

# Set Text Guide: Twelfth Night



**GCSE (9-1) Drama**

**Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in Drama (1DR0)**

---

# GCSE Drama 2016: Twelfth Night

---

## Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Characters</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Social, cultural and historical context</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Themes</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Resources</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>Practical exploration activities</b>	<b>12</b>

## Summary

---

*NOTE: For clarity, this synopsis refers to Viola as Cesario whenever she is in disguise as him.*

### Act One

#### Scene 1

*A room in the Duke's palace*

The Duke asks his musicians to play music to feed his longing for the Countess Olivia. We learn that her father died a year ago, and her brother has died recently. She plans to stay in her house for seven years to mourn for them.

#### Scene 2

*The sea coast, Illyria*

Viola, the Captain and some sailors are washed ashore after a shipwreck. Viola fears her twin brother, Sebastian, has drowned. She learns from the Captain that Duke Orsino rules this land, and that he seeks the love of Olivia. On hearing that Olivia has closed herself indoors, Viola says she would like to serve such a lady. When the Captain advises her otherwise, she decides to disguise herself as a man and look to serve the Duke.

#### Scene 3

*A room in Olivia's house*

Maria, Olivia's gentlewoman, warns Sir Toby, Olivia's uncle, that his niece is becoming angry at his drinking and rude behaviour. They then discuss the foolish Sir Andrew Aguecheek, whom Sir Toby has invited to the house as a suitor to Olivia. Sir Andrew arrives, and is clearly a fool, outwitted on arrival by the clever Maria.

#### Scene 4

*A room in the Duke's palace*

Viola enters the Duke's company disguised as 'Cesario'. The Duke instructs her to take his message of love to Olivia. However, it appears that Viola has fallen for the Duke herself. This sets in motion a classic Shakespearean love triangle, with mistaken identity and cross-dressing at the heart of the comedy.

#### Scene 5

*A room in Olivia's house*

Maria warns Feste, the fool or jester, that he is in trouble for staying away from Olivia's house. Olivia arrives and confronts Feste. They engage in a battle of wits and are clearly fond of one another. Malvolio is unimpressed by Feste, though Olivia defends him.

Maria reports that there is a young man at the gate who wishes to see Olivia, and that Sir Toby is holding him off. Olivia demands that someone take Sir Toby away from him, embarrassed that he will likely be drunk. He shortly enters, and is drunk. They leave and Olivia is left with Malvolio, who describes the young visitor to her. She agrees to see him. Cesario enters and confidently addresses Olivia. The Countess is taken with Cesario, and sends Maria away in order to be alone with him. Olivia says that she cannot return the love of the Duke. Cesario explains what he would do if he loved Olivia, which causes Olivia to begin falling in love with Cesario. Cesario leaves disappointed, but Olivia sends Malvolio off with a message that she will see him again.

## Act Two

### Scene 1

*The sea coast*

We see that Sebastian, Viola's twin brother, is alive and has been saved by a sea Captain, Antonio, who offers to be his servant. Sebastian wants to be alone to grieve for the assumed loss of his sister. Antonio has enemies in the court of Duke Orsino, though he bravely follows Sebastian there, such is his loyalty to the man he has just saved.

### Scene 2

*A street*

Malvolio catches up with Cesario and tries to return a ring to him, a ring which Cesario definitely didn't leave with Olivia. Malvolio warns that Olivia will not marry the Duke and throws the ring on the floor as he exits. Left alone, Viola realises that Olivia must have fallen in love with Cesario.

### Scene 3

*A room in Olivia's house*

Sir Toby and Sir Andrew are up late drinking. Feste joins them, and sings a song about how love should be enjoyed in the present. They are very loud, and though Maria initially comes to quieten them down, she is eventually drawn into their revelry. Malvolio is awoken by the noise and confronts them angrily, informing Sir Toby that Olivia wishes him to improve his behaviour or leave the house. He scorns Maria before going to bed. Maria conjures a plan to exact revenge upon him: she will write a love letter to Malvolio in Olivia's handwriting.

### Scene 4

*A room in the Duke's palace*

The Duke sends for Feste to sing him a song to cure his heartache. He talks with Cesario about love. The dramatic irony here is that the audience should begin to see that Viola is in love with the Duke, who in turn is in love with Olivia, who is in love with Cesario (Viola) – a perfect love triangle which drives the comedy. The Duke claims that no woman could have a love as strong as his, to which Viola describes her own love for him, unbeknown to the Duke. The scene ends with the Duke sending Cesario back to Olivia.

### Scene 5

*Olivia's garden*

Fabian, a member of Olivia's household who also wants revenge on Malvolio, joins Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in the garden. They hide behind a hedge as Maria strategically places the fake love letter for Malvolio to find. They spy on him fantasising about being Count Malvolio. He finds the letter and reads aloud, puzzling out Maria's cleverly constructed riddles and finding meanings that relate to himself. The letter instructs him to behave like a great man rather than just a steward, to smile, and to wear yellow stockings. (We later learn that Olivia hates the colour yellow.) He has fallen for it hook, line and sinker, and when he leaves, the conspirators fall about with joy and lavish praise on Maria for succeeding.

## Act Three

### Scene 1

*Olivia's garden*

## GCSE Drama 2016: Twelfth Night

Cesario arrives at Olivia's and engages in a spar of wits with Feste. Feste is aware of his status, but pushes its boundaries with his intellect and sharp wit. Though he may be considered to be speaking above his station at times, he is sure to use titles such as 'sir' in order to remain subservient. There is a good status exercise that might be explored in relation to this in the Practical Exploration Activities section of this document. Olivia enters and asks to be alone with Cesario, telling him that she no longer wants to hear word of the Duke and declaring her love for him. Cesario replies that he will never give his heart to any woman.

### Scene 2

*A room in Olivia's house*

Sir Andrew declares that he is leaving, offended by Olivia's lack of interest, but Sir Toby and Fabian persuade him to stay. They tell him that Olivia has shown more interest in Cesario in order to spur him on. Sir Andrew goes to write his challenge to Cesario, leaving Sir Toby and Fabian to enjoy their joke. Maria enters and tells them that Malvolio has fallen for the letter and is even wearing yellow stockings.

### Scene 3

*A street*

Antonio has caught up with Sebastian, who acknowledges his affection for him and thanks him for his loyalty. Sebastian wishes to do some sightseeing, but must go alone as Antonio is a wanted man in Illyria. Antonio gives him his purse to buy some trinkets for himself. They arrange to meet later.

### Scene 4

*Olivia's garden*

Malvolio greets Olivia, smiling and wearing yellow stockings. Olivia is perplexed by his manner as he quotes from the letter. She presumes him mad and asks Maria to see to him. Once left alone, he twists Olivia's words and interprets them as confirmation of her love for him. Maria enters with Sir Toby and Fabian and they treat Malvolio as a madman. When he leaves, they agree to continue treating him this way.

Sir Andrew enters with his written challenge to Cesario. It is badly written, but Sir Toby and Fabian pretend to the contrary. They tell him they will deliver it for him, but when he leaves they agree instead to tell Cesario of the challenge themselves, in a ploy to make the two duellists terrified of each other. They leave as Olivia enters, declaring her love for Cesario. She exits and Sir Toby and Fabian re-enter. The speed with which characters are entering and exiting can be very comedic, as the farcical nature of the situation gathers momentum.

Sir Toby and Fabian tell Sir Andrew and Cesario respectively how dangerous the other is. Eventually, the two reluctantly begin to fight. At this point Antonio enters, and assuming Cesario to be Sebastian, draws his sword to help. Sir Toby draws his sword against Antonio, but as he does so the Duke's officers arrive and arrest Antonio. Antonio requests his money back from 'Sebastian', though of course Cesario has no idea what he is talking about. Antonio is dismayed at this apparent betrayal. Having heard Antonio say 'Sebastian', Viola begins to hope that her brother may be alive. Having seen that Cesario is in fact a coward, Sir Andrew follows him to 'beat him'.

## Act Four

### Scene 1

*The street before Olivia's house*

Feste mistakes Sebastian for Cesario, then when Sir Andrew makes the same mistake Sebastian strikes him. A fight ensues, and as Sir Toby restrains Sebastian, Olivia enters

and sends Sir Toby away. Thinking Sebastian to be her love, she invites him to her house. He assumes he is dreaming, but is more than happy to go along with it.

## Scene 2

*A room in Olivia's house*

Feste disguises himself as Sir Topas the curate (a type of parson) and begins to torment Malvolio, who is imprisoned in a dark room. He makes Malvolio believe he is mad by claiming that the room is well lit. Sir Toby begins to feel guilty and urges Feste to speak to him in his own voice and end the torment. Hearing Feste sing in his own voice, Malvolio asks for a pen so that he can write to Olivia. Feste pretends that Sir Topas has returned, playing both parts simultaneously, and eventually agrees to help.

## Scene 3

*Olivia's garden*

Sebastian cannot believe his luck and has to convince himself he has not gone mad. He wishes he had Antonio to advise him and wonders what may have happened to him. Olivia enters with a priest and asks Sebastian to marry her. Sebastian agrees.

## Act Five

### Scene 1

*The street before Olivia's house*

The final act takes place across one long scene, in which all the mistaken identities come to a head. This allows the pace and rhythm to be sustained, which aids the comedy. The Duke arrives, looking for Olivia. Antonio is brought in by the officers and the Duke recognises him as an old enemy. Cesario points out Antonio as the man who took his side during the duel. Olivia enters and rejects the Duke, who realises she loves Cesario and threatens to kill him. Olivia announces that he is her husband, though Cesario denies it. The priest confirms they are married, not noticing any difference between Cesario and Sebastian. Sir Andrew enters with a head wound, claiming it was caused by Cesario. Sir Toby enters, also sporting a head wound. Finally, Sebastian enters and apologises to Sir Toby, and at last the twins are in the same place at the same time. They cannot believe they are both alive, and confirm each other's identity by their shared knowledge of their father's mole. The Duke realises Cesario is Viola and that she loves him. Viola tells that her own clothes are with the sea captain, who Malvolio has imprisoned. Feste reads Malvolio's letter in a madman's voice, much to the chagrin of Olivia, who asks Fabian to finish the letter. The Duke, now knowing her true identity, proposes to Viola. Malvolio is brought in and shows Olivia the love letter. She explains that he has been tricked. Fabian explains all. Malvolio leaves, vowing revenge. The play ends with a philosophical song from Feste, which describes the different stages of a man's life.

## Characters

---

### Viola

The play's protagonist. She disguises herself as Cesario, a young man, for most of the play, and falls in love with the Duke.

### Orsino

The Duke, who spends the majority of the play pursuing Olivia, only to fall in love with Viola when he discovers who she is at the end.

### Olivia

Wealthy and beautiful, she is courted by the Duke and Sir Andrew, though falls for Cesario. She marries Sebastian, thinking him to be Cesario, but ends the play seemingly happy.

### Sebastian

Viola's twin brother. He marries Olivia more by luck than anything else.

### Malvolio

Olivia's steward. He is pompous, self-righteous and socially driven.

### Feste

The fool. He could be said to be the wisest character in the play.

### Sir Toby

Olivia's drunken uncle. A trickster, he is often playing practical jokes.

### Maria

Olivia's gentlewoman. She is smart, and gets the better of Malvolio.

### Sir Andrew Aguecheek

A suitor to Olivia. He thinks himself to be brave, but is actually a fool.

### Antonio

A sea captain who rescues Sebastian and becomes fiercely loyal to him.

### Fabian

A member of Olivia's household who joins in with the trickery, both against Malvolio and in pitting Cesario and Sir Andrew against each other.

## Social, cultural and historical context

---

William Shakespeare is widely considered the greatest English dramatist of all time.

Born on 26 April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, he went on to write at least 38 plays.

Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway at the age of 18. She was eight years older than him. They had three children: Susanna, and twins Hamnet and Judith. Information about his life after his marriage is sparse, but he is thought to have spent most of his time in London, writing and performing in his plays. Between 1585 and 1592, he began a successful career in London as an actor, writer, and part-owner of a playing company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as the King's Men.

Shakespeare produced most of his known work between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were mainly comedies and histories, and these works are still regarded as some of the best work produced in these genres. He then wrote mainly tragedies until about 1608, including *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, considered some of the finest works in the English language. In his last phase, he wrote tragicomedies, also known as romances, and collaborated with other playwrights.

Shakespeare's plays remain highly popular today and are studied, performed, and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world.

Shakespeare wrote *Twelfth Night* towards the middle of his career, around 1601. It is considered one of his best comedies.

It is the only one of his plays to have an alternate title: *What You Will*. It is uncertain what exactly the two titles mean, though *Twelfth Night* may be a reference to Epiphany, which in Shakespeare's day was celebrated as a day when everything was turned upside down, much like the world of the play.

It is one of Shakespeare's so-called transvestite comedies. These plays feature female protagonists who disguise themselves as men, for one reason or another. At the time when the play was written, all actors were men. Therefore, Viola would have been a man playing a woman pretending to be a man.

The play is often performed and has been since its first appearance in 1601, appealing to different generations' appreciations of the confusion arising from mistaken identity. Malvolio, over the years, has been seen as a figure of both fun and ridicule, with audiences reacting differently to him in the context of their time.



## Themes

---

One of the play's main themes, that drives the comedy, is identity and mistaken identity. Other themes are intertwined with this as Shakespeare sets up the convolutions of the plot and takes the characters on the journey that, at times, there appears to be no obvious conclusion to.

For example, it is not just the Duke who mistakes Viola for Cesario, but as she looks like her twin brother Sebastian when she is dressed as a man, many of the characters are often confused as to who she is. As Viola explores the character of Cesario much is made of the identity of her, as Cesario, in relation to her twin brother Sebastian and much of the humour of the play comes from the interplay this sets up for the audience. Included in the idea of identity is the exploration of gender and what gender is.

Certainly, a twenty-first century audience is arguably much more aware of issues surrounding gender identity than any previous audience and Shakespeare's ambiguity in exploring relationships in the play in terms of attraction and being attracted to the person – regardless of the person's sex – is accentuated by the use of disguise and the interplay between the characters.

The Cesario, Olivia, Sebastian, Antonio relationships, for example lend themselves to be explored in performance for much comic effect but, in so doing, giving opportunities to consider the nature of attraction and gender. Orsino, for example, continues to refer to Viola as 'he' and by her male name, even when he knows that she is in fact Viola. There is something about the language used in Orsino's declaration of love to Viola suggests that he enjoys maintaining the pretense of Viola's masculinity.

Appearance and reality are explored throughout the play, typified in the disguise of Viola as Cesario, for example and in her maintaining the male persona and taking on the role of a courtier. In Act 3, scene 1, for example, the exchange with Olivia has, for the actors much opportunity for creating humour for the audience as Olivia asks Cesario what he thinks of her and Viola, as Cesario replies That you do think you are not what you are and Olivia responds with If I think so, I think the same of you. When Antonio confronts Viola in Act Three, scene 4, thinking she is Sebastian his words are often taken as a declaration of love for Sebastian in a twenty-first century context as he declares that he worshipped him as he would worship a holy image.

Feste mistakes Sebastian for Cesario and so does Sir Andrew in Act Four, scene 1, leading Sebastian to declare Are all the people mad? The mistaken identity in the play is key to the development of Shakespeare's play that is convoluted but plays out to a satisfactory conclusion when all of the elements are brought together and justice is seen to be done.

Disguise is a device often used in plays by Shakespeare and it is often the case that female characters disguise themselves as male characters which for the actors and audience of the day created the in-joke of a male actor playing a female character disguised as a male character.

Another major theme is Love. Essentially the play is a 'romcom' of the day. As is often the case with Shakespeare's comedies, the conclusion of the play sees characters paired off. There are numerous times throughout the text where the characters talk about love and being in love or wanting to be in love. From the very opening line of the play, for example, Orsino connects love with music in one of the most quoted lines from any of Shakespeare's plays and immediately evokes for the audience a sense of what is to come with the love he seeks being to excess. Fundamentally the play is a romantic and romantic love, which Shakespeare shows

to be a little painful in its pursuit, is at the heart of the play. Whilst there is an inevitability in the conclusion of the play and the neatness of love found, there is also a sense of loss as both Malvolio and Antonio are not able to find happiness with the people they are in love with – Olivia and Sebastian – who find happiness with each other.

When looking at the theme of Madness and what is madness, it becomes a little more complicated. There are references in the text to madness being linked to drunkenness, for example, with the drink driving the drunken man to madness, according to Feste. Later Olivia connects Malvolio's strange behavior to the summer season 'very midsummer madness' implying that it is the sun, the heat, the season that causes his behavior.

Towards the end of the play, Sebastian struggles to convince himself that he is not mad and neither is Olivia as he wanders into her garden and she awaits him with a Priest to perform their wedding ceremony.

Malvolio is ambitious and his ambitions take him beyond his social standing of a steward to make him think that he can in fact be a suitor for Olivia. Not only is he not of noble birth – and therefore doomed to failure in his attempts at winning her hand in marriage, but also his personality makes him completely unattractive to her.

The passage of time or the idea that time will help resolve things is evident in the play and could be linked to fate or the idea that whatever will be will be. This is also linked, for example, to the idea that the passage of time also ages us and as Feste sings in Act Two, scene 3, it is best to enjoy life while you are still young as time may not be kind and, while life's issues may be resolved, there are always others to take their place.

## Resources

---

### Recommended edition

Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare. New Longman. ISBN: 0-582-36578-3

### Further reading

*1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* by James Shapiro. ISBN: 978-0571214815

*1606: William Shakespeare and the Year of Lear* by James Shapiro. ISBN: 978-0571235780

### Online resources

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/feb/23/twelfth-night-review-olivier-national-theatre-tamsin-greig>

<http://home.uchicago.edu/~jorgea/untitled%20folder/Rethinking.pdf>

### Useful soundtracks to use in the classroom

*Twelfth Night* film score by Shaun Davey

Numerous performances of the play are available via various platforms, including YouTube and on DVD.

## Practical exploration activities

---

### Performers

The following exercises are designed to help theatre makers practically explore some of the key characters, themes and ideas that are central to *Twelfth Night*. Some of the exercises may help performers to consider how key roles might be communicated and realised from 'page to stage'.

**Off-text improvisation** is a useful explorative technique to consider the 'before and after' life of the play. You might explore moments from the play that are alluded to but not seen, for example:

- Viola and Sebastian on the boat before it sinks
- Olivia and Sebastian alone after the play now they are married
- Malvolio after the play, plotting his revenge.

**Hot-seating** is a valuable and exciting method to develop characterisation. It helps performers to 'flesh out' their understanding of the characters. Using their imagination and the information provided in the given circumstances will allow performers to consider the voice, attitude and physicality of the character they are exploring.

A more theatrical way to explore hot-seating might be to combine it with an off-text improvisation. For example, following on from the examples above, after we have watched a scene, we could immediately interview the character and ask them probing questions to discover thoughts the performer may not have considered.

**Exploring accent and dialect** can also help performers to consider character choices. It is not clear exactly where Illyria is, but we do know that Viola and Sebastian are not from there, so they might have different accents from the other characters.

**Non-verbal communication** is often a highly effective way to explore character, subtext, tension and silence. How does each character behave in moments of silence? For example, you might see how different characters behave when they are on their own. How does this differ, if it does, from how they behave when they are with other characters?

Another useful exercise involves **staging and rehearsing a key scene with a particular focus and then trying it in an alternative style**. For example, the performers might explore status in conjunction with the director. The director calls out numbers from 1 to 20 for the actors in the space; 1 is the lowest status, that of a slug, if you will; 20 is the highest status, the king, perhaps. By playing this game we can begin to discover how bodies in space can signify status, and this might give a good indication of how to stage certain pivotal moments in the play, where status plays a crucial role. This is particularly useful for scenes with Feste, the jester: his position in society is one of low status, but he often uses his wit to elevate his status.

### Directors

The following exercises and ideas are designed to help theatre makers explore some of the opportunities, themes and ideas that are central to *Twelfth Night*. A director is responsible for everything that happens within the performance space and works collaboratively with a number of other key people, including actors and designers. Some of the suggestions may help directors to consider how key aspects of the play might be communicated and realised from 'page to stage'. This is not an exhaustive list; it is a guide.

It might be useful to set up a **production meeting** and pitch for your students – either as one group or in smaller groups, depending on numbers – as this will help them to consider the whole play and root their practical ideas in aims and intentions.

Remember that audience impact is key, and that setting up small groups of potential theatre makers might help your students to consider the text in a holistic way. In this

model, for example, a small group of five could consist of a director, set, costume, sound and lighting designers. The director puts important questions to each member of the team, in order to develop a creative concept for a production of the play, then sells a potential 'theatrical' pitch to the teacher (producer or 'dragon') in order to secure funding. It is important that the director has an overall vision for the play in performance and the design team should question the director on their overall approach and theatrical intention.

This is a useful discussion exercise that also lends itself to research, images and presentations. It can work at the start of a scheme of work to initiate ideas and contextualise themes and key moments or, probably more effectively, at the end of a scheme of work as a way of ensuring all aspects of production are considered. It is important with this activity that each member of each production team should justify their ideas with key moments from the play.

Another useful exercise for a director to consider involves **staging and rehearsing a key scene or moment from the production with a particular focus** and then trying it in an alternative style. For example, it might be useful to explore the moment when Malvolio arrives in the garden in Act Three scene 4, and the consequences of this in the remainder of the scene. It would be interesting to explore the dynamic of the moment and then to imagine how things might have been different if he had not appeared at that point. As a director, you would be encouraging actors to think about appropriate interpretations of characters within the context of the whole play, and looking at Shakespeare's structuring of relationships in the play.

A director may **explore the structure of the play** and look at other ways into it. For example, by starting with the events of Act Two, scene 5 and then flashing back or rewinding the story to the beginning from this point and taking the narrative through until the end, the threading and unthreading of the complexity of the relationships can be explored.

## Designers

The following exercises and ideas are designed to help theatre makers explore some of the opportunities, themes and ideas that are central to *Twelfth Night*. Some of the suggestions may help designers to consider how key aspects of the play might be communicated and realised from 'page to stage'.

It might be useful to set up a **production meeting and pitch** for your student designers, as this will help them to consider the play as a whole and root their practical ideas in aims and intentions. Remember that audience impact is key, and that setting up small groups of potential theatre makers might help students to consider the text in a holistic way. For example, a group could consist of a set, costume, sound and lighting designer. Smaller groups simply take on more than one area of responsibility. It is important that each designer questions the aims and intentions of the others, so that each member of the production team is able to think in a holistic and collaborative way. The design 'pitch' could then be offered to the teacher (producer). This is a useful discussion exercise that also lends itself to research, images and presentations. It can work at the start of a scheme of work to initiate ideas/contextualise themes and key moments, or at the end of a scheme of work as a way of ensuring all aspects of production are considered. It would also make an excellent 'active' revision session in time for the exam. TIP – each member of the production team should justify their ideas with key moments from the play.

**Creating a model box of a potential set design** is a useful exercise and can be as simple or as elaborate as required. It is often useful for students to see how each scene will be played in a potential space, and by creating a model box they will be able to refer more easily to their ideas in a specific space. *Twelfth Night* takes place in the fictional place of Illyria, which gives a designer a wide scope for the styles and visual themes of this place.

**Exploring different music and sound effects for key scenes** is another effective way of considering how design can play an important role in the development of a key idea or

theme. Might the sea be an influence for the soundscape, as much of the action takes place along the coast?

How can lighting help to create shadow and suspense? **Look at previous productions and lighting designs** to see how other theatre makers have used lighting to create impact. If you don't have access to lighting, you might want to consider the effect of torches or candles. (Safety first!) Again, though the play is set in one place, how might the light change the space, both literally in terms of the time of day, but also metaphorically as the climax of the play approaches?

Another useful exercise that helps to build the world of the play and develop ideas for performance is **sourcing and designing potential costumes**. Research is key, and will help students who are initially daunted about the thought of 'designing'. They don't have to be great artists to create great designs. The main thing is that they approach the design of the production in a holistic way. Is their costume design expressionistic, representational, or more naturalistic? What is their aim and intention? Does their costume design root the production and performance in a particular time period or style? How is the designer going to achieve the disguise for Viola as Cesario, and is this naturalistic or comedic?

