

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is a play about loyalty and love. Proteus and Valentine, young men entering society for the first time, are torn between their loyalties to each other as life-long companions and their new desires for romantic attachments. Pitting platonic male friendship against heterosexual romantic love, *Two Gentlemen* suggests that you can have one or the other, but rarely both. As Proteus and Valentine must learn to prioritize their affairs of the heart, they also must come to terms with more worldly affairs. This is a play about being confronted with your station in life and finding a way to ascend, or to reconcile yourself to not ascending. Over the course of the play, these two gentlemen evolve in ways that neither expect, nor likely fully comprehend. It is for these reasons that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* reveals itself as a very human drama.



*Two Gentlemen* represents the characters' internal dilemmas through a series of vastly different settings: the country, the city, the forest primeval. Who you are is determined by where you are. In the beginning, Proteus and Valentine are two gentlemen (in training) who are *of* Verona. Their home represents warmth and safety, where things never change and bonds are by their nature perpetual and unbreakable. In Verona, they are the best of friends; they love each other as brothers. But, in Milan, things change. The city makes things complicated; in the bustle of business, identities become flexible as loyalties shift. There is great freedom when the rules change, but also great risks. Finally, there is no recourse but to head into the forest, that infamous Shakespearean wilderness where anything can happen. There, under a canopy of trees instead of gilded roofs of the modern city, the characters attempt to work out, once and for all, their tangled desires. The result is a kind of renewal, but under new conditions.

-James M. Cherry