

Who are the characters?

The Mendip Players Youth actors were tasked to find a character from any Shakespeare play to whom they related in some way. This would then be their character in Tangled Web.

The characters' original story arcs have been intertwined into this new story as much as possible and their original characteristics have been kept. Of course, there would not have been this cross over of characters in Shakespeare's actual works although there are definite similarities in some of their traits. For example, in Tangled Web, Viola dresses as a man to prove equality whereas in their original plays, it was Portia who did this. In Viola's play, she dresses as a man to get a job!

Below are brief summaries of the characters and the plays in which they first appeared. As to why they are all now stranded on an island – who knows!

Merchant of Venice

Portia is portrayed as the hero of her play because, dressed as a man, she impersonates a lawyer to save a life. She is clever, wealthy and wise and, although a romantic figure, spends much of her play trying not to get married. She does want to be a good wife, but she wants control of her choices – not just do what her father demands (in his will). She is much the same on the island!

Midsummer Night's Dream

Hermia is a confident young woman. She is in love with Lysander, but her father commands her to marry Demetrius instead. Hermia refuses, confidently opposing her father. She is a calm, self-possessed character whose main focus is to reunite with Lysander.

Puck is Oberon's (king of the fairies) mischievous and merry jester. He represents the forces of chaos and disorder, challenging the ability of humans and fairies to enact their will. He is responsible for giving Bottom a donkey's head in their original play. Puck's failed attempts to control fate bring about harmony on the island.

Bottom is a weaver who can be overdramatic and is unaware of how he sometimes looks to others. In his own play, his foolish self-importance reaches its pinnacle after Puck transforms his head into that of a donkey. On this island, he is still the subject of Puck's pranks although he is now more proactive in responding to them.

Romeo and Juliet

Juliet Capulet, at almost 14 years old, falls in love with Romeo, the son of her family's enemy. She proposes marriage and eventually fakes her own death – pretty gutsy behaviour for a teenager. Happy to defy her father, Juliet knows what she wants and will do anything to get it. Being on the island does not change this!

Benvolio Montague is Romeo's cousin and spends the majority of his time attempting to keep the peace and diffusing potential arguments. He is intelligent, level-headed, and tries to see both sides of every issue – a quality that makes him a popular member of the group.

Tempest

Ariel is a spirit of the island and Prospero's servant. Their function is to act as an observer and report back about the things that are going on, and to intervene when required. They have special powers: they can fly, make themselves invisible, control the movements of people, and influence the weather. They play a pastoral role in keeping harmony on the island.

Troilus and Cressida

Hector is a great Trojan warrior, a hero to his entire city and respected by all, including his enemies. He is honourable and gallant, although dismissive of some ideas which come from women which leads him into danger. His determination to keep the group safe on the island means he doesn't use the help that is at hand.

Twelfth Night

Viola is a resilient and resourceful young woman who has been shipwrecked in a country called Illyria. Her father died when she was thirteen and she believes she is now alone with no family. She disguises herself as a boy and serves in the court of the governor of Illyria, Duke Orsino. On the island, she seeks to prove female equality.

THINGS WE SAY TODAY, WHICH WE OWE TO SHAKESPEARE:

"KNOCK, KNOCK! WHO'S THERE?"
 "IN A PICKLE" "SET YOUR TEETH ON EDGE" "HEART OF GOLD"
 "FAINT HEARTED" "SO-SO" "GOOD RIDDANCE"
 "LIE LOW" "FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE" "BAITED BREATH" "SEND HIM PACKING"
 "COME WHAT MAY"
 "THE GAME IS UP"
 "WEAR YOUR HEART ON YOUR SLEEVE"
 "NOT SLEPT ONE WINK" "FULL CIRCLE" "OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH"
 "WHAT'S DONE IS DONE" "NAKED TRUTH" "TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING"
 "LAUGHING STOCK" "BREADED HIS LAST" "BREAK THE ICE" "WILD GOOSE CHASE"
 "HEART OF HEARTS" "VANISH INTO THIN AIR"
 "SEEN BETTER DAYS" "MAKES YOUR HAIR STAND ON END"
 "DEAD AS A DOORNAIL" "FOR GOODNESS' SAKE" "LOVE IS BLIND"
 "GREEN EYED MONSTER" "FAIR / FOUL PLAY / PLAY" "OFF WITH HIS HEAD"
 "THE WORLD IS MY OYSTER" "BRAVE NEW WORLD"
 "BE ALL / END ALL" "A SORRY SIGHT"