

RUFF READS



TWELFTH NIGHT **OR WHAT YOU WILL**

EDUCATOR RESOURCE GUIDE

Wooden O production of Twelfth Night, 2012. Photos by John Ulman.

TWELFTH NIGHT Educator Resource Guide

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Wooden O production of *Twelfth Night*, 2012. Photos by John Ulman.



SYNOPSIS

Twelfth Night begins on the shore of Illyria, where Viola has survived a shipwreck but fears that her twin brother, Sebastian, has drowned. After learning about her new surroundings from the ship's captain, Viola disguises herself as a young man and sets out to find employment from Duke Orsino.

Orsino has been sending messengers to court the Lady Olivia. He is convinced, from what he hears, that she is his ideal match. After Viola (disguised as 'Cesario') arrives at his court, it only takes a few days to become a favorite of Duke Orsino. The Duke imagines that 'Cesario's' youthful face will appeal to Olivia and sends 'him' to woo her on his behalf. Viola dutifully takes on the task, even though she has fallen in love with Orsino herself!

Meanwhile in Olivia's house, Olivia refuses to see any suitors because she has dedicated herself to seven years of mourning for her recently deceased brother. Her uncle Sir Toby Belch thinks that his niece is being foolish and brings his friend Sir Andrew Aguecheek, a foolish knight, to woo Olivia. They are reprimanded by the maid, Maria, for drinking late into the night and making merry in a house of mourning. Only the fool, Feste, can lift Olivia's spirits.

They are interrupted by news that a messenger from Orsino is waiting at the gate. 'Cesario' enters and is granted private audience with Olivia. It becomes clear, as 'Cesario' tries to convince Olivia of Orsino's worthy love, that Olivia is instead falling for 'Cesario.' When Viola leaves, Olivia sends her melancholy steward Malvolio to bring a ring to the youth and say it was left behind.

Malvolio intercepts Viola on her way back to Orsino's and presents the 'forgotten' ring, telling her only to return to tell Olivia of how Orsino takes the news of her rejection. Viola accepts the ring in confusion, but realizes to her dismay that this is a sign that Olivia has fallen in love with 'Cesario' instead of Orsino!

Elsewhere in Illyria, Viola's twin brother, Sebastian, has survived the shipwreck but believes that Viola has perished. He too sets off for Duke Orsino's court. Sebastian's friend, the sea captain Antonio, has enemies in Orsino's court, but pledges to accompany Sebastian to keep him safe.

At Olivia's house, more late night merrymaking is interrupted by the disapproving Malvolio. After he leaves, Maria concocts an elaborate trick to be played on him. Forging a love letter from Olivia, she will encourage Malvolio to take on a series of ridiculous behaviors — all carefully planned to put him out of Olivia's favor. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Feste all agree to help with the trick, which leads to Malvolio falling for it entirely and being confined as a madman.



Malvolio before Olivia, from 'Twelfth Night' by Johann Heinrich Ramberg, 1789.

Sir Andrew is discouraged by Olivia's continued favor toward 'Cesario,' so Sir Toby convinces Sir Andrew to challenge the youth to a duel. Just as they are about to fight, Antonio happens upon the scene and, believing Viola to be her brother Sebastian, intervenes and is arrested. Later Sir Andrew encounters the real Sebastian on the street and re-issues his challenge, but Sebastian soundly beats him. Olivia arrives and mistakes Sebastian for 'Cesario,' asking him to marry her. He is immediately smitten by her beauty and agrees.

The appearance of Sebastian in town sends everyone into confusion. Antonio accuses 'Cesario' of not repaying the money he lent to Sebastian. Olivia embraces 'Cesario' saying they have been married, much to Viola's shock. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew accuse 'Cesario' of assaulting them in the street. In the midst of all Viola's denials, Sebastian arrives. The twins recognize each other, Viola is revealed as a woman, and they clear up the confusion.

In the end, Viola marries Orsino, Sebastian and Olivia remain happily wed, and Sir Toby offers to marry Maria to make up for all the trouble he has given her. It is only vengeful Malvolio who does not live happily ever after.

CHARACTERS

VIOLA

Twin sister to Sebastian, later disguised as **CESARIO**

ORSINO

Duke of Illyria

OLIVIA

A Countess

SEBASTIAN

Twin brother to Viola

MARIA

Olivia's waiting-gentlewoman

SIR TOBY BELCH

Olivia's kinsman

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK

Sir Toby's companion

MALVOLIO

Steward to Olivia

FESTE

A Jester in Olivia's household

FABIAN

A member of Olivia's household

ANTONIO

A captain, a friend to Sebastian

VALENTINE AND CURIO

Two gentlemen attending Orsino

CAPTAIN

OFFICERS

PRIEST

MALVOLIOS IN POP CULTURE



Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (2012).



Dolores Umbridge from *Harry Potter*.



Sue Sylvester from *Glee*.



Dwight Schrute from *The Office*.

For most Shakespeare fans, Malvolio is a character who we love to hate. As a comic demi-villain, he inspires laughs with his exaggerated self-love, stringent adherence to rules, and failed attempts to constrain the antics of the fun-loving clowns who surround him.

Malvolio-like characters are common in contemporary popular culture and usually manifest most, if not all, of Malvolio's key traits.

We've curated a few examples of "Malvolios" from TV and film. Using the list of traits below, ask students if they can identify Malvolio-like characters from some of their favorite TV shows or movies. Ensemble comedies are a great place to look first.

Malvolio Traits:

- Takes self very seriously
- All about following rules
- Ambitious
- Is pranked by those they attempt to antagonize
- Willing to ruin fun for others

MERRIMENT AND SOBRIETY IN *TWELFTH NIGHT*

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* is the latest of his festive comedies, which include *Much Ado about Nothing* and *As You Like It*. The title indicates the festive atmosphere in the play, referring to the twelve nights of Christmas, in which the normal rigors of society and schooling were put aside in favor of vacation and merriment. This tension between rules and mirth is the central tension of the play, both in its main plot and its subplot.

At the opening of the play, we are introduced to the characters of Duke Orsino and the Countess Olivia. Neither of these characters is capable or willing to savor life's pleasures while they are young. Orsino is tied up in his Petrarchan love for Olivia. He woos her according to strict rules, and is obsessed with the suffering associated with unrequited love. He writes her letters that proclaim his undying love for her, and yet he has not seen her in so long that it begins to look as if he is in love with the idea of loving Olivia, and has no particular feelings about the lady herself.



Olivia and "Cesario" in *Twelfth Night* at Seattle Shakespeare Company, 2012

The Countess Olivia is bound by a different set of rules and expectations. She is consumed by her chastity and mourning for a dead brother, denying herself any pleasure in the world around her. She has elaborate mourning rituals that dwell upon the actions of mourning, but seem to have little connection to her actual brother for whom she is supposedly doing all of these shows. Those around her comment that she is foolishly wasting her beauty and youth, and should put off the shows of sorrow in favor of living her life. As Shakespeare scholar Bevington writes, "We suspect that Olivia takes a willful pleasure in self-denial not unlike Orsino's self-congratulatory suffering. She appears to derive satisfaction from the power she holds over Orsino, a power of refusal. And she must know that she looks stunning in black."

When Viola appears on the scene, she acts as a counterpoint to these two. She also has a brother who is presumed dead, but she hopes for his safety and trusts that if he has died, he is in heaven. She also continues to live her life despite this tragedy, in a way

that Olivia refuses to do. Viola acts as a go-between for Orsino and Olivia, but she throws away the artificial professions of love that Orsino sends. Instead she has an honest conversation with Olivia, urging her to give up her mourning and seize this happiness for herself. This takes Olivia by surprise and does in fact convince her to fall in love, albeit with "Cesario," who has no interest in her.

Viola also shakes Orsino out of his indulgent suffering. She uses her disguise as boy to gain his platonic affection, having conversations with him and asking him questions that would be inappropriate had she been known to be a woman. They develop a strong "male" friendship bond, and this allows Viola to frankly counsel him in the ways of mature love, encouraging him to drop his obsession with courtly love. When she later reveals herself to be a woman, the lines between romantic love and male friendship are blurred, potentially leading to a more mature relationship.

The main subplot of *Twelfth Night* concerns the conflict between Malvolio, who dresses somberly and outlaws revelry in Olivia's house, and Feste, who uses his status as a professional fool to try and convince Olivia that her sorrows are misplaced and out of proportion. Along with Feste comes Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Maria, who enjoy the simple pleasures of life. They dance, drink, and engage in revels at all hours of the night, and generally enjoy their lives. Malvolio objects to this, insisting on a rigid sobriety for everyone in the house.

Here, the conflict between merriment and sobriety is more stark. Malvolio directly confront Sir Toby and company, and is hostile to them and their revelry. Whereas Viola gently shook Olivia and Orsino out of their foolish posturing, Malvolio's punishment is more cruel. Their plan for Malvolio manipulates him into putting on bright colored clothing and smiling, the very things that he objected to. For this he is declared a madman, and in a twist of fate it is the fool, Feste, who looks to the madman.



Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* at Seattle Shakespeare Company, 2009

MESSY ENDINGS



Phoebe and Silvius in *As You Like It* at Seattle Shakespeare Company, 2012

At the end of Shakespeare's comedies, there is always a wedding and a celebration. The central couples have declared their love, all obstacles have been overcome and the audiences are treated to a happy ending. But even with this, Shakespeare had a tendency to leave the endings somewhat messy, as life often is. For example, not all the couples of *As You Like It* want to be together; Silvius and Phoebe are married essentially through a trick and both are very aware that there is not real love between them as there is between Rosalind and Orlando. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, the marriages of Beatrice and Benedick and Hero and Claudio are offset by Shakespeare reminding the audience of Don Pedro being the odd man out, saying they will deal with him in the morning. In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare gives us one of his messier endings in one of his most celebrated comedies.

The most obvious character who ends the play unhappy is Malvolio. By the end of the play, he has become humiliated and hurt by the deception foisted on him by Toby Belch and Maria. Shakespeare has Malvolio's humiliation cross the line from pure fun to cruel mockery. The stocking scene is genuinely funny, but when Malvolio is kept in darkness with Feste further torturing him as Sir Topas, it seems as though things have gone too far. The joke has gone from fun to something more mean-spirited, and the audience is left to decide whether Malvolio deserved such humiliation. Needless to say his words "I will be revenged on the whole pack of you," at the end of the play add a certain level of unease to an otherwise happy ending.

If one looks deeper at the core relationships in the play, it does leave more questions. For example, does Orsino love Viola? Their relationship has been built on deception. He has only known her as Cesario, not Viola. He really does not know who she is as a woman. Viola and Orsino have shared their souls and feelings with each other, but all of this happened while Viola was in disguise. Will they truly be happy? Shakespeare doesn't give an answer one way or the other. The same can be said of Olivia and Sebastian. Sebastian is not his sister, in men's clothes or not. Olivia believes he is Cesario and marries him under that belief, which Sebastian goes along with. How long will these relationships last? Shakespeare does not give us an indication of what will happen after the curtain falls.

There are certainly other characters who end the play in less than pleasant circumstances. Andrew Aguecheek has been left out in the cold, both by Olivia and Toby Belch. Toby Belch has been beaten and humiliated and will likely be punished for his actions. One can also look at Antonio, who is a true innocent amid all the deception and who was arrested for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Does *Twelfth Night* have a happy ending? On the surface, the answer seems to be yes. Viola ends with Orsino, whom she has been pining for throughout the show. Olivia has found happiness again. Any misunderstanding or deception has been revealed and dealt with. Signs point to yet another ending filled with happiness. Yet *Twelfth Night*, which is the last of Shakespeare's great comedies, has an ending which points toward the direction Shakespeare would go to in his later writings. The future of the central relationships is unknown. A number of characters have fates which are unknown. One character has been treated poorly and swears vengeance. An audience can leave with uncertain emotions about the future of the characters. It is notable that, following this play, Shakespeare began the writing period that would result in some of his greatest tragedies. Even in the laughs of *Twelfth Night*, the more mature and complex side of Shakespeare's writing was beginning to show.

TWINS AND DOPPELGANGERS

Identical characters (whether twins or doppelgangers) have always been a subject of fascination in literature, theatre, and film. Even in real life, twins have often been subject to curiosity. Writers and artists have used lookalikes as an integral part of plots, equally for tragic or comic effect.

THEATER

Antipholus of Ephesus & Antipholus of Syracuse

Dromio of Ephesus & Dromio of Syracuse

Shakespeare used not one, but two sets of twins in *The Comedy of Errors*. The play's fun revolves around the twins getting confused for the other.



The Comedy of Errors at Seattle Shakespeare Company, 2007

Victor & Poche

In Georges Feydeau's *A Flea in Her Ear*, a gentleman and a servant are often mistaken for the other.



A Flea in Her Ear at The Old Vic Theatre, 2010

LITERATURE

Tom Canty & Prince Edward

In his novel *The Prince and the Pauper*, Mark Twain presents a fictional story of a prince who changes places with a commoner who happens to look exactly like him.



George and Fred Fred and George Weasley

Fred Weasley & George Weasley

Characters in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. Actual twin actors played the brothers in the films.

MYTHOLOGY

Apollo & Artemis

Twin brother and sister who were the Ancient Greek deities of the sun and moon respectively.



Apollo and Artemis

Romulus & Remus

The twins who were nursed by a wolf and went on to found the city that would become Rome. Romulus eventually killed his brother in a feud about where to build the city.



Romulus and Remus

Yamuna (Yami) & Yama

Yamuna (Yami) and Yama were twin deities of the sacred Yamuna River and Death respectively in the Vedic pantheon of Ancient India.

FILM

Susan & Sharon

In *The Parent Trap*, two twins conspire to get their estranged parents back together. The story was originally filmed in 1968 with Haley Mills playing both parts and then remade in 1998 with Lindsey Lohan.



The Parent Trap, 1998

The Man in the Iron Mask

Based on a set of characters in an installation of Alexander Dumas's *Three Musketeers* serial novels, Philippe is the secretly imprisoned identical twin of King Louis XIV. The story has been adapted into multiple films.



The Man in the Iron Mask, 1998

PRE-SHOW REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Before watching the show, have students reflect on the following questions, either in a large group, small group, or individually in a journal.

Throughout this play, characters fall in love with people who are clearly — to the audience — wrong for them. Why do you think people fall in love with people they don't really know?

Have you ever played a prank on someone? What happened? Why did you do it? How did you feel about it at the time, and how did you feel about it afterward?

In *Twelfth Night*, characters routinely criticize other characters for not acting “appropriately” in a situation. How do different people define what is appropriate? Can you think of a time when you thought someone was acting inappropriately?

In this play, much of the confusion comes from mistaken identity. Can you think of a time when you experienced a mistaken identity? What happened? This could be confusing two people with the same name, texting the wrong person by mistake, thinking you recognized someone on the street, forgetting who was who in person, etc.

PRE-SHOW REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The following questions are intended to spark discussion. Some possible answers are included, but students should be encouraged to come up with their own suggested answers and interpretations.

In Shakespeare's time, women were not allowed to perform onstage. The character of Viola would have been performed by a man playing a woman disguised as a man. How does the play make this clear to the audience? How does Shakespeare use this to humorous effect?

- The way that the actors plays the character is a big part of making this effect work.
- Viola has several lines where she describes what she would do if she were a woman, or how much she is not a man.
- Many of the roles Viola is asked to play are specifically man's roles, like wooing Olivia or dueling Sir Andrew.

In this play, love and suffering seem to go hand in hand. How many characters suffer for their love? What is an example from your life or other stories when love and suffering went hand in hand?

- Orsino, Viola, Olivia, Malvolio, and Sir Andrew are all miserably in love with people who do not love them back.
- Sebastian does not suffer in love. When he first meets Olivia, she proposes to him and he accepts.
- (Student stories will vary. Many movies also feature characters who suffer in love.)

What sorts of masks and disguises are used in this play? Why do characters hide behind these disguises, and what happens when the masks come off?

- Viola disguises herself as a boy so she can travel safely and serve the Duke. When she finally unmask, she can reveal her love for him.
- Olivia masks herself in mourning (and even wears a veil) to avoid suitors. When she falls in love with Cesario, she drops that mask and is full of passion.
- Malvolio wears a fake smile as well as his yellow stockings because he thinks it will make Olivia fall in love with him. When he learns the truth, he is angry and out for revenge.
- Feste wears the disguise of Sir Topas to make Malvolio think he is mad. When he reveals his prank, he hopes to teach Malvolio a lesson.

Who are the fools in the play? Why are they fools?

- Feste. He is employed as a fool in Olivia's court.
- Sir Toby. He is a funny character who clowns around with his friends.
- Sir Andrew. He is made a fool by Sir Toby because he is not too smart.
- Malvolio. He is made a fool by Sir Toby and Maria to punish him for being self-absorbed.
- Olivia. She is made a fool by Viola because she falls in love with someone who is false.

ACTIVITY: EXPLORATIONS OF GENDER STEREOTYPES

In *Twelfth Night*, Viola needs to disguise herself as a man in order to move freely about Illyria and to work for the Duke. Shakespeare understood that women had fewer rights than men in his time, but he still found ways to put strong leading

ladies in his plays. In this activity, students will examine what the modern images are of women and men, and how that might affect what they can do. For younger students you can choose just one or two parts of this activity.

PART ONE: Collages

Have students look for popular modern images of men and women. Look particularly at advertisements that feature men and women, but some groups may also want to include celebrities and newspaper photos. Students should then make two collages, one of images of men, and another of images of women. Post these collages around the classroom for students to look at.

Discuss:

- What do these collages suggest about what it is like to be a woman? What do women do? What do women look like?
- What do these collages suggest about what it is like to be a man? What do men do? What do men look like?
- Is there a difference in how advertisers show men and women versus how newspapers show men and women?
- Do you agree with the image of men and women presented by these collages?
- Do you feel like you fit into one of these two categories? Why or why not?

PART TWO: Research

Have students do internet research about women and men, and where there are still gender differences in America. Some suggestions of topics include:

- Are there some college majors that are dominated by women? By men?
- Are there some jobs or career fields that are dominated by women? By men?
- What percentage of mothers stay home from work? Of fathers?
- What percentage of prison inmates are women? Are men?

Encourage students to research areas of particular interest to them as well. If a student enjoys computer games, they could look at whether women or men design the games or play the games. If a student wants to be an astronaut, they could research how many women and men are in NASA, and what percent of astronauts are women or men. If a student is looking at a specific college, they could look at what percentage of the administration and professors are male or female.

Have students report their findings to the rest of the class, and compile these statistics into one list for everyone to look at and consider.

Discuss:

- Were there any trends that multiple students found?
- What are your impressions of this list?
- Do you feel like you, as a male or female, are accurately represented in this list? Why or why not?
- Why do you think these statistics look the way that they do?
- Are there any societal, physical, or other factors that may affect how this list of statistics looks?
- Do you think these trends are changing over time?

PART THREE: Reflection

Have students think about their experiences of gender growing up. How big of a role has gender played in their lives so far — both their gender and the gender of people around them? Then students should write a reflection paper or journal entry about their experiences. Here are some reflection questions to get you started, but students should feel free to add others.

- Have there been times in your life that you were teased for your gender?
- Have you ever been told what you should or should not do, because you are a certain gender?
- Are there people in your life who look or act very differently than their gender stereotype?
- Have there been times in your life when you noticed men or women being judged on different standards? (For example: physical ability, dress standards, leadership skills, technical skills, etc.)
- How important to your personal identity is your gender?

There are no wrong answers to these reflections. If students are comfortable sharing, lead a class discussion based on the questions above. Be sure to keep students talking about their own experiences instead of generalizations about gender, and remind them that everyone has different experiences that should be respected and taken into account.

SEATTLE SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

Mission Statement

With the plays of William Shakespeare at our core, Seattle Shakespeare Company engages our audiences, our artists and our community in the universal human experience inherent in classic drama through the vitality, immediacy and intimacy of live performance and dynamic outreach programs.

ABOUT US

Seattle Shakespeare Company is the Puget Sound region's year-round, professional, classical theatre. The company's growing success stems from a deep belief in the power and vibrancy of the time-tested words and ideas of Shakespeare and other classical playwrights along with a commitment to artistic excellence on stage. The results have been provocative performances that both challenge and delight audiences while fostering an appreciation for great stage works.

Our combined programs — which include indoor performances, free outdoor productions, regional tours, educator and youth programs — reach across barriers of income, geography, and education to bring classical theatre to Washington State.

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EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In-School Residencies, Matinees, and Workshops

- In-School Residencies bring active, customized curriculum into schools across Washington State. Professional teaching artists plan with teachers to tailor each residency to fit the needs and objectives of the classroom. Seattle Shakespeare Company residencies inject vibrant, active exercises into lessons that unlock the text, themes, and actions of a Shakespeare play.
- Student Matinees bring over 3,000 students annually to our mainstage productions in the Seattle Center. Teachers are provided free study guides, and student groups are invited to stay after the show for a free Q&A session with the cast.
- Pre-show and post-show workshops can be booked to accompany mainstage matinees. These workshops include an introduction to the play itself, student activities, and insights into direction and design choices of our specific production.

Touring Productions

- Fresh and accessible 90-minute productions tour across Washington State each Spring, reaching more than 14,000 students and adults. These nimble productions perform as easily in school gymnasiums as professional theatre facilities. Teachers are provided free study guides and students enjoy free post-show Q&A sessions with the cast.
- Schools have the opportunity to book accompanying in-school residencies with touring productions, led by members of the touring cast and additional teaching artists.

Camps and Classes

- Our summer "Camp Bill" series in Seattle and Edmonds offers young actors a variety of camps to choose from or combine. Camps range from a One-Week Introduction to a Three-Week Production Intensive, with many options in between.
- In our Fall and Spring after-school "Short Shakes" programs, young actors develop their skills and gain hands-on performance and production experience.
- Seattle Shakespeare Company occasionally offers adult classes and workshops to our community featuring guest artists who work on our stage.