Sacramento Theatre Company

Study Guide

Twelfth Night

by William Shakespeare

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Sacramento Theatre Company

Mission Statement

The Sacramento Theatre Company (STC) strives to be the leader in integrating professional theatre with theatre arts education. STC produces engaging professional theatre, provides exceptional theatre training, and uses theatre as a tool for educational engagement.

Our History

The theatre was originally formed as the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre in 1942, an ad hoc troupe formed to entertain locally-stationed troops during World War II. On October 18, 1949, the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre acquired a space of its own with the opening of the Eaglet Theatre, named in honor of the Eagle, a Gold Rush-era theatre built largely of canvas that had stood on the city's riverfront in the 1850s. The Eaglet Theatre eventually became the Main Stage of the not-for-profit Sacramento Theatre Company, which evolved from a community theatre to professional theatre company in the 1980s. Now producing shows in three performance spaces, it is the oldest theatre company in Sacramento.

After five decades of use, the Main Stage was renovated as part of the H Street Theatre Complex Project. Features now include an expanded and modernized lobby and a Cabaret Stage for special performances. The facility also added expanded dressing rooms, laundry capabilities, and other equipment allowing the transformation of these performance spaces, used nine months of the year by STC, into backstage and administration places for three months each summer to be used by California Musical Theatre for Music Circus.

Sacramento Theatre Company can accommodate 292 patrons in the proscenium-style auditorium of its Main Stage, while the Pollock Stage offers a more intimate experience with only 87 seats in a black box-style theatre. Both provide good acoustics and sight-lines. This professional, Equity theatre presents seven professional productions per season with a reputation for excellent stage adaptations of classic literature. Three annual productions in the Cabaret Stage, which seats 100, round out the experience with high-quality Broadway musical revues.

The Young Professionals Conservatory, a training program for young theatre artists, was founded in 2003. The program, as well as the entire STC School of the Arts, is directed by Michele Hillen-Noufer.

For further information about the Sacramento Theatre Company please visit us online:

http://www.sactheatre.org

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Summary

Viola and Sebastian, twins, are separated during a shipwreck. Viola, thinking her brother dead, finds herself stranded in Ilyria. She disguises herself as a man, Cesario, and enters the service of Duke Orsino, who is in love with Olivia and who sends Viola/Cesario to woo Lady Olivia on his behalf. Orsino does not know that Viola has fallen in love with him. Olivia is indulging in a seven-year season of mourning for a dead brother and is refusing to accept the advances of any man. Her sorrow is not so profound, however, as to keep her from falling in love with the disguised Viola. She is so in love, in fact, that she later sends Cesario/Viola a ring and invitation to return and then admits her love for "him."

In Olivia's household, only her steward, the melancholy Malvolio, finds a morbid pleasure in the atmosphere of mourning which Olivia has decreed. Her uncle, Sir Toby Belch, doesn't believe in grief; he spends his time drinking with Olivia's clown, Feste, and his dupe, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, a wealthy but foolish knight.

Because Malvolio is so arrogant, Maria, Olivia's chamber woman, plots with Sir Toby, Aguecheek, and Feste to get even. They do so by forging a letter from Olivia and duping Malvolio into wearing yellow stockings, which she detests. Malvolio's unaccountable antics cause Olivia to think him mad, and Sir Toby and Maria have him committed to a dark room.

Meanwhile, Viola's twin brother, Sebastian, unaware that Viola is still alive, arrives in Ilyria with a sea captain, Antonio, who is an outlawed man in Ilyria. Antonio lends his purse to Sebastian and parts.

Seeking more "sport," Sir Toby presses Aguecheek and Cesario/Viola into a duel. Antonio rushes to rescue the youth, whom he believes is his friend, Sebastian, and is arrested by the duke's men and met by Cesario/Viola with a denial that he/she ever saw his purse.

Now Aguecheek rushes to complete the duel with Cesario/Viola but encounters Viola's twin brother instead who quickly wounds the knight. Olivia interferes and leads Sebastian to a priest and (thinking he is Cesario) marries the surprised young man.

Antonio is brought before the duke and creates some confusion by relating his adventures with Cesario/Viola, who he still thinks is Sebastian. Olivia adds to the confusion by entering and claiming Cesario/Viola as her husband.

In the meantime, Sir Andrew and Sir Toby have had another encounter with Sebastian and they both blame Cesario/Viola for their wounds. Everything is finally made clear when Sebastian himself appears and the company sees Viola and Sebastian, twins, side by side. Viola promises to assume her maiden attire to prove her identity as Sebastian's sister. Orsino, remembering Viola's many expressions of affection, is content to abandon his hopeless love for Olivia and marry Viola. Sir Toby marries Maria for her wit, and only Malvolio remains single and seems dissatisfied with the happiness of the others.

The Characters

Orsino: The duke of Ilyria, Orsino is usually melancholy and in love with being in love. At first, his in love with Olivia, but, upon seeing the hopelessness of that situation and the honesty and beauty of Viola, falls in love with and marries her.

Sebastian: The twin brother of Viola, he is a noble young man who is shipwrecked along with his sister and ends up in Ilyria. At the end of the play, he marries Olivia.

Antonio: A sea captain and true friend of Sebastian, he is a wanted man in Ilyria and at first remains in hiding. However, when he surfaces to save who he believes is Sebastian he is arrested, but is later pardoned and released when all the confused identities are sorted out.

A Sea Captain: A friend of Viola

Valentine: A gentleman attending Orsino.

Curio: Another gentleman attending Orsino.

Sir Toby Belch: The uncle of Olivia, he lives in her household and uses her generosity to him as a way to support his life of drink and song. He also takes advantage of Sir Andrew and his money. In the end, he marries Maria, his equal in wit and fun.

Sir Andrew Aguecheek: A rich and foolish knight and "friend" of Sir Toby Belch, he is duped into staying in the household and providing money and drink to Sir Toby.

Malvolio: A steward and foolish suitor of Olivia, Malvolio is the opposite of Sir Toby and Maria. His arrogance with them eventually leads to their tricking him and cruelly locking him in a dark room. In the end, he is the only one unhappy and swears his revenge on the rest.

Fabian: A servant of Olivia.

Feste: A clown and servant of Olivia, he usually participates in Sir Toby's and Maria's partying and trickery.

Olivia: A countess, she is in mourning (for seven years!) for her deceased brother. She falls in love with Viola, whom she thinks is a boy, and, in the end, marries her twin, Sebastian, thinking he is the other twin

Viola: Twin sister of Sebastian, she is a strong and capable young woman who dresses like a boy, Cesario. She quickly falls in love with Orsino and later, after he realizes she is a beautiful and intelligent young woman, marries him.

Maria: An attendant of Olivia, she is part of the partying and antics of Sir Toby and the others. She later marries Sir Toby.

Sheer Comedy

Written for the Utah Shakespeare Festival || www.bard.org

Twelfth Night is concidered to be one of Shakespeare's highest achievement in sheer comedy- the comedy of entertainment and gaiety without any shadow of unhappiness. So skillful is Shakespeare's treatment of his material that audiences forget the plot turns on an improbable set of circumstances, coincidences, and mistaken identities devices in use long before Shakespeare thought of them.

The title of the play refers to January 6, the twelfth night after Christmas and the end of the solemn Christmas festivities. For the Puritans in England, the Christmas season was not a time for celebration, but rather a devotional period, filled with somberness and dedication. The twelve days following Christmas were held to be symbolic of motherhood and, therefore, solemn. At the end of this period, the jollification began, and the renewing celebration reached full tempo only during the evening of the twelfth night, which began the season of universal festivity, of masques, pageants, feasts, and traditional sports, marking the end of the holy season. In several senses Shakespeare's Twelfth Night seems to say: "Enough; no more excess." Almost everyone in the play is suffering from an excess of something or other or is about to be converted to something else.

The predominant theme of the play is love. Youth, fantasy, and laughter have made Twelfth Night endure. It is the happiest play Shakespeare wrote, even though a somber strain runs just beneath the surface of the action from beginning to end. The play is loaded with the imagery and vocabulary of love, all in the Italian vogue which was a dominant and popular force on the Elizabethan stage. Popular love cliches are embodied within the play, such as that the woman should be younger than her lover; that man loves more deeply than woman; that true love is jealous.

Theatre-goers remember Twelfth Night for the people they encounter in it, rather than for the working-out of the plot. Their attention centers on the lesser characters in Lady Olivia's household: drunken Sir Toby Belch, foolish Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and the sprightly and devilish Maria. They have all known some pompous Malvolio who thought there would be no more cakes and ale because he was virtuous. Sir Andrew is the quintessence of foolishness. Maria is a little wilder vixen than many play-goers have known, but they recognize the type. Their problems are basic human problems. The lovers' triumph is delayed this time not by parental interference or money or politics, but by the deceits and self deceptions of the characters themselves.

The plot is sheer fantasy: improbable, exotic, romantic. Many of the characters are exaggerated, but no one really objects, and the play's sustained popularity over the centuries stands to refute those realists who insist that only the immediate endures.

The sad note running through the play surfaces with Feste the clown's final song: the players are all happily departed following the grand assemblage of the final act, and Feste, on an empty stage, sings of the wind and the rain, of being a boy and then having to face "man's estate." He reminds us that these overly merry, overly playful, overly sentimental, and overly unrealistic characters have been too concerned with loving, spending, and getting, and that actually the more serious things of life are still there, barely beneath the surface.

Let The Punishment Fit the Crime

by Diana Major Spencer || for the Utah Shakespeare Festival || www.bard.org

Twelfth Night: Another "twin" comedy, another pants role, another course-of-true-love-never-did-run-smooth mix-up, another sub-plot of less-than-noble rowdies, disguise, mistaken identity, and love tokens—in short, another Shakespearean romantic comedy. With "identical" male/female twins to add confusion and gender innuendo to the action, this delightful confection romps along through exaggerated love begetting exaggerated melancholy, exaggerated mourning fostering aggressive female wooing, and exaggerated priggishness leading to—a suitable come-uppance? Ay, there's the rub in this favorite comedy: The punishment doesn't fit the crime.

Its superior subplot features Malvolio (whose name parses as "Ill Will"), Steward of Olivia's household. A priggish Puritan, he deigns to squelch the partying of at least two of his social superiors, Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek—both of whom also sport character-defining surnames (Belch, self-explanatory for an imbiber; Ague-, a fit of chills and shivering; cheek, with no particular textual suggestion, my mind always conjures "nether cheek," for a moniker of "quivering ass"). Granted, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew need reminders about disturbing the peace, yet Malvolio's manner of reproof provokes Sir Toby's best line in the play: "Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?" (2.3.114–16; all line references are to The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. Blakemore Evans [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974]).

Sir Toby, a Falstaffian type, loving food, drink and roguishness, funds his extravagances by extorting largesse from Sir Andrew, through his promise to facilitate Sir Andrew's wooing of Olivia, whose hospitality, respectability, and mourning mode Uncle Toby has rudely abused. Sir Andrew's primary functions in the play are to finance Sir Toby's amusement and say, "Me, too" and "Me, neither" in every conversation. He can also be manipulated for Sir Toby's amusement, as in the phony duel with Cesario (Viola).

Maria, Olivia's devoted servant and the final member of Sir Toby's clique, seems level-headed and good-natured, seconding Malvolio's cautions, but condemning his supercilious, sour-puss manner. She calms the over-rowdy Sirs by creating a delicious, rollicking revenge against Malvolio: a seductive riddle of a letter-from-pseudo-Olivia to be dropped in his path. The prideful, ambitious, social-climbing Puritan will surely follow Maria's instructions to his own well-deserved humiliation.

Unfortunately, however, Toby's back-talk in act 1, Maria's bogus letter in act 2, and Malvolio's preening in act 3, lead to an objectionable scene in act 4, scene 2, the so-called "torture scene," where Malvolio is confined in some kind of dark space, rather poorly enduring Feste's demeaning proofs that he's insane. No matter how convincingly the actor portrays extremes of pain, frustration, and desperation, watching the begrimed Malvolio, wearing a distressed costume and writhing in anguish, just isn't funny. He may be excruciatingly insufferable and fully deserving of unspeakable come-uppances, but seeing him onstage shifts our attention—and thus our empathy—to the prig we so recently scorned, and away from the genial pranksters we were cheering for against the hypocrite Puritan. The practical joking of that good-natured coterie of flamboyant carousers descends to very cruel and most unusual punishment, even though nothing about their prior behavior suggests meanness. Even the prank setting up a duel for two thoroughly reluctant and inept duelers aimed only for some good belly laughs, never for physical harm.

Still, isn't that the scene as Shakespeare wrote it? Not necessarily, argues Becky Kemper, presenter at the 2007 Wooden O Symposium here at the Utah Shakespeare Festival. After citing several onstage examples of horrendous cages and dungeons designed for Malvolio, she states, "These images of torture seem out of place in Illyria" and "rob the audience of a satisfying conclusion" ("A Clown in the Dark House: Reclaiming the Humor in Malvolio's Downfall," Journal of the Wooden O Symposium 7 [2007], 42). Prior to the Romantic age, says Kemper, critics and diarists applauded Malvolio as "truly comic" and the "tricks" played on him justifiable. In time, however, "great tragedians specialized in playing the emerging star turn of Malvolio" (43)—great tragedians who might demand additional onstage time not afforded earlier Malvolios because of adherence to the original stage directions.

The first known printing of Twelfth Night is the First Folio of 1623, in which the scene of Malvolio's "torture" places the stage direction "Malvolio within" on a separate line before Malvolio's first speech. Nowhere does "Enter Malvolio" appear in the scene. In other words, he's off-stage throughout the entire scene. The 1987 Complete Oxford Shakespeare follows the First Folio, but my 1974 Riverside Edition includes "within" as part of Malvolio's first speech: "Mal. (Within.) Who calls there?" My 1952 G.B. Harrison and 1961 Hardin Craig Complete Works place "[Within]" inside the speech block, but with brackets and no period. In none of these three editions does within appear anywhere else in the scene, possibly suggesting that Malvolio remains off-stage for just that one line before his confinement device is dragged onstage or lifted through the trapdoor.

As further indication of Malvolio's absence from the stage, Kemper notes in her provocative paper that Feste's performance in the scene falls into two parts. First, Sir Topas questions Malvolio's sanity and perception of darkness, using pseudo-religious arguments to dismiss Malvolio's protestations. At this point, Maria says, "Thou mightst have done this without thy beard and gown. He sees thee not" (4.2.64–65, emphasis mine), suggesting either that Malvolio's dark room is somewhere other than onstage or that he's blindfolded. Toby then speaks to Feste: "To him in thine own voice, and bring me word how thou find'st him," indicating that Malvolio in not within view. Toby continues, "I would we were well rid of this knavery. If he may be conveniently deliver'd, I would he were, for I am now so far in offense with my niece that I cannot pursue with any safety this sport" (4.2.66–71).

The "knavery" Sir Toby intended is described in act 3, scene 4, shortly after Malvolio, smiling and cross-gartered over yellow stockings, has presented his "Be not afraid of greatness" speech to Olivia. She leaves when her servant announces "the young gentleman of the Count Orsino" (3.4.57–58), and Malvolio remains to be mocked for his "lunacy" by Toby and Maria. He storms out, calling them "idle shallow things, I am not of your element" (3.4.123–24). Sir Toby recommends putting "him in a dark room and bound. My niece is already in the belief that he's mad. We may carry it thus, for our pleasure and his penance, till our very pastime, tir'd out of breath, prompt us to have mercy on him" (3.4.135–39). "Knavery," "sport," "pleasure," and "pastime" fall far short of torture.

The second part of the "torture" scene, according to Kemper, recalls act 1, scene 5, where, after an exchange with Feste, Olivia asks, "What think you of this fool, Malvolio?" (1.5.73). Malvolio sneers, "I marvel your ladyship takes delight in such a barren rascal. . . . Unless you laugh and minister occasion to him, he is gagg'd. I protest I take these wise men that crow so at these set kind of fools no better than the fools' zanies" (1.5.82–89). In act 4, scene 2, after returning to Malvolio as himself, Feste badgers Malvolio on his pitiful state of lunacy until Malvolio becomes a "wise m[a]n that crow[s] . . . at these . . . fools," who is thus, "no better than the fools' zanies": "Fool, there was never man so notoriously abus'd. I am as well in my wits, fool, as thou art" (4.2.87–88, emphasis mine). Touché, Feste!

• Line references to The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

• Becky Kemper, "A Clown in the Dark House: Reclaiming the Humor in Malvolio's Downfall," Journal of the Wooden O Symposium 7 (2007): 42-50.

Madness and Folly

Written for the Utah Shakespeare Festival || www.bard.org

Shakespeare seems preoccupied with madness and folly in Twelfth Night. As Feste suggests, "Foolery . . . does walk about the orb like the sun; it shines everywhere" (The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare, ed. Sylvan Barnet, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972, 3.1.39-40). Indeed, Shakespeare has created a broad spectrum of fools in this play; the actions and words of almost all his characters fit the recognized behavior patterns of fools. Feste is, of course, an "allowed" or professional fool; Sir Toby Belch, like Falstaff, is a "Lord of Misrule" who orchestrates the folly of his cohorts; Maria, with her mischievous practical joking, resembles the spiteful court fools whose malicious capers brought ruin upon many unwary courtiers; Viola in her disguise is a "witty fool" not unlike Feste; Sir Andrew Aguecheek qualifies as a "natural" fool; and Olivia, Orsino, and Malvolio all suffer from melancholic folly, respectively derived from sorrow, unrequited love, and self-love.

Feste is the most obvious of these fools, belonging to a class of jesters who, as Anton C. Zijderveld writes in Reality in a Looking Glass, "were . . . in full command of their wits. . . . They played at being foolish, often with much wit and ingenuity" (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, 92). He is the "allowed fool" who can criticize the two absolute rulers of the play Olivia and Orsino with impunity, and he does. He takes the liberty to prove Olivia a fool for her grief (1.5.56-71) and to chastise Orsino for his changeability (2.4.73-79). Feste is the only member of this society who can find fault with his superiors without endangering his position. When Malvolio rather nastily reproaches Olivia for enjoying Feste's jests, Olivia is quick to remind him of his place and to deliver some criticism of her own: she replies, "You are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste with a distempered appetite" (1.5.90-1). In this way Feste serves as an emotional and critical outlet for the subjects of absolute rulers. Zijderveld comments that the fool "is irreverent in the face of authority and tries his best to undermine the impression management that is staged by the powerful" (28). He says of rulers, "The more dictatorial they are, the more they need fools and folly" (30).

If the Lady Olivia needs fools and folly, she has them in abundance. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Maria from a society of fools whose sole aim is merry-making and the destruction of any impediment to their pleasure.

Their society is "a grotesque inversion of the established hierarchy, a looking-glass image of the status quo" (66), in which the drunken Sir Toby serves as lord and master. Zijderveld writes that in the French city of Lyon there existed "some twenty different societies of fools in the sixteenth century, each having its own abbot, admiral, prince, king, court judge, or patriarch as Lord of Misrule" (73). Accordingly, Sir Toby is the leader of his friends' drunkenness, the advisor of Sir Andrew's wooing of Olivia, and the director of the duel between Sir Andrew and Viola/Cesario. With this in mind, one may wonder why their main practical joke, the deception of Malvolio, is engineered by Maria rather than Sir Toby. One possible explanation for this is that Maria is modeled on the malicious court fools, some of whom were women. In fact, she strongly resembles Mathurine, the female fool of the French kings Henry III (1574-89), Henry IV (1589-1610), and Louis XIII (1610-43). Ziderveld writes, "Her personality was not all that pleasant." He goes on to say that "She was as malicious as an old ape" (96). Just as Maria loathes Malvolio's austere Puritan behavior seen

Mathurine particularly "hated the morally strict and stern Protestants" (96). Yet another parallel between Maria and Mathurine is that both of them are associated with the Amazons. Sir Toby names Maria "Penthesilea," queen of the Amazons (2.3.177), and Mathurine "often wore . . . the outfit of an Amazon" (96). Another characteristic of the fool which Maria exhibits is her smallness. Viola mockingly says, "Some mollification for your giant, sweet lady" (1.5.203-4) after Maria, with a sailing metaphor, has urged Viola to get on with her business. According to Zijderveld, "midgets and dwarfs occupied a very special position" among fools, and they were valued by their owners (97).

Viola is another type of female fool and also has much in common with the French fool Mathurine. Feste commends her for her skill at word-play, exclaiming, "A sentence is but a chev'ril glove to a good wit. How quickly the wrong side may be turned outward!" (3.1.11-13). Mathurine, one of the few fools who "were obviously of good wit" (96), was a "smart fool" who "certainly knew her allies and foes" (97). Viola's cross-dressing also fits in with the behavior of Mathurine, who was sometimes dressed as "a military officer with a huge sabre" (96). Indeed, this sort of sexual ambiguity was not uncommon among medieval fools: "They are never clearly male or female, but engage happily in transvestism" (4).

Maria calls Sir Andrew a "natural" throughout the play, a title which he thoroughly deserves. In Erasmus's In Praise of Folly, the personified Folly characterizes the natural fool as "that class of men whom we generally call morons, fools, halfwits, and zanies" (trans. Hoyt Hopewell Hudson, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970, 47). Even Andrew recognizes that people think him a fool at 2.5.82 after Malvolio refers to "a foolish knight." According to Sir Toby, Andrew "speaks three or four languages . . . and hath all the good gifts of nature" (1.3.26-8), yet Andrew does not know the meaning of the word "accost" (1.3.58) nor of "pourquoi" (1.3.90). Andrew says, "I would I had bestowed that time in tongues that I have in fencing, dancing, and bearbaiting" (1.3.90-92), yet we find later on that, as Maria predicts, he is a coward and cannot fence well at all. In short, "many do call" (2.5.82) Sir Andrew fool, and they are right; he is all folly and no wit, unlike Feste, Toby, and Maria, who are deliberate in their foolery, beneath which exists a layer of wisdom.

Olivia and Orsino are also unintentionally foolish, though less obtuse than Sir Andrew. Both are melancholic, and from this disorder arises folly; Zijderveld includes in his detailing of the spectrum of folly a kind of fool called "melancholicus" (35). It is easy to identify the types of melancholy from which the countess and duke suffer. Olivia's is clearly derived from her excessive grief over her brother's death; she tells Valentine that she will mourn for seven years. Orsino's melancholy finds its origin in his obsessive, unrequited love for Olivia; he enacts the role of the despised courtly lover, surfeiting himself with music, bowers of flowers, and self-pity indeed he seems more in love with love itself than with Olivia.

Robert Burton, in his Anatomy of Melancholy, calls grief "the mother and daughter of melancholy, her epitome, and chief cause. . . . Sorrow, saith Plutarch to Apollonius, is a cause of madness, a cause of many other incurable diseases" (ed. Floyd Dell, New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1927, 225). Burton likewise says of love-melancholy that "if it rage, it is no more Love, but burning Lust, a Disease, Phrensy, Madness, Hell" (651).

Feste recognizes Olivia's folly, "dexteriously" proving her a fool for mourning for her brother's soul, which is in heaven (1.5.57-71), and Olivia herself later compares herself to Malvolio, lamenting, "I am as mad as he, / If sad and merry madness equal be" (3.4.13-14). Feste also pinpoints Orsino's ailment, proclaiming, "Now the melancholy god protect thee, and the tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffeta, for thy mind is a very opal" (2.4.73-5). Erasmus writes, "A man who is deceived not only in his senses but in the judgement of his mind . . . is bound to be considered close to madness" (52). Olivia and Orsino, whose reactions are out of proportion with their troubles and who lack temperance in sorrow and love, certainly fit this description.

Malvolio's melancholic folly originates in his self-love. In In Praise of Folly, Folly asks, "what is so foolish as to be satisfied with yourself? Or to admire yourself?" (29). Burton calls self-love a "delectable frenzy, most irrefragable passion, this delightful illusion, this acceptable disease" (253). Malvolio certainly thinks highly of himself, fantasizing about marrying Olivia at 2.5.23-81 and grouping himself with the truly wise men who despise all kinds of folly at 1.5.82-89. Erasmus's Folly, however, has this to say about these supposedly wise men: "even those who arrogate to themselves the part and name of wise men cannot conceal me, though they walk about 'like apes in scarlet or asses in lion-skins.' . . . Although they are wholly of my party, in public they are so ashamed of my name that they toss it up at others as a great reproach" (10).

Malvolio is also the only modern man in an essentially medieval society. He is the prototypical Puritan who threatens to wipe out folly altogether, in himself and in everyone else. He is, as a result, the opposite of Feste, the traditional medieval fool who strives to bring out the foolishness in all his acquaintances. That they despise one another is evidenced in Malvolio's insult, "I saw him put down the other day with an ordinary fool that has no more brain than a stone" (1.5.83-5). Feste's enjoyment of his revenge on Malvolio demonstrates that he returns a full measure of antipathy.

Twelfth Night becomes, in effect, a looking-glass for Shakespeare's society and our own. The play takes us from the routine of ordinary life to the realm of folly. As Zijderveld speculates, "If one follows the fool into the reality of his looking-glass, if one adapts to his 'language,' his 'logic,' his kind of 'reason,' the routine and 'normal' reality of everyday life, with its structures and hierarchies, begins to look genuinely foolish" (27). Shakespeare shows us the reflection of ourselves and our society in the distorted mirror of *Twelfth Night*, and as a result, we reach a heightened awareness of our own shortcomings and absurdities. Paradoxically, we learn by laughing, passing beyond seriousness to wisdom.

Ghosts of A Dozen Different Characters

by Patricia Truxler Aikins || for the Utah Shakespeare Festival || www.bard.org

Twelfth Night or, *What You Will*, is one of Shakespeare's most successful plays. In what Harold Goddard calls "an almost unbroken succession of telling scenes," the play is a kind of recapitulation of what has come before especially in the other six romantic comedies composed between l595 and l600 and an anticipation of what is to come in the later, great achievement of the romances. It is as if Shakespeare, for his last unadulterated comedy, summoned, as Goddard suggests, "the ghosts of a dozen different characters and situations with which he had previously graced the stage" and, once again, showed us through a woman the best way to love.

Here Shakespeare, the famous "pilferer of others' plots," pilfers from himself. The situation of the clever, gentile, and disguised Viola recalls Rosalind from *As You Like It*. Feste, the clown of *Twelfth Night*, is but another variation of the fool, Touchstone, in *As You Like It*, who "speaks wisely what wise men do foolishly." Malvolio, who is a sort of unsophisticated and overreaching Don John from *Much Ado about Nothing* and who, like Bottom from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, reminds us that we are all fools in love, anticipates even the perversion and presumption of Cloten from Cymbeline. Orsino, with a touch of the melancholic Jaques from *As You Like It*, is also Orlando, from the same play, saved from himself by nothing less than the influence of a good woman. And the plot itself requiting unrequited love and thereby rejuvenating a dying race both looks back on the problems of the romantic comedies and forward to the problems of the romances.

Here, as in all of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, women get what they want and men get what they need. Even Olivia, who like Phoebe from *As You Like It*, has made the mistake of falling in love with a woman disguised as a man, gets the man she wants in the form of the disguised woman's twin brother, Sebastian. And Orsino, who opens the play with his heart-sick lamentations about music and love, gets what he needs: a woman who is capable through lasting love of bringing him out of his self-indulgent melancholy into the real world, in this case, of comedy.

Just as *Twelfth Night* looks back on the great romantic comedies which come to maturity in that sort of holy trinity of *As You Like It*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *Twelfth Night*, it anticipates the situations and solutions of the great romances and problem plays to come *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale*, especially. For here, men sin and women amend. And while Orsino's sin is only a minor one a miscalculation of Olivia's worth and Viola's devotion it has potential for disaster.

Viola, in the guise of Cesario, woos Olivia for Orsino and tells Olivia and the audience that celibacy is only a means to an end. "What is yours to bestow is not yours to reserve," we are told. Olivia, who wants to indulge in the livery of a nun for several years to mourn the death of her brother, reminds us of Isabella from *Measure for Measure*, who, until the right man comes along, has all the potential of making celibacy a full-time occupation. And Orsino, who wants Olivia chiefly because she does not want him, has all the potential of a Troilus waiting for his unworthy Cressida. Meanwhile, Viola, the only one of the threesome who may be grounded in reality, wants Orsino. Like many of Shakespeare's plays, this play turns on the problem of rejuvenation. Here again, life celebrates life, not death, and Olivia's chief problem is perhaps a failure to understand that, in the face of her brother's death, she must look not to avoid men but to find the exactly right one with whom she might bring new life into the world.

Twelfth Night was not the first play in which Shakespeare would hint at the moral and intellectual superiority of women in matters of love, and it was certainly not to be his last.

Time Does Heal; Grief is Not the End

by Brooke Dobson and Ace G. Pilkington || for the Utah Shakespeare Festival || www.bard.org

Perhaps no play of Shakespeare's is more directly connected to his personal life than Twelfth Night. While it is always dangerous to make ringing assertions about the correlations between Shakespeare the person and Shakespeare the writer, it is hard to deny that such correlations exist in this play.

Shakespeare's twins, Hamnet and Judith, were born in 1585. Hamnet, who was Shakespeare's only son, died in 1596 at the age of eleven. Twelfth Night, a play about twins separated in a shipwreck, may have been written as little as three years after Hamnet's death. It could not have been later than 1602, the date of the first recorded performance. Gary O'Connor points out the connections: "In Hamlet Shakespeare had brought back to life his lost son, Hamnet. In Twelfth Night, in his concealed allegorical manner, he broached again in glittering terms the subject of his own twins, concentrating almost wholly on the girl and boy bond. . . . Viola stands in for them both, playing her brother as well as herself. . . . In such a way, since Hamnet's death, had Judith stood in for Hamnet" (William Shakespeare: A Popular Life [New York: Applause Books, 2000], 204).

There are, of course, two women who have lost brothers in *Twelfth Night*, one permanently and one temporarily. Olivia's grief for her brother's death is obvious, even ostentatious. Valentine reports to Orsino that "to season a brother's dead love" Olivia "like a cloistress . . . will veiled walk" for seven years. (All references to act, scene, and line numbers in the play are to Bruce R. Smith, ed., Twelfth Night: Texts and Contexts [New York: Bedford/St. Martin, 2001], 1.1. 27 30). She has removed herself from society and from male-female relationships, and her mourning clothes are the outward sign of her withdrawal. Viola's grief is much less obvious, but she pursues the same purposes. When she disguises herself as her brother, she is partly trying to fill the void caused by his absence. In the process, she has removed herself from male-female relationships even more effectively than Olivia has done. Her male disguise may not look like mourning clothes, but it removes her from the possibilities of courtship and demonstrates a grief so great that Viola has eliminated her own identity in order to keep a semblance of her brother alive. Viola is caught between two worlds, two states of being, created by the great bond that she feels for her twin brother and the confusion and consternation of his possible death. When Orsino asks, "But died thy sister of her love, my boy?" Viola/Cesario answers, "I am all the daughters of my father's house, / And all the brothers too—and yet I know not" (2.4.116 118). It is not entirely clear who is alive and who is dead, almost as though both must live or both must die.

Viola and Olivia's first meeting is enormously important. When the two of them meet face to face, they find their disguises distinctly uncomfortable. Olivia quickly realizes that a seven-year period of mourning is no longer a reasonable goal. In fact, she is willing to abandon her grief for her brother and replace it with love for Cesario. Viola/Cesario, who has previously announced her desire to marry Orsino, now experiences the passions of jealousy (of a rival) and envy (of that rival's beauty). The point of transition for both of them, the symbolic instant, is when Viola asks Olivia to draw back her veil and Olivia does so. Olivia has at least temporarily removed the physical barrier or mask of grief that keeps her from seeing the world and being seen by it. Olivia's love for Cesario then forces Viola to the realization that she cannot maintain her mask of grief, her impersonation of her brother, indefinitely.

Ironically, this confrontation between romantic rivals will ultimately free both of them to pursue the loving relationships they really want. Olivia announces her conversion from lady in mourning to lady in love with the words, "Even so quickly may one catch the plague?" (1.5.240). For Viola, things are a bit more complicated, but she has also come to a realization. She says, "Disguise I see thou art a wickedness." She then goes on to make clear just what a mess she is in, "What will become of this? As I am man, / My state is desperate for my Master's love; / As I am woman—now alas the day!— / What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe! / O Time, thou must untangle this, not I; / It is too hard a knot for me t'untie!"(2.2.30 35).

For Olivia and Viola, the loss of a brother creates a void and a need for that void to be filled. For both of them, love comes as a solace for grief and as a promise of future happiness to replace past pain. In *Twelfth Night*, Time does untangle the knots. Sebastian, Viola's brother, returns, Olivia can marry the man she loves, and Viola can marry Orsino. It is an almost fairy tale ending for the married or about-to-be-married couples, a happily ever after conclusion that seems to banish all sadness. However, in the play as in Shakespeare's real life, there has been a death. Olivia's brother will not return, nor will Shakespeare's son.

Perhaps one of the most important messages of *Twelfth Night* is that time does heal, grief is not the end, and happy endings are possible.

What Will the Future Hold?

by Stephanie Chidester || for the Utah Shakespeare Festival || www.bard.org

What can be learned from a play where all is topsy-turvy, where logic and reason are abused and rejected just as thoroughly as Malvolio is? Not much, if Harold Bloom is to be believed. In his view, "*Twelfth Night* does not come to any true resolution, in which anyone has learned anything. . . . No one could or should be made better by viewing or reading it" ("Introduction," Modern Critical Interpretations: William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, ed. Harold Bloom [New York: Chelsea House, 1987], 3). Restoration critic Samuel Pepys, despite being drawn back to see *Twelfth Night* several times, condemned it as "a silly play," and "one of the weakest plays that I ever saw on the stage" [cited in Hazelton Spencer, "Mr. Pepys is not amused," ELH: A Journal of English Literary History 7.3 (Sept 1940): 175].

While these criticisms may be unduly harsh, the play is nonetheless perplexing. The atmosphere of the play resembles that of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when the lovers are wandering in the enchanted forest under the influence of fairy potions, except that the characters of *Twelfth Night* cannot blame their antics on fairy mischief. And whereas in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the lovers eventually return to a rational world and wonder if their experiences were only dreams, the inhabitants of Illyria never definitively emerge from their irrational dream world.

While gorgeously poetic, the play's initial scene illustrates the social disorder in Illyria. *Twelfth Night* opens with Duke Orsino, the purported social and political leader of this strange country, spouting a self-indulgent and vaguely decadent tribute to music and love. Unlike analogous figures in other plays (Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or Duke Vincentio of *Measure for Measure*, for instance), Orsino has no concern for politics or maintaining order, and is apparently unable to simultaneously manage affairs of state while conducting a courtship. He cannot even be bothered to woo Olivia in person; rather than going himself to plead his case, he prefers to send his minions, so that he may lounge about sighing and listening to love songs.

Sebastian is likewise passive, and instead of investigating the irrational behavior of everyone around him ("Are all the people mad?" [4.1.27; The Signet Classic Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night*, or, *What You Will*, ed. Herschel Baker [New York: New American Library, 1965]), he allows himself to be courted by and become engaged to someone he suspects may be deranged, however beautiful she may be. Sir Toby Belch is a jovial sponge, good for consuming "cakes and ale" (2.3.115), dancing and "caterwauling" into the wee hours of the morning (2.3.72), and wreaking havoc with practical jokes, but not much else. Sir Andrew Aguecheek is weak as well as foolish, easy prey for parasites of the pocketbook like Sir Toby Belch.

As W.H. Auden argues, the normal social order with regard to gender roles has been overturned: "Women have become dominant in *Twelfth Night*. . . . The women are the only people left who have any will, which is the sign of a decadent society. Maria, in love with Sir Toby, tricks him into marrying her. Olivia starts wooing Cesario from the first moment she sees him, and Viola is a real man-chaser" (Lectures on Shakespeare, ed. Arthur Kirsch [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000], 154).

Although they exhibit the ambition and initiative lacking in their male counterparts, the females in the play are no more rational than the men. Viola, perhaps driven by grief for the loss of her twin brother, impulsively sets out to attach herself to the nearest eligible bachelor. Samuel Johnson sums up the situation thus: "Viola seems to have formed a very deep design with very little premeditation: she is thrown by shipwreck on an unknown coast, hears that the prince is a batchelor [sic], and resolves to supplant the lady whom he courts" (cited in Bloom, 2). Olivia is similarly volatile, though the loss of her brother is much less recent. Given an eloquent and moderately attractive romantic prospect, she abandons her vow of seven-years'-mourning in an instant and chases Cesario with no regard for either her own dignity or the inclinations of her beloved.

Malvolio, perverse killjoy that he is, appears to be the sole advocate of reason (or at least order) in the play, and he does his best to keep Olivia's rowdy houseguests in line. Nevertheless, even he is lured into irrational behavior by his own "self-love" (1.5.90), greed, and social ambition. It takes little more than a few hints and an obscure letter to induce Malvolio to abandon his "sad and civil" demeanor (3.4.4) and prance about "in yellow stockings and cross-gartered" (3.2.73–74), grinning like a maniac. Ironically, Feste, the allowed fool, is the only character who consistently behaves in a "normal" manner throughout the play, but normal for him is zany for anyone else.

So, what can we make of a play that is a composite of delightful madness and irrational dreams? Shakespeare directs us toward a better understanding through the play's title, which alludes to the chaotic festivals that were often held on the sixth day of January as part of the Christmas season.

The *Twelfth Night* festival and others like it "took place at regular intervals, and whenever the occasion warranted it, timed to the calendar of religion and season—the twelve days of Christmas, the days before Lent, early May, Pentecost, . . . and All Saints" (Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France," Past and Present 50 (1971): 41-42). During these festivals, social strata were inverted for a short time, giving the disenfranchised an opportunity to mock their "betters" and generally blow off steam without threat of repercussions.

Samuel Pepys missed this association entirely, pronouncing that the play was "not related at all to the name or day" (Spencer, 175), perhaps because no other mention of *Twelfth Night* or the Christmas season exists in the play. However, despite the dearth of references to this particular carnival, it is interesting to note that the events of the play precede two marriages, and that festivities similar to the *Twelfth Night* "Feast of Fools" were "timed also to domestic events, marriages and other family affairs" (Davis, 42).

Shakespeare incorporates several elements common to these seasons of misrule into *Twelfth Night*, including "masking, costuming, hiding; charivaris (a noisy, masked demonstration to humiliate some wrong-doer in the community), farces, parades and floats; . . . dancing, music-making, . . . reciting of poetry, gaming and athletic contests" (Davis, 42). It is easy to detect such features in Shakespeare's play: Viola's disguise as Cesario and Feste's pretence of Sir Topaz; the hazing of Malvolio; the rowdy merry-making of Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Maria and Feste; the many songs recited by Feste; the attempted dueling contest between Cesario and Sir Andrew; and the actual altercations among Sebastian, Sir Toby, and Sir Andrew.

What troubles most critics about *Twelfth Night* is not the madness, per se, but the absence of a return to normalcy by the play's end. Although the puzzle of Sebastian/Viola/Cesario has been solved with the reunion of the twins, Malvolio's tormentors remain unpunished, and the lovers' marriages seem doomed to failure without major changes in behavior and character. W.H. Auden's scathing commentary is typical of audience reactions: "The Duke, who up till the moment of recognition had thought himself in love with Olivia, drops her like a hot potato and falls in love with Viola on the spot, and Sebastian accepts Olivia's proposal of marriage within two minutes of meeting her for the first time. Both appear contemptible, and it is impossible to imagine that either will make a good husband" (154).

However, the final scene contains hints that order and stability may soon be restored: First, Olivia promises justice for Malvolio ("Thou shalt be both the plaintiff and the judge / Of thine own cause," [5.1.356–57]), a promise which is never revoked, despite Fabian's defensive arguments. More importantly, Duke Orsino's actions and words begin to agree better with his social position. He begins to take charge, directing matters to his satisfaction, informing Viola that he will marry her and insisting that she change into her "woman's weeds" (5.1.273). Then he modifies Olivia's dictum regarding Malvolio, adjuring them all to "Pursue him and entreat him to a peace" (5.1.382).

Whether Malvolio will actually have his revenge, or if the misdeeds of Sir Toby and friends will be forgiven as a type of *Twelfth Night* revelry, we cannot know. But just as the play's title suggests a festival of misrule, it also implies that the mayhem is only temporary. Just as order must be restored after a *Twelfth Night* or Mardi Gras carnival, the lunacy reigning in Illyria must surely end. Natalie Zemon Davis explains that these carnivals "act both to reinforce order and suggest alternatives to the existing order" (50). If this is so, we can hope that after such a prolonged period of disorder in Illyria, the future will hold beneficial change as well as greater peace and stability.

Elizabeth's England

written for the Utah Shakespeare Festival || www.bard.org

In his entire career, William Shakespeare never once set a play in Elizabethan England. His characters lived in medieval England (*Richard II*), France (*As You Like It*), Vienna (*Measure for Measure*), fifteenth-century Italy (*Romeo and Juliet*), the England ruled by Elizabeth's father (*Henry VIII*) and elsewhere—anywhere and everywhere, in fact, except Shakespeare's own time and place. But all Shakespeare's plays—even when they were set in ancient Rome—reflected the life of Elizabeth's England (and, after her death in 1603, that of her successor, James I). Thus, certain things about these extraordinary plays will be easier to understand if we know a little more about Elizabethan England.

Elizabeth's reign was an age of exploration—exploration of the world, exploration of man's nature, and exploration of the far reaches of the English language. This renaissance of the arts and sudden flowering of the spoken and written word gave us two great monuments—the King James Bible and the plays of Shakespeare—and many other treasures as well.

Shakespeare made full use of the adventurous Elizabethan attitude toward language. He employed more words than any other writer in history—more than 21,000 different words appear in the plays—and he never hesitated to try a new word, revive an old one, or make one up. Among the words which first appeared in print in his works are such everyday terms as "critic," "assassinate," "bump," "gloomy," "suspicious," "and hurry;" and he invented literally dozens of phrases which we use today: such un-Shakespearean expressions as "catching a cold," "the mind's eye," "elbow room," and even "pomp and circumstance."

Elizabethan England was a time for heroes. The ideal man was a courtier, an adventurer, a fencer with the skill of Tybalt, a poet no doubt better than Orlando, a conversationalist with the wit of Rosalind and the eloquence of Richard II, and a gentleman. In addition to all this, he was expected to take the time, like Brutus, to examine his own nature and the cause of his actions and (perhaps unlike Brutus) to make the right choices. The real heroes of the age did all these things and more.

Despite the greatness of some Elizabethan ideals, others seem small and undignified, to us; marriage, for example, was often arranged to bring wealth or prestige to the family, with little regard for the feelings of the bride. In fact, women were still relatively powerless under the law.

The idea that women were "lower" than men was one small part of a vast concern with order which was extremely important to many Elizabethans. Most people believed that everything, from the lowest grain of sand to the highest angel, had its proper position in the scheme of things. This concept was called "the great chain of being." When things were in their proper place, harmony was the result; when order was violated, the entire structure was shaken.

This idea turns up again and again in Shakespeare. The rebellion against Richard II brings bloodshed to England for generations; Romeo and Juliet's rebellion against their parents contributes to their tragedy; and the assassination in Julius Caesar throws Rome into civil war.

Many Elizabethans also perceived duplications in the chain of order. They believed, for example, that what the sun is to the heaves, the king is to the state. When something went wrong in the heavens, rulers worried: before Julius Caesar and Richard II were overthrown, comets and meteors appeared, the moon turned the color of blood, and other bizarre astronomical phenomena were reported. Richard himself compares his fall to a premature setting of the sun; when he descends from the top of Flint Castle to meet the conquering Bolingbroke, he likens himself to the driver of the sun's chariot in Greek mythology: "Down, down I come, like glist'ring Phaeton" (3.3.178).

All these ideas find expression in Shakespeare's plays, along with hundreds of others—most of them not as strange to our way of thinking. As dramatized by the greatest playwright in the history of the world, the plays offer us a fascinating glimpse of the thoughts and passions of a brilliant age. Elizabethan England was a brief skyrocket of art, adventure, and ideas which quickly burned out; but Shakespeare's plays keep the best pats of that time alight forever.

(Adapted from "The Shakespeare Plays," educational materials made possible by Exxon, Metropolitan Life, Morgan Guaranty, and CPB.)

Actors in Shakespeare's Day

by Stephanie Chidester || written for the Utah Shakespeare Festival || www.bard.org

The status of the actor in society has never been entirely stable but has fluctuated from the beginnings of the theatre to the present day. The ancient Greeks often considered actors as servants of Dionysus, and their performances were a sort of religious rite. Roman actors, often slaves, were seen as the scraps of society, only one step above gladiators. In medieval Europe, both the theatre and the actor, suppressed by the Catholic Church, were almost non-existent but gradually re-emerged in the form of the liturgy and, later, the Mystery plays. The actors of Shakespeare's age also saw fluctuations in reputation; actors were alternately classified as "vagabonds and sturdy beggars," as an act of Parliament in 1572 defined them, and as servants of noblemen.

As early as 1482, noblemen such as Richard, duke of Gloucester (later Richard III), the earl of Essex, and Lord Arundel kept acting companies among their retainers. But other than these select groups protected by nobles, actors lived lives of danger and instability because when they abandoned their respectable trades, they also left behind the comfort and protection of the trade guilds.

However, life soon became much more difficult for both of these classes of actors. In 1572, Parliament passed two acts which damaged thespians' social status. In the first one, the Queen forbade "'the unlawful retaining of multitudes of unordinary servants by liveries, badges, and other signs and tokens (contrary to the good and ancient statutes and laws of this realm)'" in order to "curb the power of local grandees" (Dennis Kay, Shakespeare: His Life, Work, and Era [New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992], 88). One result of this was that some of the actors, now considered superfluous, were turned away.

To make matters even worse, these actors faced yet another impediment: the "'Acte for the punishment of Vacabondes'" (Kay, 88), in which actors were declared "vagabonds and masterless men and hence were subject to arrest and imprisonment" (Thomas Marc Parrott and Robert Hamilton Ball, A Short View of Elizabethan Drama [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943], 46).

However, there were still nobles, such as the earl of Leicester and the earl of Sussex, who endorsed players; the protector would usually seek royal permission for these actors to perform in London or, less frequently, some other less prestigious town. Thus the actors were able to venture forth without fear of arrest. It is through these circumstances that Shakespeare ends up an actor in London.

There are many theories--guesses really--of how Shakespeare got into the theatre. He may have joined a group of strolling players, performed around the countryside, and eventually made it to London, the theatrical hub of Britain. Another theory suggests that he began as a schoolmaster, wrote a play (possibly *The Comedy of Error*s) and then decided to take it to London; or, alternately, he could have simply gone directly to that great city, with or without a play in hand, to try his luck.

An interesting speculation is that while he was young, Shakespeare might have participated in one of the cycles of Mystery plays in Stratford: "On one occasion the Stratford corporation laid out money for an entertainment at Pentecost. In 1583 they paid 13s 4d 'to Davi Jones and his company for his pastime at Whitsuntide.' Davi Jones had been married to Elizabeth, the daughter of Adrian Quiney, and after her death in 1579 he took as his wife a Hathaway, Frances. Was Shakespeare one of the youths who trimmed themselves for the Whitsun pastime?" (S. Schoenbaum, William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life [New York: New American Library, 1977], 111).

But however he got into the theatre and to London, he had made a very definite impression on his competitors by 1592, when playwright Robert Greene attacked Shakespeare as both actor and author: "'There is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tiger's heart wrapt in a Player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and . . . is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country'" (G. B. Harrison, Introducing Shakespeare [New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1947], 1).

We don't often think of Shakespeare as primarily an actor, perhaps because most of what we know of him comes from the plays he wrote rather than the parts he played. Nevertheless, he made much of his money as an actor and sharer in his company: "At least to start with, his status, his security derived more from his acting skill and his eye for business than from his pen" (Kay, 95). Had he been only a playwright, he would likely have died a poor man, as did Robert Greene: "In the autumn of 1592, Robert Greene, the most popular author of his generation, lay penniless and dying. . . . The players had grown rich on the products of his brain, and now he was deserted and alone" (Harrison, 1).

While Shakespeare made a career of acting, there are critics who might dispute his acting talent. For instance, almost a century after Shakespeare's death, "an anonymous enthusiast of the stage . . . remarked . . . that 'Shakespear . . . was a much better poet, than player'" (Schoenbaum, 201). However, Shakespeare could have been quite a good actor, and this statement would still be true. One sign of his skill as an actor is that he is mentioned in the same breath with Burbage and Kemp: "The accounts of the royal household for Mar 15 [1595] record payments to 'William Kempe William Shakespeare & Richarde Burbage seruantes to the Lord Chamberlain'" (Kay, 174).

Another significant indication of his talent is the very fact that he played in London rather than touring other less lucrative towns. If players were to be legally retained by noblemen, they had to prove they could act, and one means of demonstrating their legitimacy was playing at court for Queen Elizabeth. The more skilled companies obtained the queen's favor and were granted permission to remain in London.

Not all companies, however, were so fortunate: "Sussex's men may not have been quite up to the transition from rural inn-yards to the more demanding circumstances of court performance. Just before the Christmas season of 1574, for example, they were inspected ('perused') by officials of the Revels Office, with a view to being permitted to perform before the queen; but they did not perform" (Kay, 90).

Shakespeare and his company, on the other hand, performed successfully in London from the early 1590s until 1611.

It would be a mistake to classify William Shakespeare as only a playwright, even the greatest playwright of the English-speaking world; he was also "an actor, a sharer, a member of a company" (Kay, 95), obligations that were extremely relevant to his plays. As a man of the theatre writing for a company, he knew what would work on stage and what would not and was able to make his plays practical as well as brilliant. And perhaps more importantly, his theatrical experience must have taught him much about the human experience, about everyday lives and roles, just as his plays show us that "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players" (*As You Like It*, 2.7.149-50).

Audience: A Very Motley Crowd

written for the Utah Shakespeare Festival || www.bard.org

When Shakespeare peeped through the curtain at the audience gathered to hear his first play, he looked upon a very motley crowd. The pit was filled with men and boys. The galleries contained a fair proportion of women, some not too respectable. In the boxes were a few gentlemen from the royal courts, and in the lords' box or perhaps sitting on the stage was a group of extravagantly dressed gentlemen of fashion. Vendors of nuts and fruits moved about through the crowd. The gallants were smoking; the apprentices in the pit were exchanging rude witticisms with the painted ladies.

When Shakespeare addressed his audience directly, he did so in terms of gentle courtesy or pleasant raillery. In *Hamlet*, however, he does let fall the opinion that the groundlings (those on the ground, the cheapest seats) were "for the most part capable of nothing but dumb shows and noise." His recollections of the pit of the Globe may have added vigor to his ridicule of the Roman mob in *Julius Caesar*.

On the other hand, the theatre was a popular institution, and the audience was representative of all classes of London life. Admission to standing room in the pit was a penny, and an additional penny or two secured a seat in the galleries. For seats in the boxes or for stools on the stage, still more was charged, up to sixpence or half a crown.

Attendance at the theatres was astonishingly large. There were often five or six theatres giving daily performances, which would mean that out of a city of one hundred thousand inhabitants, thirty thousand or more spectators each week attended the theatre. When we remember that a large class of the population disapproved of the theatre, and that women of respectability were not frequent patrons of the public playhouses, this attendance is remarkable.

Arrangements for the comfort of the spectators were meager, and spectators were often disorderly. Playbills seem to have been posted all about town and in the theatre, and the title of the piece was announced on the stage. These bills contained no lists of actors, and there were no programs, ushers, or tickets. There was usually one door for the audience, where the admission fee was deposited in a box carefully watched by the money taker, and additional sums were required at entrance to the galleries or boxes. When the three o'clock trumpets announced the beginning of a performance, the assembled audience had been amusing itself by eating, drinking, smoking, and playing cards, and they sometimes continued these occupations during a performance. Pickpockets were frequent, and, if caught, were tied to a post on the stage. Disturbances were not infrequent, sometimes resulting in general rioting.

The Elizabethan audience was fond of unusual spectacle and brutal physical suffering. They liked battles and murders, processions and fireworks, ghosts and insanity. They expected comedy to abound in beatings, and tragedy in deaths. While the audience at the Globe expected some of these sensations and physical horrors, they did not come primarily for these. (Real blood and torture were available nearby at the bear baitings, and public executions were not uncommon.) Actually, there were very few public entertainments offering as little brutality as did the theatre.

Elizabethans attended the public playhouses for learning. They attended for romance, imagination, idealism, and art; the audience was not without refinement, and those looking for food for the imagination had nowhere to go but to the playhouse. There were no newspapers, no magazines, almost no novels, and only a few cheap books; theatre filled the desire for story discussion among people lacking other educational and cultural opportunities.

The most remarkable case of Shakespeare's theatre filling an educational need is probably that of English history. The growth of national patriotism culminating in the English victory over the Spanish Armada gave dramatists a chance to use the historical material, and for the fifteen years from the Armada to the death of Elizabeth, the stage was deluged with plays based on the events of English chronicles, and familiarity with English history became a cultural asset of the London crowd,

Law was a second area where the Elizabethan public seems to have been fairly well informed, and successful dramatists realized the influence that the great development of civil law in the sixteenth century exercised upon the daily life of the London citizen. In this area, as in others, the dramatists did not hesitate to cultivate the cultural background of their audience whenever opportunity offered, and the ignorance of the multitude did not prevent it from taking an interest in new information and from offering a receptive hearing to the accumulated lore of lawyers, historians, humanists, and playwrights.

The audience was used to the spoken word, and soon became trained in blank verse, delighting in monologues, debates, puns, metaphors, stump speakers, and sonorous declamation. The public was accustomed to the acting of the old religious dramas, and the new acting in which the spoken words were listened to caught on rapidly. The new poetry and the great actors who recited it found a sensitive audience. There were many moments during a play when spectacle, brutality, and action were all forgotten, and the audience fed only on the words. Shakespeare and his contemporaries may be deemed fortunate in having an audience essentially attentive, eager for the newly unlocked storehouse of secular story, and possessing the sophistication and interest to be fed richly by the excitements and levities on the stage.

Mr Shakespeare, I Presume

by Diana Major Spencer || written for the Utah Shakespeare Festival || www.bard.org

Could the plays known as Shakespeare's have been written by a rural, semi-literate, uneducated, wife-deserting, two-bit actor who spelled him name differently each of the six times he wrote it down? Could such a man know enough about Roman history, Italian geography, French grammar, and English court habits to create *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Henry V*? Could he know enough about nobility and its tenuous relationship to royalty to create King Lear and *Macbeth*?

Are these questions even worth asking? Some very intelligent people think so. On the other hand, some very intelligent people think not. Never mind quibbles about how a line should be interpreted, or how many plays Shakespeare wrote and which ones, or which of the great tragedies reflected personal tragedies. The question of authorship is "The Shakespeare Controversy."

Since Mr. Cowell, quoting the deceased Dr. Wilmot, cast the first doubt about William of Stratford in an 1805 speech before the Ipswich Philological Society, nominees for the "real author" have included philosopher Sir Francis Bacon, playwright Christopher Marlowe, Queen Elizabeth I, Sir Walter Raleigh, and the earls of Derby, Rutland, Essex, and Oxford--among others.

The arguments evoke two premises: first, that the proven facts about the William Shakespeare who was christened at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564 do not configure a man of sufficient nobility of thought and language to have written the plays; and, second, that the man from Stratford is nowhere concretely identified as the author of the plays. The name "Shakespeare"--in one of its spellings--appears on early quartos, but the man represented by the name may not be the one from Stratford.

One group of objections to the Stratford man follows from the absence of any record that he ever attended school--in Stratford or anywhere else. If he were uneducated, the arguments go, how could his vocabulary be twice as large as the learned Milton's? How could he know so much history, law, or philosophy? If he were a country bumpkin, how could he know so much of hawking, hounding, courtly manners, and daily habits of the nobility? How could he have traveled so much, learning about other nations of Europe in enough detail to make them the settings for his plays?

The assumptions of these arguments are that such rich and noble works as those attributed to a playwright using the name "Shakespeare" could have been written only by someone with certain characteristics, and that those characteristics could be distilled from the "facts" of his life. He would have to be noble; he would have to be well-educated; and so forth. On these grounds the strongest candidate to date is Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford.

A debate that has endured its peaks and valleys, the controversy catapulted to center stage in 1984 with the publication of Charlton Ogburn's The Mysterious William Shakespeare. Ogburn, a former army intelligence officer, builds a strong case for Oxford—if one can hurdle the notions that the author wasn't Will Shakespeare, that literary works should be read autobiographically, and that literary creation is nothing more than reporting the facts of one's own life. "The Controversy" was laid to rest--temporarily, at least--by justices Blackmun, Brennan, and Stevens of the United States Supreme Court who, after hearing evidence from both sides in a mock trial conducted September 25, 1987 at American University in Washington, D.C., found in favor of the Bard of Avon.

History is Written by the Victors

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William Shakespeare wrote ten history plays chronicling English kings from the time of the Magna Carta (*King John*) to the beginning of England's first great civil war, the Wars of the Roses (*Richard II*) to the conclusion of the war and the reuniting of the two factions (*Richard III*), to the reign of Queen Elizabeth's father (*Henry VIII*). Between these plays, even though they were not written in chronological order, is much of the intervening history of England, in the six *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, and *Henry VI* plays.

In writing these plays, Shakespeare had nothing to help him except the standard history books of his day. The art of the historian was not very advanced in this period, and no serious attempt was made to get at the exact truth about a king and his reign. Instead, the general idea was that any nation that opposed England was wrong, and that any Englishman who opposed the winning side in a civil war was wrong also.

Since Shakespeare had no other sources, the slant that appears in the history books of his time also appears in his plays. Joan of Arc opposed the English and was not admired in Shakespeare's day, so she is portrayed as a comic character who wins her victories through witchcraft. Richard III fought against the first Tudor monarchs and was therefore labeled in the Tudor histories as a vicious usurper, and he duly appears in Shakespeare's plays as a murdering monster.

Shakespeare wrote nine of his history plays under Queen Elizabeth. She did not encourage historical truthfulness, but rather a patriotism, an exultant, intense conviction that England was the best of all possible countries and the home of the most favored of mortals. And this patriotism breathes through all the history plays and binds them together. England's enemy is not so much any individual king as the threat of civil war, and the history plays come to a triumphant conclusion when the threat of civil war is finally averted, and the great queen, Elizabeth, is born.

Shakespeare was a playwright, not a historian, and, even when his sources were correct, he would sometimes juggle his information for the sake of effective stagecraft. He was not interested in historical accuracy; he was interested in swiftly moving action and in people. Shakespeare's bloody and superb king seems more convincing than the real Richard III, merely because Shakespeare wrote so effectively about him. Shakespeare moved in a different world from that of the historical, a world of creation rather than of recorded fact, and it is in this world that he is so supreme a master.

It is hard to get from the facts of Shakespeare's life to any sense of what it must have been like to have lived it. He was born in 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon and died there in 1616. The day of his birth is not certain, but it may have been the same as the day of his death—April 23—if he was baptized, as was usual at the time, three days after he was born. He married Anne Hathaway in the winter of 1582 83, when he was eighteen and she was twenty-six. He became the father of three children. The first was Susannah, who was born around May 23, close enough to the date of the wedding to suggest that the marriage was not entirely voluntary. Shakespeare's twins, Hamnet and Judith, were baptized on February 2, 1585. Hamnet died of unknown causes (at least unknown by us at this distance in time) in 1596. Shakespeare's career as actor, theatre owner, manager, and, of course, playwright began in the vicinity of 1590 and continued for the rest of his life, though there are clear indications that he spent more and more time in Stratford and less and less in London from 1611 on. His work in the theatre made him wealthy, and his extraordinary plays brought him a measure of fame, though nothing like what he deserved or would posthumously receive.

It's hard to get even the briefest sense of what Shakespeare's life was like from such information. It is probably impossible ever to know what Shakespeare thought or felt, but maybe we can get closer to what he saw and heard and even smelled. Perhaps some snapshots—little close-ups—might help to bring us nearer to the world in which Shakespeare lived if not quite to the life he lived in that world. In Shakespeare's youth, chimneys were a new thing. Before that, smoke was left to find its way out through a hole in the roof, often a thatched roof, and there were even some who maintained that this smoky atmosphere was better than the newfangled fresh air that chimneys made possible—along with a greater division of rooms and more privacy.

In the year of Shakespeare's birth, Stratford had more trees than houses—"upwards of 400 houses as well as 1,000 elms and forty ashes" (Peter Thomson, Shakespeare's Professional Career [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 1). Peter Levi says, "The town was so full of elm trees that it must have looked and sounded like a woodland settlement. For example, Mr. Gibbs's house on Rothermarket had twelve elms in the garden and six in front of the door. Thomas Attford on Ely Street had another twelve. The town boundaries were marked by elms or groups of elms (The Life and Times of William Shakespeare [New York: Wings Books, 1988], 7). Shakespeare's "Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang" becomes a far more majestic image with the picture of Stratford's elms in mind. And the birds themselves had a sound which modern ears no longer have a chance to enjoy. "We must realize that it was ordinary for . . . Shakespeare to hear a dawn chorus of many hundreds of birds at once. . . . as a young man thirty years ago I have heard a deafening dawn chorus in the wooded Chilterns, on Shakespeare's road to London" (Levi 10).

Exactly what Shakespeare's road to London may have been or at least how he first made his way there and became an actor is much debated. He might have been a schoolmaster or fifty other things, but he may well have started out as he ended up—as a player. We can then, in John Southworth's words, "Picture a sixteen-year-old lad on a cart, growing year by year into manhood, journeying out of the Arden of his childhood into ever more unfamiliar, distant regions, travelling ill-made roads in all weathers, sleeping in inns, hearing and memorising strange new dialects and forms of speech, meeting with every possible type and character of person; learning, most of all perhaps, from the audiences to which he played in guildhalls and inns" (Shakespeare the Player: A Life in the Theatre [Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2000], 30). At some time in his life —in fact, many times—Shakespeare must have known theatrical tours very like that.

In London itself, the new Globe, the best theatre in (or rather just outside of) the city, was in an area with a large number of prisons and an unpleasant smell. "Garbage had preceded actors on the marshy land where the new playhouse was erected: `flanked with a ditch and forced out of a marsh', according to Ben Jonson. Its cost . . . included the provision of heavy piles for the foundation, and a whole network of ditches in which the water rose and fell with the tidal Thames" (Garry O'Connor, William Shakespeare: A Popular Life [New York: Applause Books, 2000], 161). The playgoers came by water, and the Globe, the Rose, and the Swan "drew 3,000 or 4,000 people in boats across the

Thames every day" (161). Peter Levi says of Shakespeare's London, "The noise, the crowds, the animals and their droppings, the glimpses of grandeur and the amazing squalor of the poor, were beyond modern imagination" (49).

England was a place of fear and glory. Public executions were public entertainments. Severed heads decayed on city walls. Francis Bacon, whom Will Durant calls "the most powerful and influential intellect of his time" (Heroes of History: A Brief History of Civilization from Ancient Times to the Dawn of the Modern Age [New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001], 327), had been "one of the persons commissioned to question prisoners under torture" in the 1580s (Levi 4). The opportune moment when Shakespeare became the most successful of playwrights was the destruction of Thomas Kyd, "who broke under torture and was never the same again," and the death of Christopher Marlowe in a tavern brawl which was the result of plot and counterplot—a struggle, very probably, between Lord Burghley and Walter Ralegh (Levi 48).

Shakespeare, who must have known the rumors and may have known the truth, cannot have helped shuddering at such monstrous good fortune. Still, all of the sights, smells, and terrors, from the birdsongs to the screams of torture, from the muddy tides to the ties of blood, became not only the textures and tonalities of Shakespeare's life, but also the information and inspiration behind his plays.

What They Wore

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The clothing which actors wear to perform a play is called a costume, to distinguish it from everyday clothing. In Shakespeare's time, acting companies spent almost as much on costumes as television series do today.

The costumes for shows in England were so expensive that visitors from France were a little envious. Kings and queens on the stage were almost as well dressed as kings and queens in real life.

Where did the acting companies get their clothes? Literally, "off the rack" and from used clothing sellers. Wealthy middle class people would often give their servants old clothes that they didn't want to wear any more, or would leave their clothes to the servants when they died. Since clothing was very expensive, people wore it as long as possible and passed it on from one person to another without being ashamed of wearing hand-me-downs. However, since servants were of a lower class than their employers, they weren't allowed to wear rich fabrics, and would sell these clothes to acting companies, who were allowed to wear what they wanted in performance.

A rich nobleman like Count Paris or a wealthy young man like Romeo would wear a doublet, possibly of velvet, and it might have gold embroidery. Juliet and Lady Capulet would have worn taffeta, silk, gold, or satin gowns, and everybody would have had hats, gloves, ruffs (an elaborate collar), gloves, stockings, and shoes equally elaborate.

For a play like *Romeo and Juliet,* which was set in a European country at about the same time Shakespeare wrote it, Elizabethan everyday clothes would have been fine--the audience would have been happy, and they would have been authentic for the play. However, since there were no costume shops who could make clothing suitable for, say, medieval Denmark for *Hamlet*, or ancient Rome for *Julius Caesar*, or Oberon and Titania's forest for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, these productions often looked slightly strange--can you imagine fairies in full Elizabethan collars and skirts? How would they move?

Today's audiences want costumes to be authentic, so that they can believe in the world of the play. However, *Romeo and Juliet* was recently set on Verona Beach, with very up-to-date clothes indeed; and about thirty years ago, West Side Story, an updated musical version of the Romeo and Juliet tale, was set in the Puerto Rican section of New York City.

Shakespeare: Words, Words, Words

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"No household in the English-speaking world is properly furnished unless it contains copies of the Holy Bible and of The Works of William Shakespeare. It is not always thought that these books should be read in maturer years, but they must be present as symbols of Religion and Culture" (G.B. Harrison, Introducing Shakespeare. Rev. & Exp. [New York: Penguin Books, 1991], 11).

We, the Shakespeare-theater goers and lovers, devotedly and ritualistically watch and read the Bard's plays not for exciting stories and complex plots. Rather, Shakespeare's language is a vital source of our supreme pleasure in his plays. Contrary to ill-conceived notions, Shakespeare's language is not an obstacle to appreciation, though it may prove to be difficult to understand Instead, it is the communicative and evocative power of Shakespeare's language that is astonishingly rich in vocabulary—about 29,000 words—strikingly presented through unforgettable characters such as Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, Othello, Rosalind, Viola, Iago, Shylock, etc.

In the high school classroom, students perceive Shakespeare's language as "Old English." Actually Shakespeare's linguistic environment, experience, and exposure was, believe it or not, closer to our own times than to Chaucer's, two hundred years earlier. Indeed, the history and development of the English language unfolds as follows: Old English, 449–1100; Middle English 1100–1500; and Modern English 1500-present. Shakespeare was firmly in the Modern English period.

At the time Shakespeare wrote, most of the grammatical changes from Old and Middle English had taken place; yet rigid notions about "correctness" had not yet been standardized in grammars. The past five centuries have advanced the cause of standardized positions for words; yet the flexible idiom of Elizabethan English offered abundant opportunities for Shakespeare's linguistic inventiveness. Ideally it is rewarding to study several facets of Shakespeare's English: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, wordplay, and imagery. The present overview will, however, be restricted to "vocabulary."

To Polonius's inquisitive question "What do you read, my lord?" (Hamlet, 2.2.191) Hamlet nonchalantly and intriguingly aptly replies: "Words, words, words" (2.2.192). This many-splendored creation of Shakespeare's epitomizes the playwright's own fascination with the dynamic aspect of English language, however troubling it may be to modern audiences and readers. Shakespeare added several thousand words to the language, apart from imparting new meanings to known words. At times Shakespeare could teasingly employ the same word for different shades of thought. Barowne's single line, "Light, seeking light, doth light of light beguile" (Love's Labour's Lost, 1.1.77), as Harry Levin in his General Introduction to The Riverside Shakespeare (9) explains, "uses 'light' in four significations: intellect, seeking wisdom, cheats eyesight out of daylight."

Another instance: Othello as he enters his bedroom with a light before he smothers his dear, innocent Desdemona soliloquizes: "Put out the light, and then put out the light" (Othello, 5.2.7) Here 'light' compares the light of Othello's lamp or torch to Desdemona's 'light' of life.

In both instances, the repeated simple ordinary word carries extraordinary shades of meaning. "Usually such a tendency in a Shakespeare play indicates a more or less conscious thematic intent." (Paul A. Jorgensen, Redeeming Shakespeare's Words [Berkeley and Los Angeles; University of California Press, 1962], 100).

Living in an age of the "grandiose humanistic confidence in the power of the word" (Levin 9), Shakespeare evidently felt exuberant that he had the license to experiment with the language, further blessed by the fact that "there were no English grammars to lay down rules or dictionaries to restrict word-formation. This was an immeasurable boon for writers" (Levin 10). Surely Shakespeare took full advantage of the unparalleled linguistic freedom to invent, to experiment with, and to indulge in lavishly.

However intriguing, captivating, mind-teasing, beguiling, and euphonious, Shakespeare's vocabulary can be a stumbling block, especially for readers. "In the theater the speaking actor frequently relies on tone, semantic drive, narrative context, and body language to communicate the sense of utterly unfamiliar terms and phrases, but on the page such words become more noticeable and confusing" (Russ McDonald, The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare: An Introduction with Documents [Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996], 184).

Unlocking the meaning of Shakespeare's vocabulary can prove to be an interesting challenge. Such words include those which "have dropped from common use like 'bisson' (blind) or those that the playwright seems to have created from Latin roots . . . but that did not catch on, such as conspectuities' (eyesight or vision) or 'unplausive' (doubtful or disapproving). Especially confusing are those words that have shifted meaning over the intervening centuries, such as 'proper' (handsome), 'nice' (squeamish or delicate), 'silly' (innocent), or 'cousin' (kinsman, that is, not necessarily the child of an aunt or uncle" (McDonald 184). Because of semantic change, when Shakespeare uses 'conceit,' he does not mean 'vanity,' as we might understand it to be. Strictly following etymology, Shakespeare means a 'conception' or 'notion,' or possibly the 'imagination' itself.

Perhaps several Shakespeare words "would have been strange to Shakespeare's audience because they were the products of his invention or unique usage. Some words that probably originated with him include: 'auspicious,' 'assassination,' 'disgraceful,' 'dwindle,' 'savagery.'" Certainly a brave soul, he was " a most audacious inventor of words." To appreciate and understand Shakespeare's English in contrast to ours, we ought to suspend our judgment and disbelief and allow respect for the "process of semantic change, which has been continually eroding or encrusting his original meaning" (Levin 8).

Shakespeare's vocabulary has received greater attention that any other aspect of his language. Perhaps this is because it is the most accessible with no burdensome complications. Whatever the cause, Shakespeare's language will forever be challenging and captivating.

A Very Tricky Letter

Write the letter that Malvolio finds in your own words. How would you need to change the language if it were taking place in todays world?

You're the Designer

Create costume designs that show the difference between Viola and the rest of the court. You can design multiple costumes that she would wear as herself (a woman) and when she is playing Cesario (a man.) Pay attention to the meaning or feelings behind the colors you pick. Consider what era you want to set the play in and what impact that will have on the play.

You're the Actor

Option A: Monologue

Pick a speech of at least ten lines. Repeat the speech using several different techniques. Try it dramatically, angrily, humorously, sarcastically. Try emphasizing different words to change the meaning of the words.

Option B: Dialogue

Pick a bit of dialogue of at least ten lines. Play the scene using several different tech-niques. Try it dramatically, angrily, humorously, and sarcastically. Try emphasizing different words and swapping roles to change the meaning of the words.

Gender Swap

Have each student figure out how they would physically portray the opposite gender by changing their voice and physicality.

If Music Be The Food of Love

Music plays a huge role in Twelfth Night, between Orsino's famous line at the beginning of the play to all of the musical interludes throughout, it's easy to see Shakespeare had a theme in mind. Ask your students to create a soundtrack from the show using whatever songs they want.

Telling the Story

Twelfth Night is one of Shakespeare's most adapted works. We find elements of his story everywhere in pop culture. (For example the movie She's the Man.) Ask your students to retell the story in a shortened version. They can set it anywhere and change little plot elements, so long as the major plot points stay the same.

Famous Lines and Vocabulary

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William Shakespeare coined a number of phrases that we still use today, including (in varying forms) the following from *Twelfth Night*.

"If music be the food of love, play on."— Duke Orsino 1.1.1

"My purpose is, indeed a horse of that colour."— Maria 2.3.148

"I am all the daughters of my father's house and all the brothers too."— Viola 2.4.118

"Still you keep o' th' windy side of law; good."— Fabian 2.4.147

"Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em."— Malvolio 2.5.128

"Why, this is very midsummer madness."— Olivia 3.4.50

fresh in murmur: being rumored -- "And then 'twas fresh in murmur" Sea Captain 1.2.29
And then I heard a rumor (because you know how much common people love to gossip about royalty.)

galliard: lively dance in triple time --"What is thy excellence in a galliard" Sir Toby 1.3.102
How good are you at these fast dances?

gaskins: loose breeches -- "or if both break, your gaskins fall." Maria 1.5.21
If one button breaks the other will hold up, but if both break then your pants will fall down.

leman: sweetheart -- "'I sent thee sixpence for the leman; hadst it?" Sir Andrew 2.3.20
I sent you some money to spend on your girlfriend. Did you get it?

baffle: publicly humiliate --"TI will baffle Sir Toby," Malvolio 2.5.146
I will be vain, and proud, and I'll study politics, I'll insult Sir Toby, and get rid of my lower class friends, and I'll be the perfect man for her.

aqua vitae: distilled liquors -- "Like aqua vitae with a midwife." Sir Toby Belch 2.5.180
Like medicine for the sick.

conster: explain -- "I will conster to them whence you come." Feste 3.1.50
My lady is inside, tell me where you're from and I'll pass it along.

give me leave: do not interrupt me -- "Give me leave, beseech you." Olivia 3.1.102
Let me say something please. After our last enchanted evening I sent a ring after you.

vulgar proof: common knowledge -- "for 'tis a vulgar proof that very oft" Viola 3.1.115
No, not a bit, it's commonly known that we feel sorry for our enemies.

license of ink: freedom that writing permits -- "Go, write it in a martial hand, be curst and brief." Sir Toby Belch 3.2.37
Go write it down and make it look like a soldier's handwriting.

midsummer madness: extreme folly -- "this is very midsummer madness." Olivia 3.4.50
This is insane.

Examining the Text

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Shakespeare uses figurative language as he speaks with metaphors, similes, and personification. Recognizing when his characters are speaking figuratively helps in understanding the play.

A **metaphor** is the application of a word or phrase to somebody or something that is not meant literally but to make a comparison. For example: The Duke of Illyria compares music to food for lovers.

Duke Orsino If music be the food of love, play on;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die (1.1.1-3).

A **simile** is a figure of speech that draws comparison between two different things using the word "like or as". For example: Valentine compares being able to see ones love to a nun being kept from the outside world.

Valentine The element itself, till seven years' heat,
Shall not behold her face at ample view;
But like a cloistress she will veiled walk,
And water once a day her chamber round
With eye-offending brine; all this to season
A brother's dead love, (1.1.25-30).

Personification occurs when human attributes or qualities are applied to objects or abstract notions. For example: The Captain responds that the waves are Sebastian's acquaintances.

Captain Where like [Arion] on the dolphin's back,
I saw him hold acquaintance with the waves
So long as I could see. (1.2.15-17)

Many students—and adults for that matter—find Shakespeare difficult to read and hard to understand. They accuse him of not speaking English and refuse to believe that ordinary people spoke the way his characters do. However, if you understand more about his language, it is easier to understand. One idea that may help to remember that his plays are written in two forms: prose and verse. In Twelfth Night prose and verse are both used extensively.

Prose

Prose is the form of speech used by common people in Shakespearean drama. There is no rhythm or meter in the line. It is everyday language. Shakespeare's audience would recognize the speech as their language. These are characters such as murderers, servants, and porters. However, many important characters can speak in prose. The majority of The Merry Wives of Windsor is written in prose because it deals with middle-class. The servants from Twelfth Night speak in prose. For example, when Sir Toby introduces Sir Andrew to Maria:

Toby Accost, Sir Andrew, accost
Sir Andrew Good Missress Accost, I desire better acquaintance.
Maria My name is Mary, sir.
Sir Andrew Good Mistress Mary Accost--
Sir Toby You mistake, knight, 'Accost' is to front her, board her, woo her, assail her.
Sir Andrew By my troth, I would not undertake her in this company. Is that the meaning of "accost"? (1.3.43-52)

Sir Andrew mistakenly believes that Maria's name is Accost. There is no rhyme or rhythm, and the text flows without concern of where the line ends on the page, we recognize the passage as prose. Consequently, better understand that Sir Andrew, Sir Toby, and Maria are all comical characters who speak the language of an Elizabethan audience member.

Verse

The majority of Shakespeare's plays are written in verse. A character who speaks in verse is a noble or a member of the upper class. Most of Shakespeare's plays focused on these characters. The verse form he uses is blank verse. It contains no rhyme, but each line has an internal rhythm with a regular rhythmic pattern. The pattern most favored by Shakespeare is iambic pentameter. Iambic pentameter is defined as a ten-syllable line with the accent on every other syllable, beginning with the second one. For example:

Viola He nam'd Sebastian. I my brother know
Yet living in my glass; even such and so
In favor was my brother, and he went
Still in this fashion, color, ornament,
For him I imitate. O, if it prove,
Tempests are kind and salt waves fresh in love! (3.4.379-384).

The accent occurs on every other syllable, and the natural accent of each word is placed in that position on the line.

Shakespeare sometimes used this style of writing as a form of stage direction. Actors today can tell by "scanning" a line (scansion) what words are most important and how fast to say a line. When two characters are speaking they will finish the ten syllables needed for a line showing that one line must quickly come on top of another. This is called a shared line or a split line. For example, in this scene Olivia interrupts Viola's reply to Orsino:

Duke Orsino Farewell and take her; but direct thy feet
Where thou and I henceforth may never meet.

Viola My lord, I do protest,--

Olivia O, do not swear;
Hold little faith, though thou hast too much fear. (5.1.165-169)

Trochaic Verse

On some special occasions Shakespeare uses another form of verse. He reverses the accent and shortens the line. The reversed accent, with the accent on the first syllable is called trochaic. He uses this verse frequently in A Midsummer Night's Dream and in Macbeth where magic or ritual is involved. For example:

Oberon "Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye." (3.2.102-104).

When reading or acting a Shakespearean play, count the syllables in the lines. You will be surprised at Shakespeare's consistency. Then circle the syllables where the accent appears. You will notice that he places the most important words on the accent. Words like "the", "is" and "and" that do not carry the meaning are on the unaccented portion of the lines. In the Globe Theatre where there were no microphones, the more important words would carry and an audience member would still know what was going on because the important words were heard. Iambic pentameter has been called a "heart beat", and each of Shakespeare's lines contains that human beat.

Elementary Discussion Questions

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Compare and Contrast

1. Who is your favorite character and why? Who do you dislike, why?

2. If you were acting in a production of the play, which character would you want to be? Why? Who would you not want to play? Why?

3. Shakespeare sometimes gives his characters names that suit their personality. Look at Sir Toby Belch. What kind of a person does his name tell you he'd be like? What other characters have a similar clue in their name?

Relational

1. Do you think Sir Toby and his friends went too far with their trick on Malvolio? Or did he deserve it?

2. How would you react if you were treated the way Malvolio is treated by Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Maria?

3. Do you think all the couples at the end will live "happily ever after," or not? Why?

Textual

1. Read Orsino's famous speech at the top of the show. "If music be the food of love, play on." Why do you think he says that? What does he mean?

2. Read all of the songs Feste sings. What is similar about them? What is different? Which was your favorite?

3. Read Act 2 Scene 3. Why do Sir Toby and Sir Andrew want to play a trick on Malvolio? Do you think it's a good idea? Is there something else they could have done?

Shakespeare's World

1. Is there anything that happens in this play that you wouldn't see in the world today? Were these events common in Shakespeare's time? Why?

2. What would it be like to see this play at Shakespeare's theatre, The Globe, in the hot afternoon, standing up, with men playing all the roles (even Viola and Olivia)

3. How do you think Shakespeare would react if he knew that you were learning about his play more than 450 years after he wrote it?

Middle and High School Discussion Questions

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Compare and Contrast

1. Compare the three female characters in the show to each other. How are they similar, how are they different? Why do you think Shakespeare wrote them the way he did?

2. Many of Shakespeare's plays deal with mistaken identity, disguises, and twins. How is *Twelfth Night* like *The Comedy of Errors*? What about this show is uniquely funny/entertaining when compared to similar stories?

Relational

1. Many of Shakespeare's plays center around a female lead dressing as a man to either hide her identity (Viola in *Twelfth Night* and Rosalind in *As You Like It*) or act in ways that women were not permitted to (Portia in *The Merchant of Venice.*) Why do you think Shakespeare employs this plot device so frequently? What does it say about his attitude toward women? Is his opinion different from what society's would have been then?

2. Many of the Characters in *Twelfth Night* have names that give subtle clues to their character. One example is Feste, the fool. Feste could be referencing the words festival or festive. What other names in the text have these same hidden clues? Why do you think Shakespeare gave them such descriptive names?

3. Throughout the play almost every character makes a sweeping declaration of love, which is often unrequited. Is this a universal theme or just specific to Shakespeare's time? Where else can you find an example?

Textual

1. Read Act 1, Scene 3. Shakespeare uses lots of witty wordplay in this scene. Where Sir Andrew and Sir Toby say one thing Maria spins it into another. As you read try turning these jokes in to modern English, are they still funny?

2. Read Act 5, Scene 1. It is a staple in Shakespearean comedy that everyone is happy at the end of the play. *Twelfth Night* is unique in the fact that Malvolio is the only character who doesn't get his happy ending. Why do you think Shakespeare ended the show that way? Would you have ended it differently? Why?

3. Read Act 2, Scene 3. Who has the most power in the scene? Why? Does it shift as people leave and enter? How can you tell?

Shakespeare's World

1. The title of the show refers to the feast of Epiphany, which was celebrated near Christmas time. (Anyone remember the Twelve Days of Christmas?) Traditionally during the celebration servants would dress as their masters and men would often dress as women. What connections can you draw between the holiday and the play?

2. It is very probable that Shakespeare wrote the role of Feste for Robert Armin. Robert Armin took over as the leading comedy actor after Will Kemp. Once he stepped in the roles of the fools became more philosophical rather than silly. What does this tell us about Shakespeare's writing process? How would writing for specific actors affect the types of characters he wrote?

3. How to you think the actors (all male) would have overcome the challenges of perform-ing this very romantic script to a widely diverse audience (some very rich and some very poor), in the middle of the day, with no special effects? What would they have to do to keep their attention? How does Shakespeare's arrangement of the action help?

Theatre Etiquette

- Arrive at the theater on time.
- Visit the restroom before the performance begins.
- Turn off your cell phone. Do not speak on the phone or text during the performance.
- Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to the show about the rules of the theater you are attending and the location of the fire exits.
- Don't speak during the performance unless you are encouraged by the performers to
- participate. Remember that the Overture (introductory music) in musical theater is part of the performance, so be quiet when it begins.
- Do not take pictures during the performance. It can be very distracting to the actors and can cause a mishap. It can also be a violation of an actor's contract.
- Remain in your seat for the entire performance. If you must leave, exit during intermission. In an emergency, wait for an appropriate break in the show. It is rude to get up in the middle of a quiet moment.
- Do not eat or drink in the theater.
- Do not put your feet up on the seats or balcony and do not kick the seat in front of you.
- Don't put or throw anything on the stage.
- Do laugh when the performance is funny.
- Do applaud when it is appropriate during the performance.
- Do applaud when the performance is over... this tells the performers and crew that you appreciate their work.
- Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great (a standing ovation).
- Do not whistle, stomp your feet, or scream out to the performers except for a Bravo or Brava.

Using What You've Learned to Learn More

A significant part of this Study Guide comes from materials originally developed and collected into the Utah Shakespeare Festival's Study Guide and Educational material for their production of the show. The Utah Shakespeare Festival has graciously allowed us to use their material for this season's production of Twelfth Night, though clearly any adaptation and production concept oriented details will not synch with the local production. Note that not all of the material available at the USF site was included. To find more from that collection, please visit their site at:

Utah Shakespeare Festival
www.bard.org

Oregon Shakespeare Festival

https://www.osfashland.org/experience-osf/education/study-guides.aspx

OSF in Ashland, Oregon is also producing Twelfth Night this season, so there is a great collection of questions and resources available via their study guide page. Don't forget to check in their archives too... because there's a guide from 2010 that has some additional things available on it (though a six year old reference may be outdated web-wise).

Shakespeare Resource Center

http://bardweb.net

There are some extremely detailed collections of resources available at the SRC. In particular, for those students looking for a better understanding of the English language during the Elizabethan period, check out the SRC's Language section for guides on reading and hearing ... and thus, comprehending... the language used in the plays and sonnets.

Shakespeare's Words

http://shakespeareswords.com/Twelfth-Night

Read an online version of Twelfth Night with side column definitions and explanations of unfamiliar language and phrases. Not the only one of these online, but one of the easiest to use.