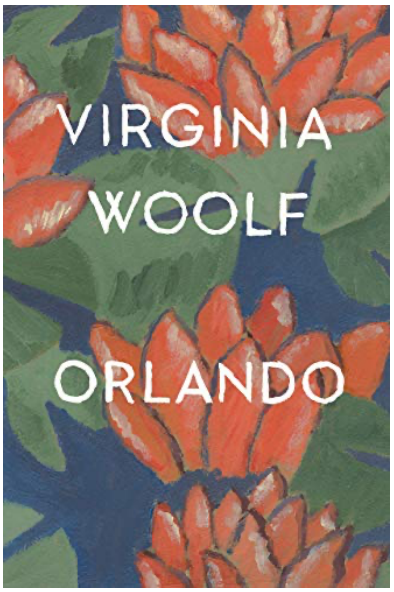
Orlando



Play Guide

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Content Advisories: The sections "Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West" and "A Critical Look at Virginia Woolf" contain information regarding sexual abuse, racism, anti-Semitism, mental illness, and suicide.

For the purposes of this play guide, Orlando is spoken of generally and pronouns are not used. When speaking of Orlando in a specific moment, pronouns will be used based gender of that time.

Many thanks to Shira Gitlin for their help and resources in creating this guide!

Orlando: The Book

Orlando was published October 11th, 1928 and was Virginia Woolf's sixth novel. Inspired by the turbulent family history of her lover, Vita Sackville-West, it is one of her most popular novels. It is a history of English literature in satiric form, describing the adventures of a poet who changes gender and lives for centuries, meeting the key figures of English literary history.

The story is told from the perspective of a biographer whose duty it is to tell the facts of Orlando's life as clearly and truthfully as possible. Orlando's thoughts and revelations take up a good portion of the pseudo-biography. Based upon Vita Sackville-West's life, Orlando shares many of West's qualities: most significantly, a deep reverence for history and family tradition, and a poetic, brooding nature. In her diary, Virginia Woolf wrote that Orlando was meant to be "Vita, only with a change about from one sex to another."

Orlando's change of gender mid-way through the novel plays an important part in character development. While Orlando starts out as a young, wealthy nobleman who takes interest in dallying about the royal court with lovely noblewomen, Orlando ends the novel a deep, reflective woman. The change is reflected in Orlando's writing; what was once overly ornate mythological drama turns into a beautiful, mature epic poem. Orlando ages (and lives through many ages), realizing that Orlando is composed of hundreds of selves and experiences. All of these experiences and selves combine to form the person Orlando is at the present moment. Orlando is a part of nature and not truly immortal; Orlando realizes that this self too, will die.

The American scholar Victoria Smith has argued that the book is about the impossibility of representing the female experience in its entirety through a recurring theme of Orlando's inability to properly describe emotions, people and even such occurrences as a sunset. Smith argued that this rhetorical ambiguity that Woolf used was a commentary on "the love that dared not speak its name" as the book was meant to celebrate her love for Sackville-West while at the same time disguising it even though the two women were immune from being prosecuted by the authorities (male homosexuality, but not

lesbianism, was illegal in Britain until 1967). Woolf intended the book to be therapeutic, to address the sense of loss felt by Sackville-West as well as herself, to provide a "spark" of hope to keep herself from drowning in what she called in her diary "a great sea of melancholy."

The story of Woolf's gender-fluid hero is about more than a single individual. A work of political satire and feminist fantasy, *Orlando* arguably laid the groundwork for or predicted today's cultural landscape, with the boundaries of both gender and literary genre more porous than ever. Through a protagonist who takes multiple lovers, writes reams of poetry in every possible style, and exists across centuries, Woolf joyfully alludes to the transgression of all limits regarding desire, curiosity, and knowledge. At the same time, Orlando constantly experiences limits of that freedom, exposing the persistent grip of patriarchy even on a character who has the privileges of wealth, beauty, and almost-eternal youth. Woolf invites the reader to imagine what it would feel like to escape, and yet, over and over again, reminds them that they are trapped. When we talk today about the tantalizing potential of a genderfluid society, of a world in which masculine and feminine traits are recognized for the performances that they are, or when we explore such possibilities in fiction and fantasy, perhaps we do so in *Orlando*'s shadow.

Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West

Virginia Woolf was born Adeline Virginia Stephen on January 25th, 1882. Her father, Leslie Stephen, was a prominent literary figure and the first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Her mother, Julia Jackson, was known for her beauty and her reputation of saintly sacrifice and had various connections to the artistic community.

Virginia Woolf

The third of four children, Virginia and her siblings (Vanessa, Thoby, and Adrian) banded together against their older half siblings, who were the children of both Julia and Leslie's previous marriages. Virginia was jealous of her youngest brother, Adrian, for being her mother's favorite. At the age of 9, Virginia wrote a family newspaper, the *Hyde Park Gate News*, which teased her older sister Vanessa and Adrian. As a member of the upper class, Virginia was provided for and educated at home, though not to the same degree as her brothers and half-brothers. This would later influence her perceptions of society and how gender played a part in it.

There were other aspects of her childhood that revealed a sharp divide between men and women in Woolf's society. Woolf's brother and half-brothers are reported to have sexually abused her throughout the bulk of their mutual youth. Nigel Nicolson, in a biography of Woolf's life, explores this, saying: "George's [Virginia's half-brother] behavior was said to have been responsible for Virginia's sexual timidity and even contributive to her periodic fits of 'insanity.'" Louise de Salvo, the American Woolf scholar, has claimed that "sexual abuse was probably the central and most formative feature of her early life," and she alleges that "virtually every male member of the Stephen household was engaged in this behaviour."

The Stephen family often travelled between their London home near Kensington Gardens to a costal house in Cornwall. The annual migrations structured Virginia's

childhood into worlds of opposites: city and country, winter and summer, repression and freedom, fragmentation and wholeness. These neat categories vanished when Julia died in 1895 at the age of 49. Virginia, age 13, stopped writing her humorous family news. Just emerging from a depression brought on by grief, in 1897, her half-sister Stella Duckworth died at age 28, an event Virginia wrote in her diary as "impossible to write of." When her father died in 1904, Virginia experienced what has been described as a nervous breakdown.

While Virginia was recovering, Vanessa helped move the family to a new home in the Bloomsbury area of London. There the siblings lived independent of their half-brothers, free to pursue studies, artistic endeavors, and entertaining. Leonard Woolf dined with them in November 1904 before sailing to what is now Sri Lanka to become a colonial administrator, as did other "young radicals" such as Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, and John Maynard Keynes, who would help form what later became known as the Bloomsbury group.

After a family excursion to Greece in 1906, Thoby died of typhoid fever at age 26. Virginia grieved but did not experience a depressive episode at this time, using writing to help her through the loss of her brother and her sister, Vanessa, who became engaged to the art critic Clive Bell.

In 1908, Virginia was determined to "re-form" the novel by creating a holistic form embracing aspects of life that were "fugitive" from the standard Victorian novel at the time. In 1911, Leonard Woolf returned from Sri Lanka, soon retired from the colonial service, and married Virginia in August 1912. Virginia continued to work on her first novel, X while Leonard write the anticolonialist novel *The Village in the Jungle* (1913) and *The Wise Virgins* (1914), a "Bloomsbury exposé." He would later become a political writer, advocating for peace and justice.

Between 1910 and 1915, Virginia struggled with her mental health while continuing to write her first novel *The Voyage Out*. She based many of the characters off of those she knew in her own life. Woolf's worries that she was a failure as a writer and a woman,

despised by her sister Vanessa and unloved by Leonard, and her mental health struggles provoked a suicide attempt in September 1913. Publication of *The Voyage Out* was delayed until 1915 and that April, Virginia sunk into a distressed state where she was often delirious. Later that year she "overcame the 'vile imaginations" that she struggled against, and kept what many biographers have deemed to be manic-depressive disorder or bipolar disorder (though such diagnoses did not exist at Woolf's time) in check for many years.

In 1917, the Woolfs bought a printing press and founded Hogarth Press. In 1919, Virginia published *Night and Day*, an answer to Leonard's *The Wise Virgins*. Woolf was also writing nearly a review a week for the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1918. Her essay "Modern Novels" attacked the "materialists" who wrote superficial rather than spiritual (or "luminous") experiences. In 1919, the Woolfs bought a cottage called Monk's House in Rodmell village. It allowed Virginia to easily visit Vanessa, travel to the bohemian Charleston, and retreat to Monk's House to write.

Vita Sackville-West

In 1924 or 1925, Virginia began her relationship with Vita Sackville-West. Sackville-West was a successful novelist, poet, and journalist. Vita was married to diplomat Harold Nicolson and the two had an open relationship, both having same-sex relationships before and during their marriage. Vita saw herself as psychologically divided in two: on one side of her personality, she was more feminine, soft, submissive, and attracted to men; while the other side was more masculine, hard, aggressive, and attracted to women.

The two had originally met in December 1922, at a dinner party in London. Though Vita came from an aristocratic family that was far richer than Virginia's, the two bonded over their confined childhoods and emotionally absent parents. Virginia admired Vita's free spirit, and Vita admired Virginia's writing.

As they grew closer, Virigina shared with Vita how she had been abused by her step-brother. Through Vita's support, Woolf began to heal from the trauma, allowing her for the first time to have a satisfyingly erotic relationship as well as greater self-confidence, helping her to cast off her self-image as a sickly recluse. Vita persuaded Virginia that her nervous ailments had been misdiagnosed and, while she should focus on her own projects, she must learn to rest.

The two continued their relationship through 1935, during what American scholar Louise DeSalvo wrote was the artistic peak of both of their careers. Vita loved to travel, especially to France, Spain, and to visit her husband in what was then Persia. These absences were draining for Virginia, who missed Vita greatly and, in some part, influenced the longing in Virginia's novel *To the Lighthouse*.

There were tensions in the relationship. Virginia was troubled by what she saw as Vita's promiscuity and that Vita was unable to critique the aristocratic system she was both a part of and a victim of. In the 1930s, they argued over Vita's husband's "unfortunate involvement" with Oswald Mosley and the New Party (which would later be known as the British Union of Fascists) and were at odds about the oncoming war. Vita supported rearmament while Virginia was a pacifist, leading to the end of their relationship in 1935.

In 1927, Virginia published *Orlando*, an effort to reclaim Vita after the cooling of their relationship. It was a biography of sorts, including the Sackville family history and a history of Vita's relationships, with the Archduke/Archduchess and Sasha being representations of some of Vita's past lovers. Reflecting Vita's interested in the Romani, Orlando's becoming a woman is implied to possibly been the result of a spell cast by a Romani witch he married. It is also a Romani camp in the Balkans where Orlando is first welcomed and accepted as woman (as the Romani in the novel do not distinguish gender). Ultimately Virginia satirizes Vita's Romani fetish as Orlando prefers not to be nomadic but settled in the English countryside. *Orlando* is also a fantasy where the character of Orlando (a stand-in for Vita) inherits an estate not unlike Knole (which Vita

would have inherited as the eldest child if she had been a man). The book did cause some tension – Vita often complained in her letters that Virginia was more interested in writing a fantasy about her rather than in returning her affection in the real world, and her life and sexual experiences were used to structure the novel. Nigel Nicholson, Vita's younger son, has called the book "a love letter to my mother."

Virginia continued writing through the rest of her life. Her final book, *Between the Acts*, was published posthumously. The onset of World War II, the destruction of her London home during the Blitz, and a cool reception to her biography of late friend Roger Fry mixed with an already present depressive state that left her unable to work. As the war continued, Virginia's diary indicates that she was obsessed with death, which became more prominent as her mental health suffered. On March 28, 1941, Virginia drowned herself by filling her overcoat with stones and walking into the River Ouse near her home. A note to her husband indicated that she felt they couldn't endure and she couldn't survive another bought of "madness" like she had experienced previously.

Woolf's legacy includes experiments with point of view that, as Benard suggests in *The Waves*, "we are not single." Neither single nor fixed, perception in her novel is fluid as is the world she presents. Considered one of the most important writers of the 20th century, she was a pioneer of stream of consciousness as a narrative device alongside Marcel Proust, Dorothy Richardson, and James Joyce. Due to the growth of feminist criticism in the 1970s, Virginia's work regained popularity and, due to the efforts of biographers, her relationships – described as bisexual or biromantic asexual – have helped establish her as a prominent queer author of the 20th century.

A Critical Look at Virginia Woolf

An Essay by your Dramaturg

Virginia Woolf is a complex and problematic character. Like many of the aristocrats of her time, she was deeply racist and anti-Semitic. Her queerness does not excuse these prejudices, though her queerness and struggles with mental illness are still worth exploring. These aspects of her personality, as expressed through her relationships as well as through her writing, allow modern readers of her work to find not a role model, but rather hints of their own struggles in a pillar of the past.

The novel *Orlando* begins with Orlando as a young nobleman beheading a Moor. Roxanne Fequiere in her essay "A Woolf in Progressive Clothing," describes this as "crude marker of the time," a way of conveying to the reader that this opening scenes take place in "the olden times," the Elizabethan era. Fequeire states that Woolf also includes this scene to give insight into Orlando's multi-layer personality. From the book:

> …all those contortions and subtleties of temper which were indicated on the first page, when he slashed the at a dead n****** head; cut it down; hung it chivalrously out of his reach again and then betook himself to the window seat with a book."

In the essay, Fequeire states:

> To grapple with the white gaze in its various forms – insidious and clunky, violent and patronizing, dismissive and invasive – is a constant obstacle for black readers of the Western canon, like a series of footnotes meant to remind you that the piece of literature in question was perhaps never meant for your consumption in the first place."

There are certain moments in *Orlando* that make the book very difficult to read from a 21st century anti-racism standpoint. There are references to the Roma, named by the slur g**sy, the Orientalism of Constantinople, and a "Blackamoor" who can only

communicate by showing all of her teeth in a grin. This racial language was not only used by Woolf here but in her own diaries, where she likes a black man (again using a racial slur) to a monkey. She also expressed prejudice to her husband Leonard and his family, who were Jewish. In 2003, a notebook of Woolf's was found in an academic's drawer in Birmingham, where it had been left for 35 years. While the notebook was written during Woolf's struggle of being an unpublished writer, it also includes an antisemitic diatribe. Woolf's biographer Hermione Lee states, "I don't at all want to excuse this very unpleasant tincture in the writing. Virginia Woolf was more critical about her own prejudices than anybody else could be." However, this statement leaves much to be desired in terms of understanding prejudice.

What are we to make of Woolf's obvious shortcomings regarding race, especially contrasted with her gender play and queerness? Some feel that Woolf is a faulty, outdated writer who should no longer be a part of the queer canon. Others work to separate the person from the work, despite the embedded nature of the prejudices in the work themselves. Others continue to grapple with the groundbreaking feminism and queerness alongside the racism and antisemitism Woolf displayed. Sarah Ruhl leaves nearly all references to this out of her adaptation, and understandably so. However, it feels wrong to produce this play without recognizing the crueler, problematic side of what is included in the original text and how we continue to grapple with it today.

Sarah Ruhl's Adaptation

Sarah Ruhl was commissioned to write the adaptation of Orlando in the early 2000s. She states that in the early draft she "didn't know enough [about writing] to be scared." In retrospect, adapting the work of one of her favorite writers seems very daunting.

Most of the language of the play comes directly from the book, though much of the dialogue comes from Ruhl as there is not a great deal of dialogue in the book. Some of the changes that were made were structural. Ruhl describes that her edits were made "in swaths and chunks." In her words:

> I think the novel is so exquisite and incandescent; I would have just put the whole thing in if I could have [...] I think one of the major things I cut out was — there's a sense in the novel that she's making fun of different literary epics, and there are a lot of literary allusions [...] and I just felt like it was so self-conscious and so much about readerly pleasure that that part wasn't terribly theatrical. So that's all gone.

In place of some of this text, Ruhl has written in a chorus to convey a great deal of narration to the audience. This work "craves an intimate relationship with the audience" and using the chorus creates "a direct pipeline" to those watching the piece.

Other changes occur regarding character design. In the book, the archduke/archduchess is very much a man in drag doing a deception, whereas in the script, in is more suited towards a cis woman playing the role. The character of Orlando, however, may lose some of the nuances of being genderfluid. She envisioned the role as one for a cis woman, which is echoed in her remarks about the play:

> It's a very wild ride, Orlando. Orlando starts as a nobleman in the 16th century and we follow him all the way through the 20th century and he becomes a woman somewhere along the way.

While some interpret Orlando's gender just being what it is – not on a strict binary but existing apart from that at all, reading Orlando's change on stage not a transition but a transformation – Ruhl's intended casting limits into a more binary relationship. However, being open to other interpretations can create a production with more dialogue around gender as well as providing opportunities for more diverse casting.

Some criticism around the production is that does not give enough attention to Orlando's apparent immortality and ways of coping with a life span that exceeds generations. The *Chicago Reader* feels that the second act of the play spends "too much time focused on Woolf's mockery of conventional love and matrimony" rather than Orlando's long, potentially lonely, life. The reviewer finds the script too tidy and desires more disorder – something that Ruhl perhaps longs for too, as she expressed a wish to have not cut anything out and have the adaptation be more like a production of *The Great Gatsby* at the Public Theater.

Regardless of criticism, Ruhl's *Orlando* bears great similarity to Woolf's novel and captures the spirit of the original. As Ruhl wonderfully summarizes: "It's a love letter, it's a romp, it's a meditation about time, it's about the act of writing, it's about writing through time, it's about how the individual can exist without any historical parameters."

Historical Eras in *Orlando*

Virginia Woolf was often critical of British historiography, which she accused of neglecting the lives of women, aside from exceptions of leaders like Elizabeth I, Anne, and Victoria. The novel takes place over several ages of British history: the Renaissance, the Restoration, the Enlightenment, the Romantic, the Victorian, and the Woolf's present (late 1920s). Woolf uses the various ages to mock theories of history.

The Renaissance (16th Century)

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf creates Shakespeare's fictional forgotten sister to emphasize the historic limitations on women's creativity, and to suggest that only in her current time could women writers actually achieve recognition for their craft. Orlando follows a similar timeline, beginning in 16th century England and being presented to Queen Elizabeth at a very young age. Elizabeth was known for being an early icon of feminine power, synthesized in this quote from her famous speech to rouse the troops against the Spanish Armada: "I may have the body but of a weak and female woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king."

Queen Elizabeth also influences Orlando trying to conform to the social structures around him. The narrator describes:

> It was Orlando's fault perhaps; yet, after all, are we to blame Orlando? The age was the Elizabethan; their morals were not ours; nor their poets; nor their climate; nor their vegetables even. Everything was different. The weather itself, the heat and cold of summer and winter, was, we may believe, of another temper altogether. (26-27)

The Restoration (17th Century)

The 17th century was a time of great upheaval and change in England. With the death of Queen Elizabeth and the ascension of King James VI, son Mary, Queen of Scots. James

was the first monarch to unite the Scottish and English thrones and suffered many disputes with Parliament as well as a threat on his life in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Though he only reigned from 1603 to 1625, the "Golden Age" of Queen Elizabeth's reign continued under him, specifically in art such as theater and literature.

Charles I faced an even rockier reign. He frequently quarreled with Parliament, claiming the "divine right of kings" to govern based on his own mind. Some saw his policies – especially levying taxes without the authorization of parament – as tyranny. The English Civil War erupted in 1642. Charles was imprisoned several times and eventually executed for treason in 1649.

His son, Charles II ruled in the shadow of a commonwealth led by perhaps one of British history's most loathsome individual, Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell eventually defeated Charles at the Battle of Worchester in 1651 and Charles fled to mainland Europe. Cromwell essentially ruled as a dictator of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales until his death in 1658, which restored the monarchy and Charles II as king. However, it was far too late to undo the cultural destruction Cromwell caused to the traditions of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland.

Religious intolerance that had existed in England for some time erupted during the Reformation, so named as the reforming of the throne that was once Catholic to a Protestant church created when King Henry VIII sought to annul his marriage from Catherine of Aragon. As both sides persecuted the other, England became more Protestant while Scotland and Ireland stayed Catholic. When Cromwell took control, he authorized penal laws against Catholics and confiscated land from these subjects. While Crowell claimed religious tolerance to other Protestant sects, that did not extend to groups such as the Quakers. While James II, Charles' successor, (who would be the last Catholic monarch in England) preached religious tolerance, he was criticized for being tyrannical.

Aside from politics, the bubonic plague hit London from 1665 to 1666, the last major epidemic of the plague in England. On top of that, the Great Fire of London occurred from September 2 – September 6, 1666.

It is perhaps understandable why Orlando during this era finds itself removed from the British Isles. Constantinople was an entirely different atmosphere. In the 17th century, Constantinople was a melting pot of cultures. In a place that did not have a fixed geographic identity (it was half in Europe, half in Asia), populations of Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Sephardic Jews, Circassians, Sudanese, and other peoples from all over the Ottoman Empire called it home. The city had also under gone many shifting identities – being once a center for both the Greek and Roman empires, a center of Christianity after Emperor Constantine's rule, then later the hub of the most powerful Muslim Empire when the Ottomans ruled. Though changes in religious power are prominent, the city in Orlando reflects the idea of shifting identities, making it an ideal backdrop for Orlando's transformation.

A note on the environmental climate of the time: the Thames really did freeze during the 16th Century and people skated upon it. From roughly 1300-1850, the Earth – particularly the Northern Atlantic – experienced what is known as the Little Ice Age, where temperatures plummeted during three major cold intervals, one of which was from 1560 to 1630. This time, known was the Grindelwald Fluctuation, saw worldwide glacial expansion. During this time, "frost fairs" were held along the River Thames, with a small market and games popping up along the frozen river. The river did not freeze as often as legend suggests but only about one winter out of ten. The most notable freezes were in 1608 and in 1683-1684 (known was the Great Frost), where the Thames was frozen solid for two months.

Thames Frost Fairs 1683-1684 by Thonmas Wyke

The Romantic (18th Century)

An artistic, literary, musical, and intellectual movement that lasted roughly from the late 1700s to 1850. After the upheaval of the 17th century, more changes occurred across Europe and the Colonies. The 18th century brought about the American Revolution and the French Revolution, the latter greatly influencing the Romantic movement. Characterized by a reaction to the spread of industrialism, Romanticism prized personal thoughts and feelings in written forms (especially poetry), emphasis of feelings and the cult of sensibility, and a call for more attention to nature. Many social and political values that became popular at the time became embedded in Romanticism, particularly the belief that the age of tyrants was at an end and the abolition of slavery.

Woolf parodies some of the ideals of Romanticism, especially those of her father, the historian Sir Leslie Stephen, whom she had a complicated relationship with. Stephen proposed in his book *English Literature and Society in the Eighteen Century*, a theory that whatever writers wrote about reflected contemporary tastes, a "return to nature" as "literature must be produced by the class which embodies the really vital and powerful currents of thought which molds society". Orlando's biographer believes that it was changes in British cuisine and the condition of the countryside that had changed Orlando's style of writing, presenting an absurd reduction of Stephen's theories.

The Victorian (19th Century)

Queen Victoria became the Queen of Britain at age 18 in 1837 until her death in 1901. Her 60-year reign was the longest of any British monarch until Queen Elizabeth II. The era named after her is known for the rise of fossil-fuel powered industrialization, a strong drive for more moral standards, great advancements in science and medicine along with the rise of mysticism and Spiritualism, and the UK establishing itself as a global territorial power as “the empire on which the sun never sets.” Victoria greatly influenced the social morays – some of which linger today, such as wearing white at a wedding – and the politics of the era. She was a widow who deeply mourned the loss of Prince Albert, a woman who did not support women’s suffrage or higher education for women but was well-read and admire of literature herself, and a monarch who served as

the constitutional monarchy in Britain became more established. In 1867, Walter Bagehot wrote that the monarch only retained “the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, and the right to warn.” Victoria became a monarch that was more symbolic than political and this placed a strong emphasis on morality and family values, contrasting with the sexual, financial, and personal scandals that had been associated by previous members of her family line, the House of Hanover. The idea of the “family monarchy”, something the British middle class could identify with, was cemented and is still a strong part of British social culture.

The Victorian era saw the growth of many areas in Britain – industrial, economic, academic, scientific – which all helped to drive the establishment of the middle class. Through this, the centering of family was integral to British society and the concept of childhood was something to cherished and celebrated.

Victorian double standards were also greatly at play in society. Mothers were integral to families, but women were weak. Children were cherished, but lower-class children were used in factories and hard labor work (at least until child labor laws were made later in the century after activists fought for them).

One industry that saw a great advancement of the Industrial Revolution was the publishing industry. Now, books could be published faster than ever before and in larger amounts. Along with the growth of the middle class, there was now a larger audience for whom literature was strongly desired.

In Woolf’s novel, Orlando does not meet Queen Victoria the way he met Queen Elizabeth, but he does feel the effects of her reign and the changes of society around Orlando. The presence of smoke and smog generated by industrialization trouble Orlando and show the opposition of Orlando’s love of nature and the state of country in the 1800s.

It is during the Victorian Age that Orlando marries, greatly changes the quality of writing, and the idea of being pregnant makes Orlando ashamed, which differs from the way that the character had been portrayed before, as if these changes are forced on Orlando as Orlando struggles to conform to the "spirit" of the Victorian era.

The 19th century begins with a heavy thunderstorm, and throughout the scenes set in the Victorian age it always seems to be raining, reflecting Woolf's view of the Victorian era as a dark one in British history. As part of her attack on Victorian values, Woolf satirized the theories of the critic John Ruskin who saw the Renaissance as a period of moral and cultural decline, which he called a "frost". Instead, Woolf depicts the Elizabethan era as one of rebirth and vitality, a time when "the moon and stars blazed with the hard fixity of diamonds".

A Brief History of Trans Identity

Shared directly from resources by Shira Gitlin

Throughout recorded history, thriving cultures have recognized, revered, and integrated more than two genders. Terms such as "transgender" and "gay" are strictly new constructs that assume three things: that there are only two sexes (male/female), two sexualities (gay/straight), and two genders (man/woman).

Hundreds of distinct societies around the globe have their own traditions for other genders:

- ⇒ Gala: androgynous or trans priests of the Sumerian goddess Inanna from 500 to 300 BCE
- ⇒ Hijra: In South Asia, at least eight-known gender expansive identities have historically been present in the subcontinent including Hijra.
- ⇒ Koekchuch: During the 18th century, the Itelmens of Siberia recognized a "third gender" called Koekchuch to describe individuals who were assigned male at birth, but expressed themselves as women.
- ⇒ Kathoeys: In Thailand, people who were assigned male gender at birth and view themselves as either third gender or a second type of woman, rather than viewing themselves as wholly female in gender.
- ⇒ Two Spirit: Two Spirit is meant to be an umbrella term that points to the important role that Two Spirit people held prior to colonization; however, as an umbrella term, specific teachings, roles, meanings, and language must come from the community. The contemporary term Two Spirit was first coined in 1990 at the 3rd annual Native American and Canadian Aboriginal LGBT people gathering in Winnipeg. In creating the term, the found group wanted to reflect the historical acceptance of gender-variant peoples and diverse sexual identities within Indigenous communities in pre-contact times. Although Two Spirit is a relatively new term, there are over 130 terms derived from Indigenous languages to describe people who did not fit into the western gender binary.

There have always been trans and gender variant people throughout history, but the Western idea of "transgender" was popularized in the early 1900s. Here are a few notable examples of trans or gender nonconforming people in history:

- ⇒ 1776: The Public Universal Friend reported being genderless (neither male no female), dressed androgynously, and asked their followers they gained while preaching throughout New England not to refer to them by their birth name or gendered pronouns.
- ⇒ 1836: Mary Jones, a free African-American, was arrested in New York City for dressing as a woman, prostitution, and pickpocketing.

⇒ 1919: Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld started the oldest Western institute studying LGBTQ identities in German. Institut für Sexualwissenschaft performed some of the earliest contemporary affirming medical services. It was eventually destroyed in the rise of German fascism under the Nazi party.

⇒ 1952: Christine Jorgensen undergoes surgery in Copenhagen and returns to the US where she is outed by the American press. She causes an international sensation, and, for many, she is the first visible trans person in the media.

⇒ 1964: Reed Erickson launches the Erickson Education Foundation (EEF), an organization that supports work being done in the 1960s and 1970s in the field for trans studies in the US.

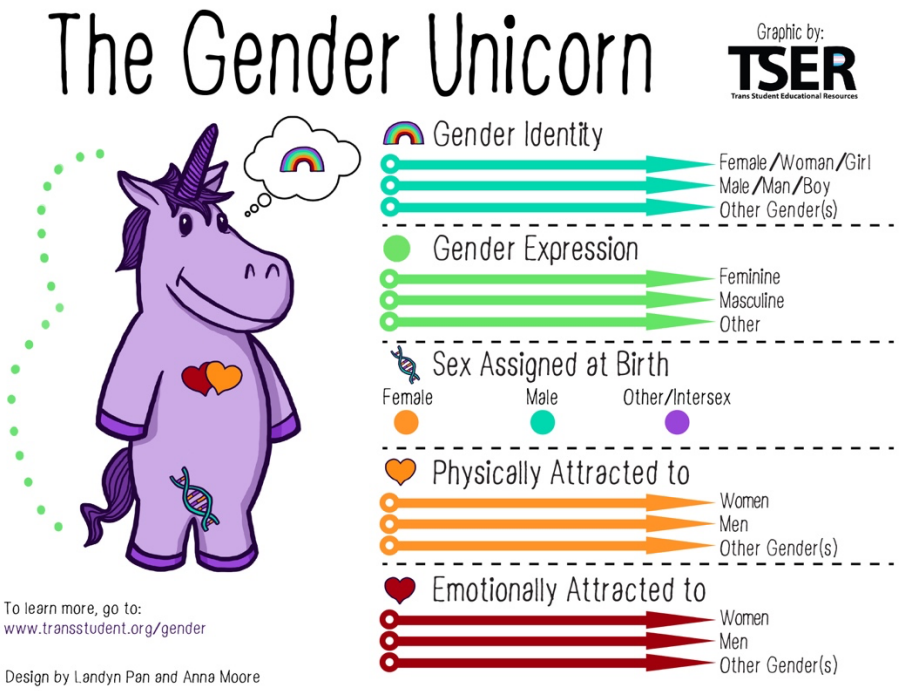
⇒ 1969: Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, and Stormé DeLarverie are among those who resist arrest in a routine bar raid on the Stonewall Inn in New York City's Greenwich Village, thus helping to ignite the modern LGBT rights movement.

⇒ 1971: Pauli Murray, a Black gender nonconforming activist, helped Ruth Bader-Ginsberg write the brief on the 1971 case Reed v. Reed, a landmark decision about gender discrimination.

⇒ 1990: Trans activist Lou Sullivan's writing and advocacy opened up dialogues about gay trans men during the AIDS epidemic.

⇒ 2014: Laverne Cox became the first openly transgender person to be nominated for an Emmy in an acting category and was on the cover of Time Magazine.

⇒ 2020: Bostock v. Clayton County, 590 US was a Supreme Court case in which the Court rule din favor of plaintiff Aimee Stephens that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects employees against discrimination because of their gender identity.



CREATING SPACE FOR GENDER DIVERSITY

Adapted from "Creating Space for Gender Diverse Theater" by John Meredith, Sloth Levine, and the Gender Explosion Working Group

Shared by Shira Gitlin; from Stagesource.org

Transgender and non-binary artists are here and we're ready to work! Steps have been made to make spaces in our world more welcoming, but more work is needed to create a truly inclusive environment and culture. It may feel like a big task, but we're here to start you out with 7 achievable actions you can take right now to support your transgender and non-binary friend, coworkers, and acquaintances.

1) MAKE SPACE FOR MISTAKES.

We're all going to make mistakes, slip up, say the wrong thing. It's inevitable. Give yourself the kindness to allow for that so you can move forward with a focus on growth, rather than making excuses. Allow others to do the same as you invite them to join you in fostering gender diversity.

2) NORMALIZE IDENTIFYING PRONOUNS UNIVERSALLY.

Introduce yourself including your pronouns. Ask for pronouns during introductions. Add a space for pronouns on contact sheets, information forms, and applications. Add them to your business cards, name tags, and email signature.

3) BE AWARE OF YOUR LANGUAGE

Be conscious of using the word "*identified*" when discussing gender. This can perpetuate the notion that trans women aren't "real" women.

Example: Instead of saying "*seeking female identified writers*" try "**seeking submissions from women**".

You don't need to say "*preferred* pronouns" just "**pronouns**" will suffice. Just like someone's name, it isn't "*preferred*" it just is.

When discussing pronouns, replace phrases like "*she series*" with "**she, her, hers**" to be more accessible.

Transgender & trans are adjectives, not nouns or verbs. Don't use the phrase "*a transgender*" or "*transgendered woman*"—try instead "**transgender people**" or "**a trans woman**"

4) SUPPORT TRANS ARTISTS

Read works by transgender writers. See work by, featuring, directed, or otherwise created with trans artists.

Pay attention to how many trans people are included in in the world around you – whether onstage/in media, at work, or in the world in general.

5) CREATE GENDER-INCLUSIVE SPACES

Support converting restrooms into gender-neutral spaces. Don't assume that the best way to divide dressing rooms is Men's & Women's.

Prepare to talk to those who may be unfamiliar with why gender neutral spaces are necessary.

6) HIRE CONSULTANTS & INCLUSIVITY TRAINERS

Bring in (***and pay***) trans and non-binary people at your workplace or attended sessions for the public to engage with gaps in your knowledge.

A GUIDE TO PRONOUNS

Adapted from "A Guide to Pronouns in the Theatre" by John Meredith, Sloth Levine, and the Gender Explosion Working Group

Shared by Shira Gitlin; from Stagesource.org

Using someone's correct pronouns is a part of effective communication, professionalism, and most of all, respect. Below we tackle some questions and misconceptions about pronouns.

BRINGING UP GENDER IDENTITY AT WORKS SEEMS UNNECESSARY AND UNPROFESSIONAL?

Using correct pronouns is just like using someone's correct name. You wouldn't walk around calling Sam by the name Alexander…that'd just be weird. And rude. And it wouldn't be unprofessional of Sam to correct you for using "him" in an email if you've never met her in person.

Pronouns have always been used in your workplace and in the world, this isn't something new or an invasion of gender politics. It's just that the majority of people have the privilege of their pronouns being correctly assumed at first glance. But just like for the Sams, Blakes, and Jamies out there, introducing pronouns is helpful and respectful to your trans coworkers and acquaintances. Plus it'll save time and strain in the long run.

HOW DO YOU START INDRODUCITNG PRONOUNS IN MY PROCESS?

Start saying your pronouns when you introduce yourself:

> "Hi, I'm Sam. He, him, his. I'm the assistant director."

Add them to your business cards and email signature next to your name:

> Sam Adams | *he/him/his*
>
> Assistant Director, Hamlet

Add them during introductions:

> "Say your name, pronouns we should use in this space, role, and favorite ice cream flavor."

On contact forms, add a section to fill them in:

> Pronouns to use in this space: _____

Subsequently, add pronouns to your contact sheets:

Asst. Director……Sam Adams……he…….617-555-7611…….sam@gmail.com

WHAT HAPPENS IF I MAKE A MISTAKE?

DON'T derail the conversation with your apology **DON'T** make excuses
DON'T overcorrect and make it a big deal

"Could you stand next to him—oh my god! I'm so sorry! Her! I know you're a girl. Obviously! I never do that. My cousin is trans so I get it. I'm just so tired right now…"

DO correct yourself quickly
DO correct others quickly
DO work to not make the same mistake again

"Could you stand next to him—sorry, her. And then hold her hand?"

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