

# Knowledge Organiser: Twelfth Night

Writer's Intent	Key Ideas		
Twelfth Night is one of Shakespeare's comedies. The festival of Twelfth Night was a holiday when everything was turned upside down – this is an element Shakespeare uses as a source of comedy. Shakespeare plays with conventions of gender and moral codes to explore and critique the society he lives in.	Key Idea	Definition	Example
	Gender Fluidity	Shakespeare shows how traditional views of gender as binary and fixed can be pulled into question. Instead he presents a more fluid exploration of gender and the relative powers that come with it that are more in keeping with today's views.	Whilst the main exploration of this is through Viola/ Cesario, the relative attractions of Olivia to Cesario and Orsino to Cesario also bring into question gender normative relationships. Furthermore, Olivia is seen to control and run her household with more authority than Orsino who is often depicted moping.
<b>Key Characters</b>  <b>Orsino</b> The Duke of Illyria and its ruler. He is a perfect gentleman and is used as a vehicle to explore the absurdity of love.  <b>Viola/ Cesario</b> The heroine in the story who disguises herself as her twin brother. Her plight is the central conflict in the play.  <b>Lady Olivia</b> A rich countess who is in mourning and uses this to stay off the advances of men – until she meets and falls for Cesario.  <b>Sir Toby Belch</b> Lady Olivia's uncle. He uses Olivia's money to keep himself entertained – including playing tricks on others.  <b>Malvolio</b> Lady Olivia's steward. He has fantasies that he might marry Olivia and rise above his class. He's a puritan so criticises excessive lifestyles.  <b>Feste</b> Lady Olivia's clown. He is Shakespeare's mouthpiece, ocriticising other's actions.  <b>Sir Andrew Aguecheek</b> A knight who is encourage by Sir Toby to court Olivia. This is done so Sir Toby can trick him out of his money.  <b>Maria</b> Lady Olivia's serving woman. She is clever and works with Sir Toby to trick Malvolio.  <b>Sebastian</b> Viola's twin brother. He is initially mistaken for Cesario which leads to comic mishaps.	Appearance and reality	Shakespeare uses characters' reliance on, and faith in, appearance as a source of the majority of the play's misunderstanding that lead to the comic elements.	Appearance and reality can be seen in the tricking of Malvolio where he believes that the letter is a genuine love letter from Olivia – the appearance – when it is in fact a ruse put together by Sir Toby and Maria.
	Love as a Cause of Suffering	Whilst the play ends happily, like any romantic comedy (which arguably it is), along the way love – or more precisely unrequited love – causes pain. Many of the characters use language that suggests they view love as a curse that attacks its victims suddenly.	Orsino is in a state of angst and depression throughout the play as a result of the unrequited love that he has for Olivia. This is also reflected in Olivia's own sadness and regrets when she falls for Cesario and this adoration is also unrequited. Though at the end of the play, the norms have been restored and Shakespeare does present some hope for love.
	Revenge	Revenge is used by Shakespeare in the sub-plot of the play. It brings a darker form of comedy to the play than that of the protagonists. Shakespeare shows how revenge can escalate from actions that at first seem like harmless jest, to ones which are cruel and cause serious mental distress. This could be seen as a critique of some sides of humanity.	Malvolio and Sir Toby are caught in a cycle of revenge that eventually leads to Malvolio's demise and promise of future revenge. Malvolio wishes to get revenge on Sir Toby because of his excessive behaviour and humiliation of him. Whereas Sir Toby wants to get revenge on Malvolio because of his pride and persistent criticism of their behaviour.
	The folly of ambition	A reoccurring theme in Shakespeare's plays, it shows how those who overreach their station – and so challenge the natural social order – are doomed to failure. This is one of the ways in which Shakespeare restores, and ensures order.	Malvolio's character, and the treatment he receives at the hands of Sir Toby and Maria, explores the foolishness of having aspirations above your station. It is of note that he is the only character in the play who does not marry or receive a happy ending – he is in fact excluded from the festivities at the end.
	Writer's Methods		
Method	Definition	Example	Purpose
	Shakespearean Comedy	A light-hearted play with a happy ending usually involving marriages between the unmarried characters. 1. Introduction of main character(s) 2. Tragic Event 3. Journey (physical / self-discovery) 4. Reconciliation 5. Resolution and Happy Ending	1. Viola and her family are introduced. 2. There's a shipwreck and only Viola survives. 3. Viola disguises herself as Cesario and as Cesario discovers elements of her character. 4. Viola and Sebastian meet one another and realise their sibling has survived. 5. Viola's true identity is revealed, and she marries Orsino.
Dramatic Irony	When the full significance of words or actions is clear to the audience but unknown to the character.	When Olivia falls in love and courts Cesario, but the audience know it is really Viola.	It creates comedy as the audience is aware of the foolishness of Olivia's actions. Shakespeare uses dramatic irony in the play to show the cruelty or comedy of characters' actions.
Soliloquy	A speech where an actor speaks their thoughts aloud usually when alone.	Viola/ Cesario's soliloquies show how she is struggling to navigate the world she is in – particularly in terms of love.	They allow the reader to create an emotional bond with Viola as they are able to see her vulnerabilities.
Symbolism	The use of objects or items to represent other ideas or concepts.	Clothes are seen as a symbol of the performative nature of gender.	It invites the audience to question some of the social constructs which govern their lives.



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Key Word Glossary			
Word	Definition	Example	Word in Action
Aside	Lines in a play that are <b>intended to be heard by the audience but unheard by the other characters</b> in the play.	Cesario's <b>asides</b> give the audience an awareness of how her true self feels.	
Characterisation	The building or <b>crafting of a fictional person</b> .	Aguecheek is <b>characterised</b> as a fool.	
Deception	Giving an appearance or impression different from the true one; <b>misleading</b> .	Sir Toby <b>deceives</b> Malvolio by making him think Olivia wants to marry him.	
Disguise	Give (someone or oneself) <b>a different appearance</b> to conceal one's identity.	Viola <b>disguises</b> herself as a man.	
Elizabethan	Shakespeare wrote his plays when Elizabeth 1 <sup>st</sup> and James 1 <sup>st</sup> ruled England. We refer to <b>the time that Elizabeth was on the throne from 1558-1603</b> as the Elizabethan Era.	Twelfth Night was an <b>Elizabethan</b> festival.	
Epiphany	A moment of <b>sudden and great revelation</b> or realisation.	Olivia has an <b>epiphany</b> when she meets Cesario.	
Feminism	The belief in full social, economic, and political <b>equality for women</b> .	The positive presentation of women in the text means that it can be seen as <b>feminist</b> .	
Melancholy	A feeling of pensive <b>sadness</b> , typically <b>with no obvious cause</b> .	Malvolio is a <b>melancholic</b> character.	
Motif	A dominant or <b>recurring idea</b> in an artistic work.	Letters are a <b>motif</b> in the play.	
Manipulate	<b>Control or influence</b> (a person or situation) cleverly or dishonestly.	Sir Toby <b>manipulates</b> Aguecheek.	
Oxymoron	A figure of speech in which apparently <b>contradictory terms appear in conjunction</b> .	Feste often uses <b>oxymorons</b> to highlight the stupidity of other characters.	
Patriarchal	A system of <b>society or government controlled by men</b> .	Olivia's state of mourning occurs because of <b>patriarchal</b> traditions.	
Pity	<b>Feeling of sorrow and compassion</b> caused by the suffering and misfortunes of others.	The treatment of Malvolio arouses <b>pity</b> in the audience.	
Pun	A <b>joke exploiting the different possible meanings of a word</b> or the fact that there are words which sound alike but have different meanings.	Feste often uses <b>puns</b> as a form of humour.	
Reversal	A <b>change to an opposite direction</b> , position, or course of action.	There is a <b>reversal</b> in Orsino's adoration of Olivia in the final act.	
Sonnet	A <b>poem of fourteen lines</b> using any of a number of formal rhyme schemes. Sonnets <b>typically have 10 syllables</b> per line and are <b>traditionally love poems</b> .	Shakespeare uses the <b>sonnet</b> form in the play to parody love.	
Setting	<b>The place or type of surroundings</b> where something is positioned or where or when an event takes place	The <b>setting</b> of the play is Ilyria – a distant and unknown place for Shakespeare's audience.	
Sub-plot	A secondary strand of the plot that is a <b>supporting side story</b> .	Sir Toby and Malvolio's sparring is a <b>sub-plot</b> .	

