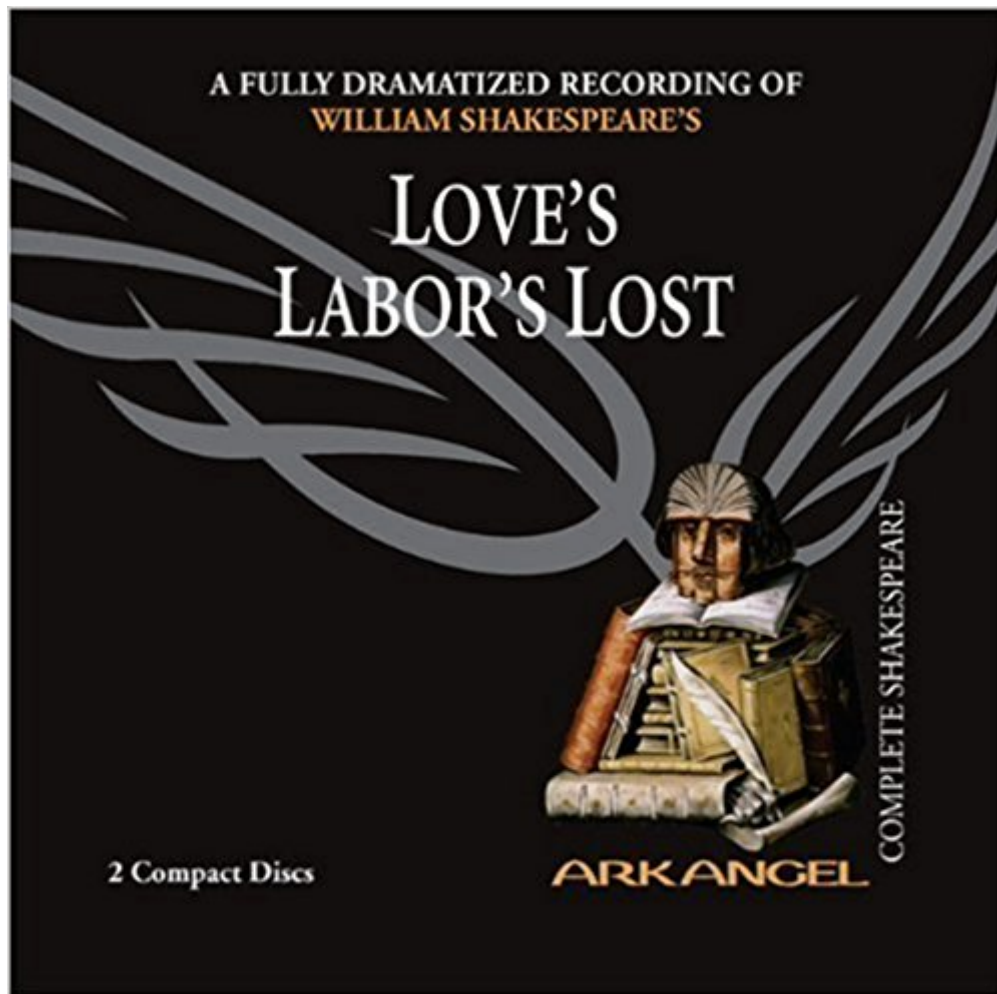




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# Love's Labor's Lost (Arkangel Complete Shakespeare)



## Synopsis

[Full-Cast Audio Theater Dramatization. Berowne is played by Alex Jennings and Rosaline by Emma Fielding. Samantha Bond is the princess, and Greg Wise the king of Navarre. Alan Howard plays Don Armado.] A play replete with puns and double-entendres, this is one of Shakespeare's earliest and most lighthearted. The young king of Navarre and three of his courtiers have vowed to lock themselves away for three years of study and fasting, and to forswear the company of women for this period. No sooner is their vow made than it is tested, however, as the princess of France and three of her ladies arrive in Navarre on a diplomatic mission. The young men fall instantly and hopelessly in love, and the tension between their vow and their passion forms the subject of this charming and sparkling early comedy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), English poet and dramatist of the Elizabethan and early Jacobean period, is the most widely known author in all of English literature and often considered the greatest. He was an active member of a theater company for at least twenty years, during which time he wrote many great plays. Plays were not prized as literature at the time, and Shakespeare was not widely read until the middle of the eighteenth century, when a great upsurge of interest in his works began that continues today.

Perhaps you know Shakespeare's usual method of ending a play: at the end of his tragedies everyone is dead, and at the end of his comedies everyone is married. Not so in this

comedy, and that's part of the charm of *Love's Labor's Lost*. It's an early play in the Shakespeare canon, unique in how it ends, unique in that the voice of Berowne is Shakespeare's own, unique in that the plot is solely Shakespeare's, and unique too in that the ending sequence of Act V.2 is the longest continuous sequence in all of the Bard's plays, comprising over 900 lines, or about a third of the play. While the plot itself is a bit thin, the play parodies stuffy intellectuals and overly idealized medieval love stories, and showcases the Bard's poetical gifts. The story: Ferdinand, king of Navarre, and three lords make a pact to get away from it all for three years, and devote themselves to quiet academic study and contemplation. At the same time, they vow not to admit any woman onto their premises. This cannot possibly last, and they weaken when the Princess of France arrives (with three of her ladies) to conduct official state business. The king and his three friends call on the Princess and her three ladies, one thing leads to another, and each of the gentlemen falls in love with one of the ladies. In Acts III and IV, things get complicated. Costard, the clown, told to deliver two letters, gets them mixed up. The letter from Armado (a courier), meant for the village hoyden Jaquenetta, is read to the Princess and her ladies. A love sonnet from Berowne meant for one of the ladies (Rosaline) is instead read to Jaquenetta. The schoolmaster tells her to show it to King Ferdinand. She does when, in succession, the young men have caught each other reciting love-rhymes. The most eloquent of the lords is Berowne.

Rosaline's description of him (Act II.1) could be Shakespeare's self-portrait: "A merrier man, // Within the limit of becoming mirth, // I never spent an hour's talk withal." In a lyrical outpouring, Berowne says love belongs to study, that women's eyes are "the books, the arts, the academes, // That show, contain, and nourish all the world." In Act V, when all are happily coupled, word arrives that the princess's father, the king of France, has died. The gentlemen ask the ladies to marry them, but they, unwilling to consent, impose a penance of a year's wait. Yes, a year for academic study and contemplation they so desired in Act I, but clearly do not want now. Oh, the irony. Before departing, in Act V.2 (comprising 900-plus lines), they listen in the twilight to the villagers' songs of spring ("When daisies pied and violet blue" and winter ("When icicles hang by the wall") the cuckoo and the owl. The play ends, without marriage, unhappily ever after, perhaps. A year is a long time. Who knows what will happen? I prefer the Pelican Shakespeare edition for its conciseness, the sparest of

footnotes, and the insightful, to-the-point introductions. In this case, it's Peter Holland of Birmingham University, England, who provides the smart intro. Five stars.

This is a clever comedy, but I've enjoyed others more. As I read Shakespeare, I do frequently look at the footnotes to ensure that I'm picking up the nuances of the writing. This is difficult on the kindle version, as footnotes appear every four or five pages, meaning that the reader has to flip back and forth to really make use of the footnotes.

A must have must read before going to the play

I needed it for an intro to theater course. It did what was advertised.

Perfect condition, was as if I had just bought it new from the bookstore. Really, so happy with my purchase!

Thank goodness for the Folger Shakespeare Library. For a Shakespeare class I recently purchased this book *Love's Labor's Lost* and it's perfect to carry to class, to underline (I don't recommend this) and to read for the rich pleasure of the Master's words. We saw a small clip of Ken Branagh's film, which he filmed as a musical, and we have been reading it aloud in class. I plan to visit Ashland Oregon Shakespeare Festival, where this play and *Measure for Measure* will also be performed. I had not read this play, nor seen it performed on stage so I have a lot to look forward to.

Splits words at the margin. Is impossible to read. It worked on computer but no matter what setting I used on kindle i could not get it to work.

"*Love's Labor's Lost*" is a Shakespeare that I just am not all that fond of. It is highly praised by critics, but its endless wordplay and battle of wits just wears me down. I have yet to see it in professional performance and when that happens (in the next week) I might have a different opinion. But having read it twice now, it does not do all that much for me. I gave "*Love's Labor's Lost*" a 3.5 star rating compared to other Shakespeare, not to literature as a whole. The Bard is in a class of his own. The Pelican Shakespeare edition features an introduction by Peter Holland that is one of the most unpleasing I have come across in the new Pelican editions. If you are not intimately

familiar with the play it will in no manner enhance your reading of it. For the sake of this review I will focus on some of the more pleasing aspects of the play. From his first entrance the character of Costard is a delight. Like most Shakespearean clowns he is the most honest person on the stage, and his bafflement at the antics of some of the nobler characters is easily shared by the reader. The play boasts another wonderful creation in the character of Don Adriano De Armado, a Spaniard who uses a ridiculous profusion of words to high comic effect. His speech at the end of Act 1:2 is a fun moment in the play. Act 5 (one of the longest in Shakespeare) travels from riotous comedy to the pain of sudden death, as can life, and I guess that is the point. The text ends beautifully with two of the most evocative poems written by Shakespeare, the often anthologized

“Spring” & “Winter”. As one critic has written of those two pieces, they are “an expression of the going-on power of life” and they end the play admirably. There is nothing wrong with “Love’s Labor’s Lost”; it just does not get to me as much as other Shakespeare. The constant wordplay and confusion with some of the archaic language used in many of the jokes just keep me from fully getting pulled into the story of the play. As for the Pelican Shakespeare series, they are my favorite editions since the scholarly research is usually top notch and the editions themselves look good as an aesthetic unit. It looks and feels like a play and this compliments the text’s contents admirably. The Pelican series was recently reedited and has the latest scholarship on Shakespeare and his time period. Well priced and well worth it.

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