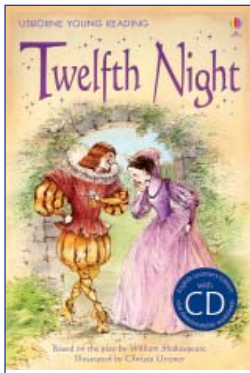


Twelfth Night • Teacher's notes



Author: William Shakespeare, adapted by Rosie Dickins

Reader level: Advanced

Word count: 2764

Lexile level: 530L

Text type: Adapted classic

About the story

This famous tale of mismatched lovers begins in the aftermath of a shipwreck. Viola is washed ashore, unable to find her beloved twin brother Sebastian. With the help of the ship's captain, she decides to dress as a boy, Cesario, to get a job at the nearby court of Duke Orsino. The Duke is suitably fooled and employs Viola to deliver his message of love to Lady Olivia. Unfortunately, Viola promptly falls in love with the Duke himself, and Olivia – also fooled by the disguise – falls in love with Viola-Cesario.

At Olivia's house, her uncle Sir Toby and the jester Feste are up to mischief. Helped by the maid, Maria, they forge a love letter from Olivia to her pompous steward, Malvolio. When Olivia sees Malvolio, she is horrified: he seems to have lost his mind. Then Sir Toby and Maria trick their foolish friend Sir Andrew into fighting a duel with Viola (still in disguise). Meanwhile, Viola's twin Sebastian has been rescued by a sailor named Antonio, who lends him money. When Antonio happens to walk past the duel, he mistakes Viola for Sebastian and leaps to her defence. He's arrested by the Duke's guards, at which point he asks Viola for his money back. She's taken aback. Could it be that he's mistaken her for Sebastian? Does that mean Sebastian might still be alive?

Indeed, at that same moment, Sebastian is being mistaken for Viola-Cesario. Olivia professes her love for him and asks him to marry her. Sebastian has never met Olivia before, but accepts willingly. Scenes of great confusion follow, culminating in a joyful reunion for Sebastian and Viola, and a triple wedding party for Sebastian and Olivia, Duke Orsino and Viola, and Sir Toby and Maria.

About the author

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, and became famous as an actor and writer when he moved to London. He wrote hundreds of poems and almost 40 plays, loved worldwide for their dramatic range, dazzling use of language, complex characters and enduring stories.

Words and phrases of interest, and unfamiliar words

Help your students to develop strategies for unfamiliar words, so that you don't have to interrupt the flow of the story often to explain vocabulary. You might suggest they make a quick note of words as they read, or mark their place on the page with removable sticky notes or index tabs. Encourage them to deduce meanings: are they familiar with any part of the word (e.g. "wreck" in "wreckage")? Can they guess from the context (e.g. "prank" followed by "plotting... a duel")? You could look at different strategies for learning new vocabulary, such as making word clouds or thematic lists.

p2	characters	p8	refused	pited	stockings	p38	tempests	
	noblewoman	p11	bound to	p18	disguise	p40	flailing	
p3	steward	p12	in uproar		untangle		bewildered	
	jester	p13	snobby	p19	blushed	p43	determined	
p5	shipwreck	p14	mourn	p21	tunefully	p44	lunatic	
	struggled	p15	interrupted	p22	virtuous	p51	pretended	
p6	desperately		shrugging	p24	rogue	p53	vouch for	
	wreckage	p16	willow cabin	p25	airs and graces	p37	offended	
							p61	quarrels

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Before reading

Write the words TWELFTH NIGHT on the board. Does this mean anything to your students? You could mention the Twelve Days of Christmas. Explain that there's a tradition in some countries of celebrating Christmas over twelve days, finishing with a feast on the twelfth night (January 5th). The feast would be a time of great merriment.

The playwright, William Shakespeare, wrote a play called Twelfth Night to be performed as part of this feast. Ask the class what sort of play they think it might be. Happy? Sad? Funny? Do students know anything about Shakespeare, such as when he was alive and writing plays? Can they name any more of his plays? You could list more comedies underneath TWELFTH NIGHT (e.g. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing*) and make a separate list of the tragedies (e.g. *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo & Juliet*). Ask the class why you've made two lists. [Comedies and tragedies.] What are the differences between the two types? Where might you find: love, marriage, death, fighting, jokes? [Often in both...]

Ask the students to think how they might write a comedy. What would they include to make the audience laugh? What makes *them* laugh? [E.g. jokes, tricks, misunderstandings, teasing, funny costumes, slapstick...] Now invite them to read and listen for how Shakespeare creates humour in Twelfth Night.

Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same.

During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

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|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| p5 | What's good about this beginning? [it's dramatic, gets you instantly interested...] | p20 | Do you think Viola's tempted to reveal her real identity? Why doesn't she? |
| p7 | Why would he be more likely to hire a man? How would you describe Viola? [e.g. brave...] | p23 | How would you describe Maria? And Toby? |
| p11 | What do the house and gardens tell us about Lady Olivia? | p28 | Can you see how this could cause trouble? |
| p12 | What's a jester? [Rich people used to have jesters to entertain them and make them laugh.] | p32 | What does <i>midsummer madness</i> mean? |
| p14 | How would you describe Feste's attitude towards Olivia? Are you surprised by the way he cheers her up? | p33 | What does <i>his eyes glinting</i> tell us about Toby and what he's thinking? |
| p15 | What does Olivia's yawn tell us? | p35 | Does Sir Andrew look like a fighter? |
| p17 | What does Olivia love about Viola-Cesario? | p46 | Do you feel sorry for Malvolio? |
| p19 | Why is Viola blushing? | p47 | What would you do if you were Sebastian? |
| | | p50 | See how many more people Viola-Cesario is in trouble with over the next four pages... |
| | | p59 | This is a sudden change of heart... or is it? |
| | | p63 | Is everyone happy at the end? |

After reading

Ask the class what are the different comedy techniques they have noticed in the story [disguise, mistaken identity, pranks, wordplay, etc.]

Everything ends happily... just. What if Sebastian hadn't arrived on the scene to marry Olivia? What if Olivia hadn't discovered the truth about Malvolio? Shakespeare's comedies often have this darker potential: you'll find it in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, also available as an Usborne English Learner's Edition.

Did you know?

In Shakespeare's day, most actors were male. Boys and men would dress up as the female characters, making Viola's disguise more believable, but also adding to the comedy: a man dressed up as a woman dressed up as a man. Shakespeare used the device in other plays, too, e.g. Rosalind-Ganymede in *As You Like It*.