dench, whose mere presence on screen lends

plays the theater's owner. He's a stressed out guy indebted up to his ears and desperate for the show to go on despite more than a few major setbacks.

Then there's Ben Affleck, who was nominated for nothing but who, and looks great in those tights, playing a minor role as the theater's broker (and most arrogant star). He takes the small role of Mercutio in the play and is initially displeased with his character's bit part. But after reading it, he is so impressed he can't pass it up and is happy just to be a part of something so good. Sometimes it does imitate art.

Considering that two of the movie trailers before *Love* employed the phrase "Gettin' Jiggy Wit' It," this film is a welcome change from all

peal to our intellect, giving us a refreshing opportunity to experience such things as Shakespeare in a way that doesn't condescend.

For those of you that aren't happy about this new trend, all I can tell you is to get used to it. Several remakes or alternative representations of Shakespearean plays are in the works, including yet another "Hamlet" and "Othello." At least five are being considered for or have started production and two had trailers before *Love*. Whether you consider this a great opportunity to expand your horizons, or seven more opportunities for extra credit, it doesn't really matter because, hey, whatever gets you through the door...

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