



TWELFTH NIGHT, OR WHAT YOU WILL

STUDY GUIDE

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A Brief Synopsis

After being caught in a storm while out at sea, two twins, Sebastian and Viola, are separated once their ship is destroyed. Viola washes up on the shores of Illyria, and soon begins working for Duke Orsino. However, what begins this misadventure is none other than an act done by Viola herself. She changes her name to Cesario and goes about her daily life dressed as a man while in Illyria. While working for the Duke, it is very quickly apparent that Duke Orsino is lusting after Lady Olivia, a young woman who is in mourning because her father and brother recently died. Viola, disguised as Cesario, is charged with the task of delivering Orsino's professions of love to the mournful Olivia, however, Olivia is fooled by Viola, and believes her to be a man. Therefore, she falls in love not with Orsino, but with Cesario instead. Meanwhile, Viola herself begins falling in love with Duke Orsino, which further complicates things as she struggles to woo Olivia for Orsino.

Later, Sebastian arrives at the shores of Illyria, believing his sister died in the shipwreck. However, he is not alone in his journey. Antonio helps Sebastian navigate Illyria after saving him from the shipwreck, but has to be cautious as Antonio is wanted by Orsino's men for a past misdemeanor. While in Illyria, Sebastian stumbles upon Olivia, who believes him to be Viola (Cesario), and they soon become married.

This cast of characters also includes Olivia's uncle, Sir Toby Belch, his friend Sir Andrew (in town to woo Olivia too), Olivia's gentlewoman Maria, and head servant Malvolio. While Viola attempts to deal with her feelings for Duke Orsino and the love triangle she has gotten herself into, Sir Toby Belch and his two companions manage to trick Malvolio into thinking that Olivia loves him by writing a false letter to him "from Olivia".

In the end, amidst the tricks and almost-battles, Olivia and Sebastian end up in love, and Duke Orsino realizes his love for Viola.

Meet the Characters

Viola and Sebastian are *twins*.
Orsino is the *Duke* of Illyria.
Cesario is one of Orsino's men.
Olivia is a *countess* in Illyria.
Maria is Olivia's Gentlewoman.
Sir Toby is Olivia's *uncle*.
Malvolio is Olivia's *steward*.
Feste is Olivia's *clown*.
Sir Andrew is visiting.
Antonio is wanted by Duke Orsino.



Photo by Ed Flores

From top to bottom, Vinessa Vidotto as Olivia, Tyler Reaser as Viola, and Colt Watkiss as Duke Orsino.



Photo by Ed Flores

From left to right: Dominique Ruffalo as Maria, Kasey Caruso as Sir Toby, Connor Griffin as Sir Andrew.

Orsino is *in love* with Olivia.
Malvolio is *in love* with himself...
but also Olivia.
Cesario is *in love* with Orsino.
Olivia is *in love* Cesario.
Antonio is *in love* with Sebastian.
Cesario is actually Viola.
Sir Toby is *fooling* Sir Andrew.
Maria is *fooling* Malvolio.
Antonio is helping Sebastian-both
very much unaware that all this is
happening in Illyria.

These images are from Arizona Repertory Theatre's production of *Twelfth Night*.



Globe Theatre, 2012

Themes

Gender & Identity

In *Twelfth Night*, gender is less defined while identity, particularly Viola's, is constructed externally but appreciated by others inwardly. Identity is often defined by an outward portrayal of gender, which is likely the mindset Shakespeare was operating in. However, the undefined gender of *Twelfth Night* creates a situation that's more complicated than typical love triangles. Viola cannot tell Orsino that she is in love with him because Orsino believes her to be a man, and Olivia is in love with Cesario, but who she really falls in love with is the woman under the disguise: Viola. In a modern light, the play makes even more of an interesting statement about gender, since gender is viewed as more of a spectrum than a binary.



ART, 2017
Photo by Ed Flores

Love

With characters falling in and out of love left and right in the play, it is easy to identify love as one of the main themes in *Twelfth Night*. The contrast between the deep feelings the characters all claim to have, and the fact that at the end of the play they are almost all willing to fall for someone else emphasizes the fleeting nature of romantic love, and makes an interesting point about the possibility that people fall more in love with the idea of love than with an actual person.



Everyman Theatre, 2014

Deception

There are layers of disguise and deception at work in *Twelfth Night*, from Viola disguising herself as a man to Maria and Sir Toby tricking Malvolio into thinking Olivia may fall in love with him. At points in the play it seems that everyone is pretending to be something they are not for the sake of love. Ultimately it is coming clean about who they are, and getting rid of the deception that results in a happy ending, for most of the characters that is.



ART, 2017
Photo by Ed Flores

Revels

Amidst the romantic plotline of *Twelfth Night*, there is a major subplot of Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Maria playing tricks and making revelry. Sir Toby is determined to enjoy life, playing freely, completely unconcerned with the consequences of his actions. He instigates games at other's expense. Whether it's locking Malvolio up or taking all of Andrew Aguecheek's money by association, the characters in this play have fun until the fun is well past done.

Shakespeare's Production Concept

Twelfth Night, or What You Will is a particularly exciting comedy that comes later in Shakespeare's life, meaning at this point in his career, he was a well-seasoned playwright looking for ways to have a little fun. One luxury of working on Shakespeare's plays is our ability to interpret his intentions and to reimagine how his words could work with a modern audience (thanks to copyright laws and a lack of documentation and stage directions on Shakespeare's part). His brilliant body of work lets current day artists explore a plethora of meanings that he himself probably didn't even realize he'd created. After all, over 400 years of re-mounts encourages us artists to get creative.

With that, we have to look to the text to help us infer what he might have been thinking while writing all 36 of his plays. *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* takes place in Illyria, which is literally the Balkan Peninsula. This Peninsula is located in Southeastern Europe, across the sea from Italy's famous "boot." However, Shakespeare fictionalized his Illyria to be somewhat placeless. We know that Shakespeare's Illyria is on the shore, as Viola and Sebastian end up there after a shipwreck. Other than that, Shakespeare used his imagination to fill in the details.

Shakespeare also isn't that specific about what days of the year *Twelfth Night* occurs on. We know that from beginning to end three months have passed, but other than that he does not make any direct allusion to any particular dates, outside of the title which refers to the twelfth day after Christmas. However, the only signifiers we have in the play that the characters are at the end of celebrating this twelve-day festival is Sir Toby and Air Andrew's making of revelry (please see www.12thN.weebly.com on the "context" page for more information on Christmas Revels festivities). However, it is possible Shakespeare may have been juxtaposing Olivia's mourning with a festival full of revelry.

ART's Production Concept

Our production takes place in an Illyria much like Shakespeare's: placeless. Our scenic designer, Andie Pratt knows about our Illyria unlike anyone else. In designing it, Andie looked to several different eras of architecture for inspiration. The blank walls you will see fit contemporary looks, while the moulding, the chandeliers, and other small but ornate details draw upon the Victorian era. She's designed secret doors that would often be seen in castles. There is even "a magic box" as she's coined it, that can be morphed into anything—a sewer, a garden, a plaza... you name it!

In a way, Andie acted much like Shakespeare, but rather than words she used images. In designing the set for *Twelfth Night*, she got to use her imagination to fill in the details that cannot be taken from images of a particular place, because no such place exists. By including architecture styles and details from many different eras, it becomes almost impossible to recognize exactly where Illyria is and when it is happening.

As far as a time period, we have set the play in an indeterminate future or past. Much like our "where," our "when" is timeless. We can feel this timelessness through Patrick Holt's costume design. He has incorporated looks inspired by several different eras, making it impossible to place exactly what era these characters live in. Similarly, lighting designer Domino Manheim takes it one step further and has designed the lighting to avoid dictating any particular time of day. Instead she wants to draw upon a feeling, tone, and mood. So not only do our characters exist in a timeless era, they are living in a minute-less day.

Activities

Twelfth Night: Build A “Shakesbook” Profile

(with thanks for Cal Shakes!)

Overview: Students will create their own “Shakesbook” pages in order to empathize and identify the personal situations of the characters in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

Grades: 9-12th

Goal: To connect Shakespeare's characters to contemporary times

Activity: Have each student pick one character from *Twelfth Night* and build a fake “Facebook” profile. Using information pulled from the script or imagination, students will be able to reflect on thoughts, feelings, and motivations of each character in *Twelfth Night*.

- Students should fill out the profile with information such as Personal Statistics, Likes/Dislikes, and Friends.
- Each “Shakesbook” page should have a Profile picture. Students can either draw a personal profile picture themselves or uses images cut out of magazines or newspapers they feel depict their characters personality.
- Students can later share their “Shakesbook” page with the class or have other students write on their wall.

Reflection:

- 1) What was one thing you imagined with your character? What was something you found interesting about your character?
- 2) Was it easy to imagine these characters lives outside the play?
- 3) Was it easy to decide who your characters friends are? Their Likes/Dislikes?

SHAKESBOOK

NAME:

Status:

Profile Picture:

Networks:

Sex:

Relationship Status:

Political/Religious view

Information:

Contact Information

Email:

Current Town:

Personal Information

Activities:

-

-

-

Favorite Music:

-

Favorite TV Show/s:

-

Favorite Movie/s:

-

Favorite Books:

-

Favorite Quote/s:

Friends:

-

-

-

Wall/Recent Activity:

Twelfth Night: Design Your Own Production

Overview: Students will look for clues in the play and design their own production elements.

Grades: 7-12th

Goal: To express your own design ideas of *Twelfth Night*.

Activity: Before seeing the play, have each student design their own aspect of the show using clues they found in the play (or by reading the study guide). Students can choose to design scenic, costume, lighting or sound or design the whole look of the production. After attending the ART production, ask each student to compare and contrast their design ideas with those of the ART production. Reflect on the differences they saw between their design and ART's. Ask students that after seeing ART's production, is there anything they would change about their design ideas? Why or Why not?

Twelfth Night: Malvolio's Letter

Overview: Students will engage with the language of Shakespeare by writing the letter Malvolio finds in their own words.

Grades: 7-12th

Goal: To gain a contemporary understanding of Shakespeare's language.

Materials: Copies of the letter Malvolio reads: Act 2, Scene 5 (attached below)

Activity:

Working in small groups, hand out the copies of the letter and ask students to read it through. Clarify any misunderstandings. Then ask students to write their own version of Malvolio's letter in "today's" modern language. Ask each group to share their versions with the class.

Act II Scene 5

Toby, Andrew, and Fabian hide themselves in a box tree while Maria plants the fake love letter from Olivia for Malvolio to find in the garden. Malvolio enters the scene, sees the letter on the ground, and begins reading the letter. He falls instantly for the prank, much to the delight of those watching.

MALVOLIO'S LETTER

To the unknown beloved, this, and my good wishes:

Jove knows I love: But who?

Lips, do not move;

No man must know.

I may command where I adore;

But silence, like a Lucrece knife,

With bloodless stroke my heart doth gore:

M, O, A, I, doth sway my life.

If this fall into thy hand, revolve. In my stars I am above thee;

but be not afraid of greatness: some are born great,

some achieve greatness, and some

have greatness thrust upon 'em. Thy Fates open

their hands; let thy blood and spirit embrace them;

and, to inure thyself to what thou art like to be,

cast thy humble slough and appear fresh. Be

opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants; let

thy tongue tang arguments of state; put thyself into

the trick of singularity: she thus advises thee

that sighs for thee. Remember who commended thy

yellow stockings, and wished to see thee ever

cross-gartered: I say, remember. Go to, thou art

made, if thou desirest to be so; if not, let me see

thee a steward still, the fellow of servants, and

not worthy to touch Fortune's fingers. Farewell.

She that would alter services with thee,

THE FORTUNATE-UNHAPPY.

Thou canst not choose but know who I am. If thou

entertainest my love, let it appear in thy smiling;

thy smiles become thee well; therefore in my

presence still smile, dear my sweet, I prithee.

Additional Resources



Photo by Ed Flores

Who is Shakespeare?

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/>

This website has everything you need to know about Shakespeare. Including: biographies, analyses of his plays, pronunciations, quizzes, all of his plays and sonnets, and much more!

<http://www.folger.edu/shakespeares-life>

A quick overview of the life of the bard.

12th Night or What You Will

<http://m.william-shakespeare.info/shakespeare-play-twelfth-night.htm>

A short and easy to read overview of the plot, characters, and other important elements of the play

<https://blog.library.si.edu/2013/01/twelfth-night-traditions-a-cake-a-bean-and-a-king/#.WKYWn9V1A0M>

This website has a rundown on the holiday that Shakespeare's play is named after.

<http://www.brighthubeducation.com/homework-help-literature/75664-four-main-themes-in-twelfth-night/>

Common themes of the show and writing prompts!

<http://www.litcharts.com/lit/twelfth-night/themes>

An easy to read rundown of all of the themes with analyses.

UA Production

<http://12thn.weebly.com/>

Your go to resource for all things University of Arizona, ART production of *12th Night*. The site includes historical and social context, a rundown on other productions of the show, a more extensive thematic exploration, and more!

Other *Twelfth Night* Study Guides

California Shakespeare Theatre: <http://www.calshakes.org/v4/educ/teachers.html>

Utah Shakespeare Festivals: <https://www.bard.org/study-guides/twelfth-night-study-guide>

Shakespeare Theatre: http://www.shakespearetheatre.org/_pdf/first_folio/12night_pdf