

Classical Theatre Project

Twelfth Night Education Guide



“If music be the food of love, play on!” I.i.1

One of Shakespeare’s most popular comedies, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, is an outstanding commentary on the illusions and delusions of love. Classical Theatre Project takes the topsy-turvy world of Illyria and transplants it onto a vaudeville stage. Five actors undertake eleven roles in this uproarious, interactive and highly musical production.



Interesting Facts:

- The first recorded production of *Twelfth Night* was February 2nd, 1602.
- Length: 21,467 words, 2,500 lines (The *Comedy of Errors* is Shakespeare’s shortest play at 1,787 lines, while *Hamlet* is his longest at 4,042 lines.)
- The term “twelfth night” refers to the twelfth night after Christmas - a Catholic holiday known as the Feast of Epiphany.

***Twelfth Night* Characters**

Viola

Viola is a young woman of Messaline, who finds herself shipwrecked in Illyria. She is *Twelfth Night's* protagonist, keeping the motions of the play going. Since she is alone (her twin brother Sebastian thought to have drowned), she disguises herself as Cesario, a young man, and starts working for Duke Orsino. Soon after, Viola discovers her own love for her master, but cannot do anything about that as a man. Viola is an outspoken young woman, trying to cope in a new world and as a new "man".

Duke Orsino

Orsino is a powerful nobleman, and rules over Illyria. He is lovesick for the Countess Olivia, but finds himself growing very fond over his new page boy, Cesario, who is actually Viola. One of Orsino's favourite hobbies is music, and he sings throughout the play.

Countess Olivia

Olivia is a beautiful noblewoman of Illyria, who is the object of Orsino and Sir Andrew Aguecheek's love. Mourning for her brother, she has refused to marry for seven years. However, when she sees Cesario, she falls in love with him, completing the love triangle in the play. Olivia is blinded by her love for Cesario and mistakenly offers herself to Sebastian, who accepts her marriage proposal.

Sebastian

Sebastian is Viola's twin brother, who also survived the shipwreck to arrive in Illyria. He sets out to find Orsino with his friend Antonio and discovers along the way that other people believe they know him. He is mistaken for Cesario and weds Olivia.

Malvolio

Malvolio is Olivia's head servant. He is very efficient, but also egotistical and self-righteous. His behaviour and attitude encourage Sir Toby, Maria, and Sir Andrew to play a dirty trick on him: they forge a love note from Olivia. Malvolio believes himself to be the best suitor for Olivia and fantasizes about marrying her.

Feste

Feste is Olivia's clown, or fool, but he also entertains Orsino's household. Making jokes, singing songs, and being foolish to entertain and cheer Olivia is his job. Feste is usually thought to be the wisest character in the play.

Sir Toby

Sir Toby, Olivia's uncle, is a drunk and is quite rowdy. As a lark, he encourages his drinking partner, Sir Andrew, to marry his niece. Sir Toby and Maria plot to continuously torment Malvolio, discover their feelings for each other and get married.

Maria

Maria is a trusted servant in Olivia's household. She is daring and outspoken, and she also fantasizes about advancing in social standing. Unlike Malvolio, Maria succeeds and marries Sir Toby after assisting with the joke played on the head servant.

Sir Andrew Aguecheek

Sir Andrew is a friend of Sir Toby and wishes that he could marry Olivia. He believes himself to be an incredibly interesting man with many talents and skills, but he is however just a fool.

***Twelfth Night* – The Major Events**

<p>1. Viola survives the wreck of her ship and finds herself in Illyria with nothing but her brother Sebastian's suitcase. Alone and believing her brother to be dead, Viola finds Duke Orsino and disguises herself as a young man, calling herself Cesario, to go work for him.</p>	<p>2. Meanwhile, in Olivia's court, Sir Toby Belch wants his niece Olivia to marry Sir Andrew Aguecheek. Olivia plans to mourn her recently deceased brother for seven years and does not plan to wed, even with such fine suitors as Orsino.</p>
<p>3. Viola goes to work for Orsino as a page but soon falls in love with him. Orsino, who is in love with Olivia, sends Viola to woo his love. Instead of falling for the Duke, Olivia sets her sights on the disguised Viola.</p>	<p>4. Sebastian was said to have drowned in the shipwreck, but he survived and arrives in Illyria. Sebastian goes to see Orsino, though his companion Antonio is scared to go, for he is an enemy to Orsino and will be arrested upon his arrival.</p>
<p>5. Viola finds out that Olivia loves her and does not know how to react. Maria, Toby, and Feste have all endured abuse from Malvolio, Olivia's servant, so they decide to forge a love note from Olivia as a way to torment Malvolio.</p>	<p>6. After reading the letter he believes to be from Olivia, Malvolio transforms himself according to the outlandish qualities described in the letter. Meanwhile, Toby and Andrew discover Olivia's love for Cesario.</p>
<p>7. Malvolio declares his love for Olivia, but appears crazy. Andrew is egged on by Toby to fight Cesario to win Olivia's love. He is stopped by Antonio who mistakes the cross-dressing Viola for her twin brother.</p>	<p>8. Olivia declares her love for Cesario to Sebastian and, despite the identity confusion, Olivia and Sebastian decide to wed. Malvolio discovers Olivia never loved him, while Maria and Toby reveal they have also married. After Viola reveals her true identity, Orsino professes his love for her and proposes.</p>

William Shakespeare made use of cross dressing in quite a number of his plays - about one fifth in total. The majority of cross dressing is that of female characters disguising themselves as young men. In three, it is central to the complication and resolution of the plot. In *Twelfth Night*, Viola disguises herself as Cesario, who immediately causes a love triangle between herself, Duke Orsino and Countess Olivia. Other plays to involve cross-dressing include: *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

<p>Before you see the show</p> <p>Before you see the CTP production of <i>Twelfth Night</i>, consider what goes into putting on a show. What choices would you make if you were directing, designing or performing in <i>Twelfth Night</i>?</p>	<p>Direction</p>	<p>Design</p>	<p>Acting</p>
	<p>The Role of the Director</p> <p>The director interprets the play and makes decisions about the best way to tell the story on stage. In addition to choosing the actors and working with them in rehearsal, the director works closely with the designers to create the look of the show.</p> <p>You're the Director</p> <p>What is your vision of how the play should be staged? Write a brief concept for your production including who you would cast and what themes you would emphasize.</p>	<p>The Role of the Designers</p> <p>The designers work closely with the director to create the look of the show by deciding what the costumes for each character and what scenic elements should appear on stage throughout the play.</p> <p>You're the Designer</p> <p>Choose a scene from <i>Twelfth Night</i> and sketch your vision of the set. Or choose two characters and cut pictures from magazines with what you think they should wear. Consider the themes and symbolism you wish to convey.</p>	<p>The Role of the Actors</p> <p>The actors work to interpret each role in the play and work in rehearsal with the director to find the best way to present a character. They have to memorize lines and make decisions about the personality, age, and physical characteristics of their roles.</p> <p>You're the Actor</p> <p>Memorize a speech from your favourite character. Perform the speech, keeping in mind the following: how does the character sound? What does he or she look like? What is the emotional journey of the speech?</p>

Going to a play in Shakespeare's London would have been similar to attending a sporting event today. The Rose and Globe Theatres were large, open-aired arenas and they would be packed with 3000 people, more than 1000 of whom would be groundlings or "penny stinkards" (since they paid a penny for admission) standing in the pit in front of the stage. The performances took place at two o'clock in the afternoon on a stage that was a large empty platform with the audience on three sides.

What to Watch For

Attending the theatre is an interactive event. There is a unique energy created when the attention of the actors and the attention of the audience combine with imagination to create a world that exists only for the duration of the performance. Consider the following before you arrive at the theatre:

A) Design Elements

How do the costumes, lighting or music support the tone and meaning of the play?
How do design motifs enhance themes in the play?

B) Non-verbal Cues

Body language and non-verbal cues in a live performance support and clarify the words the characters speak. Watch for moments in the play where body language plays an important part in the interactions between characters. How do the physical actions express the characters' reactions and attitudes without words?

C) The Text

Watch out for scenes that have been abridged or cut entirely. How do such cuts affect the impact of the performance as a whole?

Characters in CTP's Production of *Twelfth Night*

Before the going to see the performance, write down some observations about the play, the characters, and lines of the text that stand out. After you have seen the CTP's production of *Twelfth Night*, it is very obvious that some characters are missing or have been combined into others. Take a look at your notes, the character lists and discuss in class some of the following questions:

- Who was missing from the cast? Did you actually miss them?
- What lines were condensed or given to other characters?
- Were the actors successful in presenting themselves as numerous characters?
- What do you think the performance gains or loses through having five actors performing eleven roles?
- Do you think this show would work better or worse with more actors?
- What did you think of the last scene, where there are too many characters present for the actors to present?

Once you have discussed, take the last scene of *Twelfth Night* and try to create your own ending. You can use any number of people, but try to limit the number to less than the number of characters. Work on the scene, creating the characters, changing lines or roles if necessary, and present it to the rest of the class. Have fun with this!

Questions and Answers

There will be a question and answer period after the performance of *Twelfth Night*. Think of a question to ask the actors about the play, or about the process of creating a professional stage production.

After you see the show	Direction	Design	Acting
<p>After you see the CTP production of <i>Twelfth Night</i>, discuss the following questions with the class:</p>	<p>What did you think of the director's choices for this setting and time period?</p> <p>Based upon this production, what do you think <i>Twelfth Night</i> is about? What themes and messages were being conveyed?</p>	<p>How did the look of this production differ from what you had imagined when reading the play?</p> <p>What did you think of the set for <i>Twelfth Night</i>? What about the costumes? How did they help convey the story?</p>	<p>What did you think of the portrayal of Viola? Of Orsino?</p> <p>How did this production handle the discovery of Viola's identity?</p> <p>Who was your favourite character? How did the choices of the actor make that character stand out from the others?</p>

Audience Response

After seeing the play, think back to specific moments in the performance.

- Which were most memorable for you?
- What was it that most excited, moved, or surprised you?
- Do you think your reaction was shared by the rest of the audience?

Brainstorm a list of moments that gathered a strong response from the audience in general.

- Did different members of the audience respond in different ways?
- Are there places where the boys responded differently than the girls?
- Places where teachers responded differently than students?
- How do you account for these differences?
- Did you think the audience response was appropriate to the situation and the content of the performance?

What's the Big Idea?

Now that you've heard *Twelfth Night* in performance, consider what you feel to be the main ideas of the play.

- What did Shakespeare hope to accomplish with this play?
- Is there a theme or recurring motif that stands out?
- Did this production convey the director's ideas on the play?
- What did the director feel were most important features of the play and how were they illustrated?

Hearing the Words

Shakespeare's language is poetic, rhythmic, and dense with imagery. It's meant to be heard by an audience of everyday people.

- How did the actors make the meaning of their words clear?
- Were there changes in tone, volume, pitch or speed that helped important words or ideas stand out to the audience?
- Discuss the actors who were most successful in making their words "live."
- How did they use their words to make the meaning clear?

Hearing a Play

While they may have worn lavish costumes, there was rarely any set to speak of in Shakespeare's time, and only minimal props were used. Shakespeare's words had to create the setting, tone, and atmosphere of the whole play. With emphasis on the aural elements of the visual elements at the theatre, most playgoers would say they were going to "hear" a play rather than seeing one as we would say today.

What are the Images?

Shakespeare's language is dense with images. His plays were performed in broad daylight, with little in the way of scenery or props to set the scene. The images in the language take over for physical images. The characters use words to set the scene rather than relying on physical sets and props.

- Find a scene in *Twelfth Night* where the characters set the scene through language - what mood is created through the words?
- What specific words contribute to the effect?
- What is described (physical surroundings? Weather? Temperature? Lightness, darkness? Smells?)

Now write a short paragraph of your own, describing a place or time with which you are familiar. Be specific in using words to create a vivid picture of that place. How can you let your readers/ audience know exactly what it is like to be in that place? Use your words to make textures, temperatures, smells – the entire essence of that place – live for your audience.

Compare *Twelfth Night* to *She's the Man*

She's the Man is a modern-day interpretation of *Twelfth Night*. In this film version, Viola is a girl who wants to play soccer, but the only way she can is by impersonating her brother at his new school. Since it is a film, there are many steps that can be taken to create a story than in a live performance.

After seeing the play, watch the movie and record your thoughts. Then write a summary based on the following questions:

- What were the main differences in this interpretation?
- What characters were missing, and what new main characters were added?
- Where characters roles were changed, and how?
- What themes were still present, or what new themes were introduced?
- Which version did you like more, and why?

Storyboard the Action

Within three short scenes at the beginning of *Twelfth Night*, most of the important characters are introduced to the audience. Keeping track of who is who, and what they all want, can be a major challenge for the reader. Work in pairs or small groups to clarify your understanding of the scene. Create a story-board or comic book version of the scene that introduces all the major events of the scene.

Include lines of dialogue in thought bubbles. Consider how a director might group the assorted characters to clarify their relationships, to highlight the action in the script, to make the entrance of an important character stand out.

Share your work with the class. Are there characters or elements of the plot that are missed? Use your work as a guide for staging the scene - experiment with using the story-board as a blueprint with class members acting out each of the roles and following the "direction" the blueprint offers.

