

'HOURLANDO'

Charleston Orlando Teaching Resource

As part of the celebrations for the 90th anniversary of the publication of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Charleston has developed a script and materials for schools, colleges and community groups to explore the book in a lively, engaging way with 'HOURlando' – the entire book condensed into a 60 minute interactive session.

Resources

To run this session with your group, you will need to print out the following:

- **HOURlando Script** -Orlando and the narrator both use the main script for their participation.
- **HOURlando Timeline** date signs to pin up in the participation area
- HOURlando Character Scripts for each of the smaller roles, give to each participant

Group

There are 13 separate roles in the HOURlando script, including the narrator. For smaller groups, participants can play double roles (for instance, the three love interests can each play one of the Muses; Nicholas Greene can also play The Law). Larger groups can divide the central role of Orlando into several players. The whole group speaks together to mark the midnights with a loud 'Dong!', to make the trumpet sound, and to call out the date in which the action is taking place.

Cast

1. Narrator
2. Orlando
3. Vita
4. Biographer
5. Sasha
6. Harry / Harriet
7. Shelmardine
8. Nicholas Greene
9. Muse 1
10. Muse 2
11. Muse 3
12. The Law
13. Text references

Character Script - VITA

1. Hi everyone! Vita Sackville-West here. Virginia wrote Orlando for me, don't you know. I am Orlando, isn't that sublime? And this house is Knole House, my beloved ancestral home that I was denied from inheriting because I am a woman.

2. Hold on! I said something about that! I said 'there is no living soul who knows the complete truth; here, may be one who knows a section; and there, one who knows another section: but to the whole picture not one is initiated.'

3. Mostly based on my lover, Violet Trefusis

4. Also Virginia's dad Sir Leslie Stephen was editor of the Dictionary of National Biography (referenced in Chapter Six) and author of English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century, so it's all a bit of a dig at him too.

5. This sounds more like Virginia talking... you know she's rather been through the mill...

6. Where I lived for several years while my husband Harold worked for the Embassy. I loved Constantinople.

7. Oh I am fascinated by the Romany community! I always fantasised about running off to live like that!

8. Based on my darling husband Harold.

Character Script - BIOGRAPHER

1. Hello, readers. I am the traditional Victorian biographer. Let's assume I am male and represent all that Woolf thought wrong about patriarchal, misogynist ideas of history, time and importance. I like fact, evidence and documentation. I like privileged men doing welldocumented manly things like fighting and conquering. I do not like this woolly business of mystical transformation. As the book goes on you'll see I also don't much rate women's things, by which I mean lives, identities, experiences, emotions etc etc.

2. I don't know about all this. 'Many people, holding such a change of sex is against nature, have been at great pains to prove (1) that Orlando had always been a woman, (2) that Orlando is at this moment a man. Let biologists and psychologists determine. It is enough for us to state the simple fact; Orlando was a man till the age of thirty; when he became a woman and has remained so ever since. Let other pens treat of sex and sexuality; we quit such odious subjects as soon as we can'.

3. 'She has none of the formality of a man, or a man's love of power. She is excessively tender- hearted. She could not endure to see a donkey beaten or a kitten drowned. She detested household matters, was up at dawn and out among the fields...no farmer knew more about the crops than she did. She could drink with the best and likes games of hazard. She rode well and drove six horses at a gallop over London Bridge. Yet... the sight of another in danger brought on the most womanly palpitations. She burst into tears on slight provocation. She was unversed in geography, found mathematics intolerable, and held caprices more common among women than men, as for instance that to travel south is to travel downhill.'

4. Oh I switched off a long time ago. You just sit! One could hear a pin drop! If only a pin would drop, that would be LIFE! Can't you at least kill a wasp? That may be the merest trifle compared with killing a man but it would be a fitter subject for a biographer than this mere wool-gathering.

Do you know how irritating it is to see one's subject slipping out of one's grasp? What is more humiliating than to see all this dumb show of emotion and excitement when we know that what causes it – thought and imagination – are of no importance whatsoever.

5. Oh yes. She has a son. 'Safely delivered on Thursday March the 20th at 3 o'clock in the morning'. See, that's what I'm talking about, dates! Times! Masculinity! Proven fact! Apart from that, Orlando, you are now too boring for me to continue. You have finished your book, both in real terms and in terms of your own biography.

◆ CHARLESTON ◆

Character Script - TEXT

1. Frozen roses fell in showers... Near London Bridge, where the river had frozen to a depth of some twenty fathoms, a wrecked wherry boat was plainly visible, lying on the bed of the river where it had sunk, overladen with apples. The old woman, who was carrying her fruit to market on the Surrey side, sat there in her plaids and farthingales with her lap full of apples, for all the world as if she were about to serve a customer, though a certain blueness about the lips hinted the truth

2. Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us... they mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues... If we compare the picture of Orlando as a man with that of Orlando as a woman, the man has his hand free to seize his sword, the woman must use hers to keep the satins from slipping from her shoulders. The man looks the world full in the face, as if it were made for his uses. The woman takes a sidelong glance at it, full of subtlety, even suspicion. Had they both worn the same clothes, it is possible their outlook might have been the same.

Character Script - SASHA

1. ME! A Russian Princess of ambiguous gender. I'm Love Interest Number 1.

2. I do have my own proper name but Orlando calls me Sasha. I'm not sure why.

3. Yes, yes, I am non-binary, what else do you expect? It's Orlando! Now let's make private jokes in French that no one else can speak. We can skate off and have a cuddle and represent lots of metaphors about freezing and thawing! Before I nip back onto my frozen ship to fetch some clothes, and you think you see me cheating on you with a sailor, and you faint and freak out, but then agree to elope with me at midnight.

Character Script - NICHOLAS GREENE

1. Greetings! I am the great poet Nicholas Greene! Orlando idolises me but he slowly discovers I am a bit of a nincompoop. I stay with Orlando for ages, get fat on his food and compliments, moan about how hard it is being a poet and then write a poem that takes the mickey out of Orlando and widely humiliates him.

2. Sir Nicholas Greene now! I too have lived 300 years. I am an eminent critic. All English writing is still rubbish mind you. Young writers are in the pay of booksellers, turning out any trash that pays their tailor's bills, an age marked by precious conceits and wild experiments.

3. What have you got there? A completed manuscript? The Oak Tree, you call it? Brillo. Let's get that published immediately so you can win lots of awards and money and kudos before the end of the book.

Character Script - HARRIET / HARRY

1. It is I, the Archduchess Harriet. But guess what, Readers – it's all a ruse! I'm actually a man! You'll find out in a couple of chapters, when Orlando becomes a woman!

2. What if we peruse this old suit of armour and I fasten a gold shin plate to your beautiful lower leg (that many people remark on throughout the book)? Would that make you fall in love with me?

3. It is I, Orlando, Archduchess Harriet!

4. Only this time – I am Archduke Harry! Orlando, you are and always will be the Pink, the Pearl, the Perfection of your sex. Marry me!

5. You have broken my heart, Orlando! Eugh, what's that you have put down my neck?

Character Script - THE MUSES x 3

Purity I am the Lady of Purity. I'm covered in snow. On all things frail or dark or doubtful, my veil descends

Chastity I am the Lady of Chastity. I am ice incarnate. I will freeze Orlando to the bone

Modesty Lady of Modesty, me. Lady of the Moon. Virgin I am and ever shall be. My hair covers my eyes. I do not see. Narrator The three join hands and dance slowly while singing – essentially a girl band but with depressing lyrics and too many morals (hashtag ice girls) Altogether: 'Truth come not out from your horrid den. Hide deeper, fearful Truth. For you flaunt in the brutal gaze of the sun things that were better unknown and undone; you unveil the shameful; the dark you make clear, Hide! Hide! Hide!'

Character Script - THE LAW

1. The chief charges are: (1) that you are dead and therefore cannot hold any property whatsoever (2) that you are a woman, which amounts to much the same thing

2. Erm, sorry to interrupt – just wanted to let you know that the law thinks you are officially female, you can officially live in the house until you have a son to officially own it, all those children you may have had over the last 300 years or so are now officially illegitimate and that small business of a random marriage in Constantinople has been officially annulled. It's all officially official.

Character Script - SHELMARDINE

1. Madam, you're hurt!
2. You're a man, Orlando!
3. Orlando!!