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The Rover

Aphra Behn · *1677 · original English (Project Gutenberg #21339)*

What an impertinent thing is a young Girl bred in a Nunnery! So Florinda answers Hellena's questions, and The Rover is already in motion. The hosted text is Behn's English, a Restoration comedy of carnival, disguise, and a wandering cavalier. For grades 11–12. Tact; no prurience. Quote Behn, not only a modern introduction if one stands first.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

How should a school read Behn's carnival comedy of lovers, disguises, and a rover, as a play about wit and constancy, without turning the more reckless scenes into a spectacle?

"What an impertinent thing is a young Girl bred in a Nunnery! How full of"

Act I, Florinda to Hellena

Florinda is already tired of her younger sister's questions. Hellena, bred in a nunnery and bound that way again, wants to know what a lover is before she is shut away. The play will take them, and the rover Willmore, into a carnival at Naples. Teach the wit, the disguises, and the tests of constancy, for grades 11–12, with tact. This is Behn's English, PG #21339. No prurience on the map. Quote the play, not a later retelling.

KEY CHARACTERS

Florinda
The elder sister, already in love, who opens the play by trying to check Hellena's questions

Hellena
The younger, bred in a nunnery, inquisitive, and not willing to be shut away unseen

Willmore
The rover; a cavalier whose charm is also a danger; teach the test of constancy

Angelica
A woman of the city who has her own pride and her own wound; teach her as a person, with tact

A SISTER'S QUESTIONS, AND A CARNIVAL AHEAD

> *"What an impertinent thing is a young Girl bred in a Nunnery! How full of"*
>
> Act I, Florinda to Hellena

Grades 11–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

A Girl Full of Questions

ACT I, THE OPENING

Hellena will not stop asking; Florinda says she has already been told more than she understands. The first scene is already about a sister who wants to know the world, and a sister who is already in love.

- The first line is exact, including "Nunnery" and Behn's capitals.
- Keep Hellena and Florinda as this file names them.
- For grades 11–12. Tact from the first scene.
- Quote Behn.

> *"What an impertinent thing is a young Girl bred in a Nunnery! How full of"*
>
> Act I, Florinda to Hellena

02

Carnival, and a Rover

THE PLAY

Willmore, a rover of the king's army, comes into a city at carnival. Disguises, bargains, and near-disasters follow. Teach the comedy as a test of faithfulness as well as a display of wit.

- Tact. No prurience and no slurs on the map.
- Angelica and the other women are persons in the play, not ornaments.
- Finish the play; do not stop at the first disguise.
- 11–12.

> *"What an impertinent thing is a young Girl bred in a Nunnery! How full of"*
>
> Act I, Florinda to Hellena

03

Sisters, and a Forced Match

THE HOUSEHOLD PLOT

Florinda is being pushed toward a match she does not want; Hellena is being packed back to a nunnery. The carnival is also their chance to choose. Teach the stakes, not only the jokes.

- The nunnery in the first line is already part of that pressure.
- Constancy and courage belong to the women as well as to the cavaliers.
- Tact.
- Name the people as Behn names them.

> *"What an impertinent thing is a young Girl bred in a Nunnery! How full of"*
>
> Act I, Florinda to Hellena

04

Behn's English

THE EDITION

The Rover is Behn's own English, 1677, in this hosted text. A school should say her name plainly: a woman writing for the Restoration stage.

- Project Gutenberg #21339.
- Quote the play, not only a modern introduction if one is present.
- Not a later film or a cleaned rewrite.
- 11–12.

> *"What an impertinent thing is a young Girl bred in a Nunnery! How full of"*
>
> Act I, Florinda to Hellena

05

Tact in a Restoration Comedy

HOW TO TEACH IT

The play is frank, and some scenes are reckless. A school map should teach the plot and the moral tests without making those scenes a spectacle.

- No prurience on the map or in a class reading-aloud of the worst patches; skip or summarize with tact if needed.
- The point is not to blush for effect.
- Gravity about danger to women in the carnival scenes.
- Finish in constancy, not in gossip.

> *"What an impertinent thing is a young Girl bred in a Nunnery! How full of"*
>
> Act I, Florinda to Hellena

Wit, and a Test of Faith · Sisters Under Pressure · A Rover's Charm · Constancy · Tact

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 11–12

1. The Rover opens: "What an impertinent thing is a young Girl bred in a Nunnery!" Keep Behn's capitals. This is Aphra Behn's own English, 1677, PG #21339. For grades 11–12.
2. Tact. No prurience and no slurs on the map. Some carnival scenes are reckless; teach the danger and the tests of constancy, not a spectacle.
3. Florinda and Hellena are under household pressure (a forced match, a nunnery). Teach those stakes, not only the jokes.
4. Quote Behn, not a later retelling or film.
5. Name Angelica as a person, not as an ornament.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English (Project Gutenberg #21339), Project Gutenberg #21339, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/behn-the-rover/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.