

Twelfth Night

Background Info

Author Bio

Full Name: William Shakespeare

Date of Birth: 1564

Place of Birth: Stratford-upon-Avon, England

Date of Death: 1616

Brief Life Story: Shakespeare's father was a glove-maker, and Shakespeare received no more than a grammar school education. He married Anne Hathaway in 1582, but left his family behind around 1590 and moved to London, where he became an actor and playwright. He was an immediate success: Shakespeare soon became the most popular playwright of the day as well as a part-owner of the Globe Theater. His theater troupe was adopted by King James as the King's Men in 1603. Shakespeare retired as a rich and prominent man to Stratford-upon-Avon in 1613, and died three years later.

Key Facts

Full Title: *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*

Genre: Comedy

Setting: Illyria (an ancient area on the coast of the Adriatic Sea, between contemporary Croatia, Albania, and Montenegro)

Climax: The weddings of Viola and Orsino, and Sebastian and Olivia

Historical and Literary Context

When Written: c. 1601

Where Written: England

When Published: 1623

Literary Period: The Renaissance

Related Literary Works: *Twelfth Night* has been referred to as a "transvestite comedy" and can be grouped with other Shakespeare plays in which characters cross-dress—namely, the comedy *As You Like It*, but also *Merchant of Venice*, which includes a court scene in which the primary female character, Portia, dresses up as a young man. With its confused twins, *Twelfth Night* also resembles Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, which is based on the *Menaechmi*, by the Roman comedian Plautus. *Twelfth Night* itself is based on an Italian comedy called *Iganni*—or, the "unknown ones."

Extra Credit

What a drag! *Twelfth Night* is sometimes called a "transvestite comedy" for the obvious reason that its central character is

a young woman, **Viola**, who disguises herself as a pageboy, **Cesario**. In Shakespeare's time, **Viola's** part, like all the parts in *Twelfth Night*, would have been played by a man., because women were not allowed to act. So, originally, "**Cesario**" would probably have been a boy, dressed up as a woman, dressed up as a man.

Feast of Misrule: *Twelfth Night* takes its name from an English holiday celebrated on the eve of January 5, the so-called "twelfth night of Christmas" or the Feast of the Epiphany. In Renaissance England, Twelfth Night was known as a "feast of misrule." For the day, kings and nobles were to be treated as peasants, and peasants as kings and nobles. At the center of the Twelfth Night feast was a large cake with a bean or coin baked into it and served to the assembled company; the person whose slice of cake contained it became King Bean, the Christmas King, or Lord of Misrule—a commoner who would take the place of a king in order to watch over the topsy-turvy proceedings.

Two titles. *Twelfth Night* is the only play of Shakespeare's with an alternate name: its full title is *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*. The second title references the holiday season of ritualized disorder and revelry, where you can act out all your fantasies.

Plot Summary

In the kingdom of Illyria, the Duke **Orsino** laments over his unrequited love for the Lady **Olivia**, who is in mourning for her brother and has refused to see anyone for seven years.

Meanwhile, a ship has been wrecked by a storm off the coast, casting the young noblewoman **Viola** onto shore. Finding herself alone with the **Captain**, Olivia assumes that her twin brother, **Sebastian**, with whom she was traveling, is dead. Grieving, she learns from the Captain—who, by chance, was born in Illyria—about the region, and decides that she would like to conceal her identity and offer her services to this Lady. However, after the Captain informs Olivia that Olivia refuses to see anyone. Viola resolves to conceal her identity—she dresses up as a pageboy, **Cesario**, and go work for **Orsino**. The Captain agrees to help.

Viola advances quickly in Orsino's household. However, she soon finds herself falling in love with Orsino—a love which she cannot pursue, since Orsino believes her to be (the male) **Cesario**. At the same time, when Orsino sends **Cesario** to Olivia's house to woo her in his stead, Olivia becomes passionately attracted to "**Cesario**." Only Viola understands the love-triangle that her disguise has brought about: she loves Orsino, Orsino loves Olivia, and Olivia loves her. None of these loves can be fulfilled.

While the plot between Orsino, Viola, and Olivia unfolds, scenes at Olivia's house introduce a second group of charac-

ters: Olivia's uncle, the drunkard **Sir Toby**; his equally vulgar friend and suitor of Olivia, **Sir Andrew Aguecheek**; Olivia's charming lady-in-waiting, **Maria**; the clown, **Feste**; and **Malvolio**, Olivia's self-important steward, who constantly scolds and irritates the rest of them. Maria devises a prank to get even with Malvolio. She forges a letter, supposedly from Olivia, addressed to a secret beloved "M. O. A. I.," the letter instructs its anonymous addressee to wear yellow stockings and crossed garters, to act haughty, smile constantly, and refuse to explain himself in order to show that he returns Olivia's affections. Malvolio finds the letter and assumes that he himself must be "M. A. O. I." Following "Olivia's" instructions, he behaves so oddly that she worries that he has gone mad.

Viola's twin brother **Sebastian** soon arrives up in Illyria: he was saved from the shipwreck by a local, **Antonio**, but thinks his sister is dead. Antonio has grown so attached to Sebastian that he follows him into Orsino's territories despite the fact that Orsino is an old enemy.

When Sir Andrew starts to notice that Olivia is in love with **Cesario**, Sir Toby encourages him to challenge **Cesario** to a duel. They are just about to fight when Antonio shows up and asks to defend **Cesario**, whom he mistakes for Sebastian. (Viola, in her disguise, looks exactly like her twin brother.) When Orsino's police show up and haul Antonio off, **Cesario** slips away. But then Sebastian happens to arrive on the scene.

Sir Andrew and Sir Toby resume fighting—mistaking him for **Cesario**. Sebastian is baffled, but defends himself. Olivia shows up during the scuffle and, mistaking Sebastian for **Cesario**, calls Toby and Andrew off at once. She immediately asks Sebastian to marry her. Sebastian is mystified. But, seeing that Olivia is beautiful and wealthy, he accepts her offer.

Meanwhile, Olivia's belief that Malvolio is mad, has allowed Maria, Toby, and the others to lock him up in a dark cell for "treatment." They enjoy tormenting and mocking him. However, Sir Toby starts to get worried, since he knows how angry Olivia already is with him for attacking Sebastian (or, as she thinks, **Cesario**). Therefore, they let Malvolio send a letter to Olivia, arguing his case and demanding to be released.

Cesario and Orsino visit Olivia's house. Olivia welcomes **Cesario** as her husband, thinking that he is Sebastian. Orsino is shocked and enraged, but when Sebastian himself arrives on the scene, everything falls into place. Viola and Sebastian are reunited. Now aware that **Cesario** is in fact the woman, Viola, Orsino declares that he is in love with her and asks her to marry him. It is reported that Sir Toby and Maria have also married privately. Finally, Olivia remembers Malvolio and summons him out of the dark room. Furious, he accosts her. When she tells him he should not take things so seriously, he threatens that he will have revenge against them all and storms off. The happy couples await their marriage ceremony.

Characters

Viola (Cesario) – The protagonist of *Twelfth Night*. An aristocratic woman, she is tossed up on the coast of Illyria by a shipwreck at the beginning of the play and disguises herself as the pageboy, **Cesario**, to make her way. Throughout the play, **Viola** exhibits strength of character, quick wit, and resourcefulness. Although her disguise puts her in an impossible position, she maintains self-control and a quiet dignity that contrast with the over-the-top emotional performances of love and mourning by the other main characters, **Orsino** and **Olivia**. While those two characters seem almost to be play-acting, Viola truly feels pain when she believes that her brother Sebastian died in the shipwreck and when her love for Orsino seems impossible.

Orsino – The Duke and ruler of Illyria. At the beginning of the play **Orsino** is obsessed by his unrequited love for **Olivia**. How-

ever, in the final scene, when **Orsino** discovers that **Cesario** is in fact the woman, **Viola**—and that **Olivia** has already married **Viola's** twin brother, **Sebastian**—he quickly proposes to **Viola**. Because the language and gestures he uses to talk about love are so melodramatic, and because he switches from **Olivia** to **Viola** so quickly, **Orsino** seems more in love with the idea of love and his own role as a spurned lover, than to actually be in love. His constant self-indulgent complaints about his lovesickness also display his extreme self-centeredness. Critics have also noted that, in the final scene, he seems to be attracted to **Cesario** as **Cesario**—that is, to **Viola** in her male persona.

Olivia – A beautiful noblewoman in Illyria. At the beginning of the play, she has rejected both **Orsino** and her ridiculous suitor, **Sir Andrew Aguecheek**. In mourning for her recently

deceased brother, she has vowed not to receive any man, or to go outside, for seven years. However, when she meets **Cesario** (Viola in her male costume) she falls in love and forgets these oaths. Olivia's mourning for her brother therefore resembles Orsino's love-melancholy: it seems more like a performance than a real, deeply felt emotion. Like Orsino, she seems to enjoy indulging in misery, and also has no problem shifting the object of love from one person to the next.

Sebastian – **Viola's** twin brother, whom she believes is lost at sea, and who likewise thinks she's dead. **Sebastian** is noble and capable of strong, deeply felt emotion, just like his sister. The constant powerful love he shows while grieving and when reunited with **Viola** contrasts **Orsino's** and **Olivia's** relatively frivolous emotions. He is also the only major character in the

play who never engages in deception. He can be pragmatic, though: when the beautiful, wealthy Olivia proposes to him, he accepts despite the fact that he has never met her before.

Malvolio – The steward in charge of the servants at **Olivia's** house. A stuck-up killjoy, **Malvolio** annoys the other members of the household by constantly condescending to and scolding them. In revenge, **Maria**, **Sir Toby**, and others play a prank on Malvolio that adds comic relief to *Twelfth Night*, but also reveals Malvolio's ambition, arrogance, and self-love. The play provides a happy ending for all of the characters *except* Malvolio, reminding the audience that not all love is fulfilled.

Maria – **Olivia's** clever, feisty lady-in-waiting holds her own in battles of wit with the other servants and devises the prank

on **Malvolio**. Although vicious to **Malvolio**, she is devoted and attentive to Olivia. Her wit wins the affection of **Olivia's** uncle, **Sir Toby**, whom she marries.

Sir Toby – **Olivia's** vulgar uncle, a drunkard, lives at and leeches off of her house. Sir Toby's crass double entendres and sex jokes offer an earthy contrast to **Orsino's** flowery love-poetry, and his antics help to overthrow Malvolio's efforts to impose order. Sir Toby eventually marries Olivia's lady-in-waiting, **Maria**.

Sir Andrew Aguecheek – A friend of **Sir Toby**, he hopes to marry **Olivia**, despite the fact that his suit is obviously hopeless. **Sir Andrew** provides a comic foil for the higher characters, who are much more serious about their wooing.

Feste – A clown, **Feste** is allowed to poke fun at the higher characters. In this role, he turns upside down the conventional social order, just as occurred during the Twelfth Night holiday (see Background Info for more detail on the Twelfth Night holiday).

Antonio – A local from Illyria who rescues **Sebastian** from the shipwreck. Antonio's feelings for Sebastian push the boundary line between devoted male friendship and love.

Fabian – An attendant in **Olivia's** household.

Curio – One of **Orsino's** attendants.

Valentine – One of **Orsino's** attendants.

Themes

In LitCharts, each theme gets its own corresponding color, which you can use to track where the themes occur in the work. There are two ways to track themes:

- Refer to the color-coded bars next to each plot point throughout the *Summary and Analysis* sections.
- Use the *ThemeTracker* section to get a quick overview of where the themes appear throughout the entire work.

Desire and Love

Every major character in *Twelfth Night* experiences some form of desire or love. Duke **Orsino** is in love with **Olivia**. **Viola** falls in love with Orsino, while disguised as his pageboy, **Cesario**. Olivia falls in love with Cesario. This love triangle is only resolved when Olivia falls in love with Viola's twin brother, **Sebastian**, and, at the last minute, Orsino decides that he actually loves Viola. *Twelfth Night* derives much of its comic force by satirizing these lovers. For instance, Shakespeare pokes fun at Orsino's flowery love poetry, making it clear that Orsino is more in love with being in love than with his supposed beloveds. At the same time, by showing the details of the intricate rules that govern how nobles engage in courtship, Shakespeare examines how characters play the "game" of love.

Twelfth Night further mocks the main characters' romantic ideas about love through the escapades of the servants. Malvolio's idiotic behavior, which he believes will win Olivia's heart, serves to underline Orsino's own only-slightly-less silly romantic ideas. Meanwhile, **Sir Andrew Aguecheek**, **Sir Toby Belch**, and **Maria**, are always cracking crass double entendres that make it clear that while the nobles may spout flowery poetry about romantic love, that love is at least partly motivated by desire and sex. Shakespeare further makes fun of romantic love by showing how the devotion that connects siblings (Viola and Sebastian) and servants to masters (**Antonio** to Sebastian and Maria to Olivia) actually prove more constant than any of the romantic bonds in the play.

Melancholy

During the Renaissance, melancholy was believed to be a sickness rather like modern depression, resulting from an imbalance in the fluids making up the human body. Melancholy was thought to arise from love: primarily narcissistic self-love or unrequited romantic love. Several characters in *Twelfth Night* suffer from some version of love-melancholy. **Orsino** exhibits many symptoms of the disease (including lethargy, inactivity, and interest in music and poetry). Dressed up as **Cesario**, Viola describes herself as dying of melancholy, because she

is unable to act on her love for Orsino. **Olivia** also describes **Malvolio** as melancholy and blames it on his narcissism.

Through its emphasis on melancholy, *Twelfth Night* reveals the painfulness of love. At the same time, just as the play satirizes the way in which its more excessive characters act in proclaiming their love, it also satirizes some instances of melancholy and mourning that are exaggerated or insincere. For instance, while **Viola** seems to experience profound pain at her inability to be with Orsino, Orsino is cured of the intense lovesickness he experienced for Olivia as soon as he learns that Viola is available.

Madness

The theme of madness in *Twelfth Night* often overlaps the themes of desire and love. **Orsino** talks about the faculty of love producing multiple changing images of the beloved, similar to hallucinations. **Olivia** remarks at certain points that desire for **Cesario** is making her mad. These examples of madness are mostly metaphorical: madness becomes a way for characters to express the intensity of their romantic feelings.

But the play also has multiple characters that seem to go literally mad. As part of the prank that **Maria**, **Sir Toby**, and **Fabian** play on **Malvolio**, they convince everyone that he is crazy. The confusion that results from characters' mixing up **Viola/Cesario** and **Sebastian**, after Sebastian's arrival in Illyria, also leads many of them to think that they have lost their minds. The general comedy and chaos that creates (and results from) this confusion also references the ritualized chaos of the Twelfth Night holiday in Renaissance England (see Background Info for more detail on the Twelfth Night holiday, which was also sometimes called the Feast of Misrule).

Deception, Disguise, and Performance

Characters in *Twelfth Night* constantly disguise themselves or play parts in order to trick those around them. Some of the most notable examples of trickery and role-playing in *Twelfth Night* are: **Viola** disguising herself as the page-boy **Cesario**; **Maria** and **Sir Toby** playing their prank on **Malvolio**; and **Feste** dressing up as the scholar, Sir Topas. More subtly, Orsino's rather clichéd lovesickness for Olivia and Olivia's just-as-clichéd response as the unattainable mourning woman bring into question the extent to which these characters are just playing these roles, rather than truly feeling the emotions they claim to be experiencing.

Through the constant performance and role-playing of his characters, Shakespeare reminds us that we, like the characters, may play roles in our own lives and be susceptible to the role playing of others.

Gender and Sexual Identity

In connection with the themes of deception, disguise, and performance, *Twelfth Night* raises questions about the nature of gender and sexual identity. That **Viola** has disguised herself as a man, and that her disguise fools **Olivia** into falling in love with her, is genuinely funny. On a more serious note, however, Viola's transformation into **Cesario**, and Olivia's impossible love for him/her, also imply that, maybe, distinctions between male/female and heterosexual/homosexual are not as absolutely firm as you might think.

The play stresses the potential ambiguity of gender: there are many instances in which characters refer to Cesario as an effeminate man. Even more radically than this, however, it also suggests that gender is something you can influence, based on how you act, rather than something that you *are*, based on the sexual organs you were born with. *Twelfth Night* also shows how gender-switches make the characters' sexual identities unstable. For instance, at times, Olivia seems to be attracted to Cesario *because* "he" is such a womanly-looking man, while Orsino at the end of the play seems as attracted to Cesario as he is to Viola.

Class, Masters, and Servants

In *Twelfth Night*, as in many Shakespearean comedies, there are many similarities between a "high" set of characters, the masters or nobles, and a "low" set of characters, the servants. These separate sets of characters and their parallel plots provide comic counterpoint and also reflect the nature of the Twelfth Night holiday, which was typically celebrated by inverting the ordinary social order—a commoner or fool would dress up and get to play the king. The clown **Feste's** constant mocking of his "betters" further reinforces this idea of upsetting the social order.

Class and social standing is also a recurring theme in *Twelfth Night*. The priggish **Malvolio** is obsessed with status, always condescending to the other servants for their lowliness and dreaming of marrying Olivia and becoming a Count. **Sir Andrew Aguecheek** also wants to marry Olivia, but stands no chance because of his vulgarity and crassness. In marrying Olivia, even the noble **Sebastian** is moved in part by her wealth and social standing. **Viola**, at the beginning of the play, has lost her wealth in a shipwreck and in disguising herself as a page-boy is impersonating a different class from her own. **Viola's** disguise suggests that class, like gender identity, is to some extent a changeable role that you play by adopting a certain set of clothing and behaviors.

Symbols

Symbols are shown in **red** text whenever they appear in the *Plot Summary* and *Summary and Analysis* sections of this LitChart.

Costumes

The costumes that many characters wear represent different identities that people take on, as much in their everyday lives as when acting in a play. The costumes in the play show that a character or person's identity can change in different situations.


Hallucination

At different points in the play, characters speak of having **hallucinations** and compare the feeling of being in love to hallucinating. By connecting love with hallucinations, Shakespeare stresses that love is often based on misperceptions, mistakes, or fantasies imagined by the lover, rather than on real characteristics of the beloved.

Hunting


At various points in the play, **hunting** is used as a metaphor for the lover's pursuit of his beloved. The metaphor is telling because it emphasizes the extent to which a lover like **Orsino** takes pleasure in pursuing, rather than consummating, love: for an aristocrat like him, who does not need to hunt for food, once the prey of a hunt is caught, the fun is over.

Summary and Analysis


The color-coded bars in *Summary and Analysis* make it easy to track the themes through the work. Each color corresponds to one of the themes explained in the *Themes* section. For instance, a bar of  indicates that all six themes apply to that part of the summary.

Act 1, scene 1


Duke Orsino lounges in his palace in Illyria, alternately praising and lamenting the nature of love. First, he asks his attendants to serenade him with music. Then, he makes them stop. Love, he says, like the ocean, consumes whatever is cast into it. He adds that it is so “full of shapes,” constantly changing its objects, that it is like a **hallucination**.

Attended by servants, Orsino indulges fully in his melodramatic melancholy, not only staging a musical performance but also using clichéd language to compare his intense feelings to madness. 

Curio, one of Orsino’s attendants, enters and asks the Duke whether he will he come **hunt** “hart” (male deer). Orsino jokes that, since he first saw **Olivia**, he himself has been like a hart, hunted by his own desires.


Employing the metaphor of a hunt and punning on the words heart/hart, Orsino’s love-melancholy seems like a self-conscious performance. 

Valentine, another attendant, returns from **Olivia’s** palace, where **Orsino** has sent him. He reports that Olivia is deep in mourning for her brother, who recently passed away. To keep her brother’s “dead love” (1.1.31) fresh in her memory, she has vowed to live like a nun, cloistered and weeping, for seven years. Orsino is further impassioned, rather than discouraged, by this news. If Olivia will “pay this debt of love but to a brother” (1.1.34), he exclaims, imagine how intensely she will love when she is filled with (romantic) affections for only one man.


Although Olivia’s intention to honor “dead love” contrasts with Orsino’s passionate desire, Olivia’s mourning, like Orsino’s love-melancholy, involves self-conscious performance: she takes the role of a nun. Meanwhile, Orsino continues to play the role of a stereotypical lover, growing more impassioned by his beloved’s resistance. 

Act 1, scene 2


Somewhere on the coast, **Viola**, a young noblewoman, a **Captain**, and several sailors, have just washed ashore from a shipwreck. Viola asks what country they are in, to which the Captain responds, “Illyria.” She then cries out that her brother is “in Elysium”—the land of the dead (1.2.4). The Captain reassures her that he last saw her brother, **Sebastian**, alive, clutching the mast of their ship during the storm. Viola thanks the Captain for granting her some hope.

Viola’s single outburst of sorrow, in contrast to Orsino’s flowery speech in the previous scene, suggests that her mourning for her brother is more sincere than his love-melancholy. Even so, in referring to “Elysium” she too uses literary allusion to express her intense feelings. 

The **Captain**, who was born in Illyria, explains to **Viola** that Illyria is governed by a **Duke Orsino**, a bachelor who is in love with a **Olivia**. Olivia, herself the orphaned daughter of a count, who out of “dear love” (1.2.39) for her brother, died a year ago, has promised to never marry.


Viola’s open and easy conversation with the Captain contrasts with the stilted exchanges between Orsino and his servants. The fact that they have both lost a brother creates a parallel between Viola and Olivia. 

Intrigued, **Viola** wonders whether she could temporarily conceal her aristocratic identity and go work for Olivia. The **Captain** replies that this would be difficult because Olivia is refusing to see anyone. Viola then decides that she wants to become a servant to Orsino, and asks the Captain to help her disguise herself as a man and get an interview with Orsino. The Captain agrees.


Viola first considers concealing just her aristocratic identity, but then develops a plan that also includes hiding her gender. She trusts the Captain enough to confide in him. 

Act 1, scene 3


At **Olivia’s** palace, Olivia’s crass uncle, **Sir Toby Belch**, has just returned from a night of drinking. Olivia’s serving woman, **Maria**, scolds him in a flirting way: Olivia has been complaining about Sir Toby’s bad behavior and about **Sir Andrew Aguecheek**, the foolish knight he brought to Illyria to woo her. Sir Toby protests: Sir Andrew is tall—and rich! Maria scoffs that this makes no difference. The two are still quarreling when Sir Andrew enters the room.

The characters introduced here represent a “low” world of servants, parallel to the nobles’. The flirtation between Maria and Toby, and the practical criteria that Toby applies to Andrew as a suitor (he is tall and rich), both contrast with the flowery love-melancholy Orsino exhibited in 1.1. 

Sir Andrew and **Sir Toby** greet each other affectionately. Sir Toby jokes that Sir Andrew should “accost” **Maria**—“woo her, assail her” (1.3.54)—setting off a volley of double entendres in which Maria easily bests Sir Andrew, Maria then departs.


These vulgar puns contrast with Orsino’s poetic musings. The low characters are far less genteel and more overtly sexual in their games of love than the nobles are. 

Sir Andrew tells **Sir Toby** that he is leaving the next day, because Olivia refuses to see him. But Sir Toby persuades Sir Andrew to stay just one month longer.


In contrast to Orsino, who enjoys playing the spurned lover and is spurred on by Olivia’s lack of interest, Andrew takes Olivia’s hints at face value. 

Act 1, scene 4


At **Orsino’s** palace, **Viola**, now disguised as the page boy **Cesario**, chats with **Valentine**. Valentine tells Cesario that if he continues to please Orsino this well, he will advance quickly in the household: after only three days the Duke already trusts him intimately.

In this conversation, which anticipates Viola’s intimacy with Orsino, Viola appears disguised as Cesario in the costume she’ll wear for the rest of the play. 

Orsino enters and asks to speak with **Cesario** privately. Orsino then tells Cesario he has Orsino’s full confidence, and tells Cesario to go to Olivia’s house and do whatever he can to receive an audience on Orsino’s behalf. Cesario is skeptical, given the firmness of Olivia’s resolve not to see anyone. But Orsino is confident that Cesario will be able to persuade her—particularly because, prepubescent, he still looks like a woman: his lips, his voice all resemble “a woman’s part” (1.4.35).


This exchange further establishes the degree of trust between Orsino and Cesario. At the same time, Orsino’s comment that because Cesario resembles a woman he is likely to persuade Olivia alludes to the ambiguity of Cesario’s gender and the confusion it will cause. 

Cesario departs for **Olivia’s** house with four or five attendants. But, privately, Viola remarks to herself that she is in a difficult situation: she must woo on behalf of a man whom she herself would like to marry!


Viola’s love for Orsino is even more impossible than Orsino’s love for Olivia. Disguised as a male servant, Viola can’t even reveal her love. But Viola never displays the showy melancholy that Orsino seems to enjoy. Instead, her language is plain, which makes the pain she feels seem more real. 

Act 1, scene 5


In **Olivia’s** house, **Maria** is chiding **Feste**, the clown, for a recent unexplained absence. Feste responds by teasing Maria about her recent flirtations with **Sir Toby Belch**. Snapping that he should keep this to himself, she exits.

This scene once again presents the servants’ separate, yet parallel world. Maria wants to keep her love for Toby secret, just as Viola does for Orsino. 


Olivia enters, wearing mourning clothes and attended by her steward, **Malvolio**. Olivia first instructs her attendants to send **Feste** away, but he teases her into better spirits by saying that she is the fool of the two of them—for mourning her brother, who is in heaven. This pleases Olivia. But Malvolio disapproves and calls Feste a “barren rascal” (1.5.76). Olivia criticizes Malvolio for his “self-love” (1.5.83)—taking himself too seriously.

The fool (Feste) has official permission to cross boundaries of politeness between masters and servants. Malvolio’s reaction to the fool’s jokes establishes both his isolation from the other servants and his general humorlessness. In a play whose main focus is love, Malvolio primarily loves himself. 

Maria returns to announce that a young man at the gate wishes to speak with **Olivia**. Olivia asks if he has been sent by Orsino. Maria doesn’t know. Olivia sends Malvolio to send the man away. Passing through, **Sir Toby** exchanges a few drunken words with Olivia—also informing her about the gentleman at the gate. Olivia sends **Feste** to look after Sir Toby, who, Feste agrees, is drunk as a “mad man” (1.5.121).

Orsino’s sending of messengers is so common that Olivia now expects them. Sir Toby’s constant bad behavior provides a point of contrast to such courtly ceremonies. Feste’s casual reference to Toby’s drunken madness anticipates the antics to follow. 

Malvolio returns and informs **Olivia** that the young man outside will not leave. Olivia asks what he is like. Malvolio replies that he is an androgynous adolescent, “between boy and man,” (1.5.148) and speaks like a woman. Hearing this, Olivia gives in: she agrees to see the messenger. She quickly asks **Maria** to give her a veil to hide her face.

This is the second account of Cesario’s ambiguous gender. And it is precisely this ambiguity that seems to convince Olivia to see him. However, before meeting Cesario, Olivia covers her face—costuming herself for the courtship-game. 

Cesario enters and recites ornate poetry about Olivia's "unmatchable beauty" (1.5.158). **Olivia** instructs him to get to the point. Cesario protests that he put a lot of effort into memorizing this speech and adds that, besides, it is beautiful poetry. But Olivia refuses to listen: it is "not the time of moon," she says, to try to make her crazy by carrying on like this (1.5.187). **Maria** asks Cesario to leave but he persists, insisting that he must speak with Olivia in private. Finally, Olivia agrees. She sends the others away. Now, she demands to know: who wrote Cesario's "text" (1.5.208)? Cesario confesses that it was indeed **Orsino**. Exasperated, Olivia says that she has already heard all he has to say. Cesario asks to see Olivia's face. Olivia consents, joking that they are "now out of text" (1.5.217), and unveils herself.

Cesario says it would be cruel for Olivia to go through life without producing an heir to keep such beauty alive after her death. Cesario adds that **Orsino** loves Olivia so deeply that she should yield to him. Olivia asks Cesario to describe Orsino's affections for her. Cesario reports: he adores her, weeps for her, groans, and sighs. Olivia replies that Orsino is a worthy man but knows perfectly well that she cannot return his affections. Cesario responds that, if he were Orsino, he would not accept this denial: he would build a makeshift hut at the gate of Olivia's house, and spend all his time calling, writing, and singing to her, until she was finally moved to pity.

Cutting **Cesario** off, **Olivia** asks what his own background is. Cesario replies that he is a gentleman by birth, although conditions have reduced him. Olivia replies that Cesario should return to **Orsino**, tell him that Olivia cannot love him and must not to send any further messengers—except, that is, for Cesario. Olivia offers Cesario money but he refuses, telling Olivia that he hopes that one day she will love as passionately as Orsino does, and find that the object of her affections has a heart of stone. With this, Cesario departs.

Once she is alone, **Olivia** admits to herself that she is extremely attracted to **Cesario**. She lists his beautiful features—"Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs" (1.5.269)—and describes them as a "blazon." Thinking fast, **Olivia** summons **Malvolio** and gives him a ring, which, she lies, **Cesario** left behind on **Orsino's** behalf. She commands Malvolio to chase down Cesario, return the ring, and instruct him to come back on the following day to hear her reasons for rejecting it. Malvolio takes the ring and hurries off to catch up with Cesario. Olivia remarks to herself that she does not know what she is doing: she is acting irrationally, purely on the basis of physical attraction. Yet, she says, she cannot resist fate.

Act 2, scene 1

Somewhere on the coast of Illyria, two men, **Antonio** and **Sebastian**, stand in front of Antonio's house. Antonio begs Sebastian to remain as his guest, but without success. Finally, Antonio asks at least to know where Sebastian is going. Moved by Antonio's concern for him, Sebastian admits to the identity he has been hiding: his name is Sebastian, he is an aristocrat from Messaline, and he has a twin sister who drowned on the same day that Antonio saved him from the sea. His sister was beautiful and intelligent, and he cannot stop weeping whenever he thinks of her.

Orsino conducts his wooing through go-betweens, never actually meeting with Olivia. It's as if he wants to woo Olivia more than he actually wants to win her love. Olivia's references to "scripts" highlight how she is playing a role in the wooing ritual. Even when Olivia unveils her face and jokes that she is departing from scripted action, she is in fact creating a highly theatrical moment. In this way, Shakespeare uses traditional clichés for talking about love while also satirizing them at the same time. In effect, he is winking at the audience.

In improvising a response to Olivia, Cesario demonstrates his cleverness and skill. He is a natural poet: the argument that beautiful people are obligated to love and produce heirs is a common theme of Shakespeare's own sonnets. Viola's poetry is new and interesting in comparison to Orsino's clichéd poetry, and her description of what she would do in Orsino's place is urgent and powerful. Orsino himself would never live in a makeshift hut.

Saying that Orsino should send Cesario is a clue that Olivia is falling for Cesario. Cesario's witty refusal of Olivia's money shows his skill with verbal conventions of love and also hints at the resentment Viola must feel: she is in love with Orsino, and unable to act on it, while Olivia, who could have him instantly, is too proud to love him back.

A "blazon" is the term for a list of a beloved's features in a poem. Olivia here adopts the kind of ornate language mainly used by Orsino up to this point. She also starts playing lovers' mind-games: her lie to Malvolio, designed to get Cesario to come back, marks a big change from her nun-like behavior earlier. The fact that Olivia's love is pretty shallow—she describes Cesario only in terms of his looks—indicates the play's satirical attitude toward love and emphasizes the homoerotic dimension of her desire. She is specifically attracted to Cesario's female features.

By revealing his identity, Sebastian gives up deception, disguise, and performance in favor of open friendship with Antonio. Also notice how Sebastian's deep mourning for Viola parallels Viola's own mourning for Sebastian and contrasts with the levity Olivia has shown in the previous scene, casting off her mourning obligations in order to pursue romantic love.

Touched by the story, Antonio begs **Sebastian** to let him remain with him as his servant. Sebastian says that he would prefer to be left alone but tells Antonio he is headed to Orsino's court. Antonio pauses, because has many enemies at Orsino's court, yet decides that since he does "adore" Sebastian he will follow him, despite the danger.

Act 2, scene 2

Malvolio catches up with **Cesario**. He gives Cesario the ring from **Olivia** and explains that Olivia doesn't want it and has nothing more to say to the Duke, but would like Cesario to return to tell her how Orsino reacts. Although momentarily confused because he didn't leave any such ring, Cesario plays along by refusing to take the ring back. Malvolio, growing angry, throws the ring at Cesario's feet, then storms off.

Alone, **Viola** picks up the ring and realizes that **Olivia** has fallen in love with "**Cesario**," and that by taking on her disguise she has created an impossible love triangle: **Orsino** loves Olivia, Olivia loves Viola/Cesario, and Viola loves Orsino. Because Orsino takes Viola for a man, she has no chance with him; and because Olivia takes her for the pageboy Cesario, she is in love with someone who does not even exist. Overwhelmed, Viola remarks that only time can solve this mess.

Act 2, scene 3

Sir Toby Belch and **Sir Andrew Aguecheek** are up late, eating and drinking in a room in **Olivia's** house. **Feste** soon joins them, and they are all raucously singing together, when **Maria** shows up. Maria warns them that if they aren't quiet, Olivia will have **Malvolio** throw them out of the house. Sir Toby responds that he is Olivia's relative and she will do no such thing. They continue singing.

Malvolio enters and berates the group for treating his "lady's house" like an "ale-house" (2.3.83-4). **Sir Toby** retorts that Malvolio is just a steward and should not expect others to follow his strict standards of behavior. Furious, Malvolio yells at **Maria** that if she respected her mistress, she would reprimand these lowlives. Threatening to tell **Olivia** everything, he storms off. Maria is annoyed at Malvolio, but begs Sir Toby and **Sir Andrew** to quiet down because ever since Olivia saw **Cesario** earlier that day, she has been badly distressed.

Maria then says she has a great idea for a prank on **Malvolio**. She boasts that she can imitate **Olivia's** handwriting perfectly, and will drop in Malvolio's way a love letter that Malvolio, in his arrogance, will assume is from Olivia to him. Meanwhile, **Sir Toby**, **Sir Andrew**, and **Feste** will get to watch how Malvolio reacts.

Maria leaves to go to bed. **Sir Andrew** notes approvingly that she is a good woman. **Toby** agrees. Andrew once again laments that he needs more money in order to stay in Illyria and continue wooing Olivia. Sir Toby reassures Sir Andrew that he will win Olivia's affections in the end.

Act 2, scene 4

The next day, **Orsino** lounges in his palace as usual, attended by **Cesario**, **Curio**, and other servants and musicians. Orsino sends for **Feste**, to sing. While Curio looks for him, the musicians start playing.

The male-male, master-servant relationship between Sebastian and Antonio seems more profound and less fickle than the romantic relationships between Viola, Olivia, and Orsino. Yet the extent of Antonio's devotion hints at some possible deeper emotion that Antonio might feel toward Sebastian.

Once again, Cesario shows his skill with love-games by picking up on Olivia's ploy with the ring immediately (ring were also common symbols of both sex and marriage). Malvolio, by contrast, exhibits his usual haughtiness and cluelessness.

By tricking others with her costume, Viola has trapped herself inside the "Cesario" persona, suggesting that how the world sees you has a profound influence on one's class and gender. Viola's realization of her romantic predicament deepens the melancholy she hinted at in Act 1, scene 5.

Toby, Andrew, and Feste's antics present a "lower" world of performance that provides a coarse parallel to the courtly performances of love by Orsino, Cesario, and Olivia.

Malvolio, proud and self-righteous, objects to how the other servants' make his high-class household look common. He fears that if the household looks common, he will look common. In contrast, Maria shows concern for Olivia's well-being. Maria's comment about Olivia's distress hints that Olivia is now racked with love-melancholy for Cesario.

This prank offers a counterpoint to the ceremonies and love-games that Orsino, Cesario, and Olivia have been playing so far—it particularly parallels and mocks the carefully scripted love letters that Orsino sent by messenger to Olivia.

The rest of the scene establishes that Toby is as interested in Maria as she is in Toby. Andrew's dwindling funds also highlight another aspect of wooing and love-games that the idealistic nobles ignore: wooing takes money.

Repetitive scenes in Orsino's palace show the paralyzing stasis of his love-melancholy. This melancholy is always linked with artistic or musical performances

Orsino tells **Cesario** that, if he is ever in love, he must remember and imitate Orsino's passion for **Olivia**. Noticing that Cesario seems moved by the music, Orsino then asks whether he is not himself in love. Cesario—who is in fact in love with Orsino—confesses that he is. Orsino asks what Cesario's beloved is like. Cesario responds that she is very similar to Orsino, in both appearance and age. Orsino tells Cesario that this woman cannot be worthy: because men's passions are less stable than those of women, and women quickly lose their beauty with age, men should always take younger wives.

Curio returns with **Feste**. **Orsino** instructs him to sing what he sang the previous night, a melodramatic lover's lament. After he sings, Orsino rewards Feste with a few coins, and Feste prays for the "melancholy god" to protect the Duke (2.4.72). Orsino dismisses everyone but **Cesario**.

Orsino instructs **Cesario** to go woo **Olivia** once again on his behalf. Cesario suggests that Orsino give up. What if a woman loved Orsino just as he loves Olivia, and he did not requite her love? She would have to give up eventually. Orsino says no woman could love like he does. Cesario responds that his father had a daughter, very similar to Cesario, who once loved a man just as much as Orsino loves Olivia. The girl never confessed her love but pined away with melancholy. Orsino asks if she died of love. Cesario avoids the question. Orsino then sends Cesario with a jewel to Olivia, instructing him to hurry.

Act 2, scene 5

As **Sir Toby**, **Sir Andrew**, and **Fabian**, one of Olivia's attendants, wait in **Olivia's** garden, Maria runs in and instructs them all to conceal themselves inside a tree because Malvolio—who has been in the sun, practicing elegant mannerisms—is coming! They hide. Maria rushes off.

Malvolio enters, talking to himself. As it happens, he already believes that **Olivia** fancies him. Hiding in the tree, **Sir Toby**, **Sir Andrew**, and **Fabian** try to suppress their laughter, as Malvolio fantasizes about how wonderful it would be to marry Olivia and become a count. Suddenly, Malvolio breaks off: he has caught sight of the letter that Maria planted in his path. Inside the tree, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Fabian can hardly contain themselves. Malvolio immediately recognizes "Olivia's" handwriting and seal. He opens the letter and starts reading it aloud. It says that Olivia has a secret love she will call "M, O, A, I" (2.5.131). After some puzzling, Malvolio concludes that these letters must refer to him. He reads on. The letter instructs that, if "Olivia's" beloved finds it, he must indicate that he reciprocates her feelings by being surly with the servants, wearing yellow stockings, crossing his garters at the knee, and smiling all the time. Overjoyed, Malvolio resolves to do all of these things and hurries off.

Sir Toby says he could marry **Maria** for thinking up this prank. Sir Toby, **Sir Andrew**, and Maria then rush off to watch **Malvolio** make a fool of himself.

Act 3, scene 1

Cesario arrives at **Olivia's** palace (following Orsino's instructions in 2.4). Outside he finds **Feste**, who clowns a bit and mocks both Olivia and **Orsino**. Amused, Cesario gives him a few coins. As Feste scurries off, **Sir Toby** and **Sir Andrew** appear. Then Olivia arrives with **Maria**. Cesario asks to see her in private. Olivia sends everyone else away.

For the first time in the play, Orsino responds to the emotions of someone besides himself. Although blinded by Viola's disguise, he cannot see the irony that the audience does: he thinks that he shares only a master-servant relationship (like, for instance, Antonio and Sebastian in 2.1). Orsino's interest is also short-lived, and he soon returns to speaking in clichés (his discussion of women's beauty).

More melancholy and musical performance. Feste's reference to the "melancholy god" is mocking since Orsino really does seem to worship melancholy. The self-obsessed Orsino doesn't notice.

Viola's disguise is once again a source of dramatic irony: we know that Viola is talking about her own love-melancholy and near madness. Yet, with Orsino once again acting self-absorbed—he only briefly listens to the story—the scene suggests that perhaps Orsino's love is selfish: his total disregard for Olivia's feelings make it seem like he is more in love with the idea of love than with a real other person.

The prank creates a kind of play-within-the-play. Under Maria's direction, Malvolio, who acts phony all the time anyway, will become an unwitting actor for a hidden audience.

Malvolio's materialistic motivations for wanting to marry Olivia reveal how selfish his love is—he wants to marry Olivia not because he loves her, but because he loves himself and wants to rise in rank. Both his desire to promote himself through marriage, and his arrogant willingness to believe that Olivia loves him—however improbable that may be—make this play-within-the-play a kind of satire of love. Toby, Andrew, and Feste, mirroring the position of the actual audience watching Twelfth Night in the theater, further draw attention to theme of performance.

Toby loves Maria for what she does, while Orsino seems to know nothing about Olivia. From now on, Toby, Andrew, and friends will be Malvolio's audience.

Feste's mockery of the noble lovers, coming directly after Toby, Andrew, and Maria's laughs at Malvolio's expense, reminds the audience that the noble lovers are not necessarily any less ridiculous than Malvolio is.

When they are alone, **Cesario** says that he is **Olivia's** servant: he is **Orsino's** servant and Orsino belongs to Olivia. So, by extension, he does too. Olivia says she wishes Cesario would never again speak of Orsino but, rather, woo her for himself.

Cesario responds that he pities **Olivia** but cannot love her—because, as he tells her, "I am not what I am" (3.1.138). Cesario adds that no woman will ever have his heart; he himself shall be mistress of it forever. Nonetheless, Olivia encourages him to return in hopes that he will learn to reciprocate her affections.

Act 3, scene 2

In another room of **Olivia's** house, **Sir Andrew** tells **Sir Toby** that he has finally decided to give up and leave because he saw Olivia flirting with **Cesario** in the orchard. Sir Toby assures Sir Andrew that Olivia was only trying to test his valor, and that to impress Olivia, Sir Andrew should now challenge Cesario to a duel. Persuaded, Sir Andrew goes off to write a letter of challenge. Sir Toby promises to deliver it.

Once Sir Andrew has left, Sir Toby admits to **Fabian** that he only wants Sir Andrew to hang around so that he can keep leeching off of him.

Maria arrives, and tells **Sir Toby** and **Fabian** that **Malvolio** is doing everything instructed in Maria's letter, and making himself entirely ridiculous in the process. Maria comments that **Olivia** will probably hit Malvolio for his idiotic behavior and that, when she does, Malvolio will simply smile and consider it a sign of favor. Sir Toby is delighted.

Act 3, scene 3

Antonio and **Sebastian** arrive in Illyria. Sebastian says that Antonio didn't have to come, but Antonio insists that he has come out of "willing love" (3.3.11).

Sebastian then suggests that they take in the sights of the city, but **Antonio** explains that he once fought at sea against Orsino. If discovered in Illyria, he will be in danger. He gives his purse to Sebastian, telling him to feel free to buy anything that he desires. Antonio himself will wait at a local inn, The Elephant. They makes plans to meet at the inn in an hour.

Act 3, scene 4

In her garden, **Olivia** consults with **Maria** on how best to woo **Cesario**, who has agreed to come back yet again. She asks Maria to bring **Malvolio** to advise her, as his melancholy mood will better match her own. Maria replies that Malvolio seems to have gone mad, for he does nothing but smile. Sending Maria off to fetch him, Olivia remarks that she herself feels just "as mad as he, if sad and merry madness equals be" (3.4.14-5).

Malvolio enters wearing yellow cross-gartered stockings, smiling idiotically. **Olivia** scolds him for this behavior. However, he continues grinning and alluding to the letter which he believes she sent. Olivia concludes that Malvolio has fallen into "midsummer madness" (3.4.52). A servant enters, reporting that **Cesario** has returned. Olivia asks **Maria** to get **Sir Toby** to look after Malvolio. Then she goes to receive **Cesario**. Once Olivia and Maria are gone, Malvolio celebrates. He is convinced that his behavior has pleased Olivia and that now nothing can come between him and the "full prospect of [his] hopes" (3.4.76-7).

Cesario's servitude metaphors create a link between literal servants and nobles metaphorically enslaved by love. Here, love makes Olivia more open and honest.

Cesario's mysterious comment reflects the ambiguity that his disguise has created around his gender identity. Speaking of a "mistress" of his heart, he both hints at his true identity as Viola and extends the master/servant metaphor for love.

Spying on Olivia and Cesario, Andrew acts as the audience to their courtship "performance." From here on out, the subplot involving Andrew and Cesario parodies another conventional ritual of dramatic love: the duel.

Another performance: Toby, Andrew's supposed friend and ally, is deceiving him.

The over-the-top drama of the prank on Malvolio, which causes Malvolio to make himself look absolutely ridiculous for the sake of love, echoes the Orsino-Viola/Cesario-Olivia love triangle and forces the audience to see how love makes those characters also act in silly ways.

Antonio's persistence strengthens the impression of his love for Sebastian.

Antonio gives his purse freely, in contrast to the gifts with the gifts Orsino and Olivia gave earlier, which were intended to manipulate their objects of desire. This contrast reaffirms the strength of Antonio's devotion.

Olivia's continued obsession with Cesario, and her private remark that she is suffering from "sad and merry madness," show her love-melancholy approaching the intensity of Orsino's—and perhaps even exceeding it.

The servant/low and the noble/high plots start to come together, as they will continue to over the course of this scene. Malvolio, blinded by arrogance, totally fails to gauge Olivia's reactions—she obviously thinks he has gone crazy. Speaking of his love in terms of "prospects," Malvolio makes clear that he is still motivated most by a desire to boost his rank and wealth—that his love is really self-love.

Maria enters with **Sir Toby** and **Fabian**. All three pretend to be worried about **Malvolio**. Maria implies to Malvolio that he is acting crazily and reminds him that **Olivia** wanted him to remain in Sir Toby's care. Quickly losing patience, Malvolio dismisses the others as lower in rank than he, warns that they will hear more from him later, and storms off. Fabian comments that if their prank "were played upon a stage," he would dismiss it as "improbable" (3.4.119). Maria encourages them both to pursue Malvolio and continue to torment him. Sir Toby reports that Olivia already thinks that Malvolio is mad.

Sir Andrew enters, holding the letter he has written to challenge **Cesario** to a duel. **Sir Toby** reads it, declares that it's sure to provoke **Cesario**, and offers to deliver it. When they learn from **Maria** that Cesario is at that moment visiting **Olivia** and is about to depart, Sir Toby convinces Sir Andrew to go lie in wait and swear at Cesario when he passes. Sir Andrew hurries off. Once alone with **Fabian**, Toby confides that he has no intention of delivering Sir Andrew's letter: Cesario is clearly too well bred even to acknowledge such a ridiculous challenge. Instead, Sir Toby will tell Cesario that Sir Andrew wants to fight, convince each of the other's dueling skills, and make each terrified of the other.

Olivia enters with **Cesario**, apologizing for having said too much: she is so in love, she cannot help herself. Cesario reminds Olivia that his master, **Orsino**, is suffering just as she is. Olivia gives Cesario a locket containing her picture and promises that she won't deny Cesario anything he wishes. Cesario insists that he wants only for Olivia to reciprocate Orsino's love: she should transfer her feelings for Cesario to the Duke. Frustrated, but not defeated, Olivia bids Cesario farewell, reminding him to come the next day. She is so in love, she remarks, Cesario is almost like a "fiend" to bear her soul to "hell" (3.4.204). Olivia exits.

Once **Olivia** has gone, **Sir Toby** and **Fabian** approach **Cesario**. Using all sorts of double entendre's about swords and sheathes, Sir Toby warns Cesario that a deadly assailant is waiting to attack him in the orchard. Baffled, Cesario asks Sir Toby to explain to this assailant that he did not mean to offend anyone. Sir Toby departs. Fabian picks up where Sir Toby left off, telling Cesario that the knight is the most dangerous in all Illyria. Cesario says he does not mind admitting that he's too cowardly to fight. Meanwhile, Sir Toby finds **Sir Andrew** and tells him that after receiving the (actually undelivered) letter, Cesario is furious and ready to duel. Fearful of what he has set in motion, Sir Andrew curses. As Sir Toby's prank comes to a head, Cesario remarks, in an aside, that he is so terrified he almost wants to confess that he is a woman to save himself.

Cesario and **Sir Andrew** approach each other and draw swords, terrified. At this instant, **Antonio** enters. Seeing Cesario—whom he thinks is **Sebastian**—he says that he will fight in Cesario's place. **Sir Toby** demands to know who Antonio is. Antonio replies that he is someone who in "his love dares yet do more" (3.4.297). Puzzled and irritated at this interruption, Sir Toby draws against Antonio.

Suddenly, several officers appear. **Sir Andrew** and **Cesario**, overjoyed to stop fighting, put away their swords. The officers arrest **Antonio**, who asks **Cesario**—whom he still mistakes for **Sebastian**—to return the purse that he lent him. Cesario, confused but grateful for Antonio's help in the fight, offers him half of the money that he has on him. Dismayed, Antonio asks how the friend for whom he has done so much can deny him in his moment of need? Cesario replies that he doesn't know what Antonio is talking about, and that Antonio must be crazy.

As *Maria* and the others continue to direct their prank in such a way as to make *Malvolio* seem mad, *Fabian's* remark that he wouldn't believe what he is seeing if it were performed on stage takes the theme of performance to the next level. In his grouchy threats, *Malvolio* both exhibits his usual snobbery and makes clear that he still believes *Olivia* will marry him, promoting and giving him power over the others.

Like the prank on *Malvolio*, which provides an over-the-top parody of the way that lovers behave to win over their beloveds, this second comic subplot parodies another traditional love ritual—the duel. Like the prank on *Malvolio*, the duel will also be instrumental in bringing the high and low characters together. *Toby* is central to both plots. A noble who is more comfortable among the servants, he is a perfect agent of misrule, sowing chaos that will bring the high and low characters together.

By staging this moment between the main characters as just a fleeting interruption of the low characters, Shakespeare inverts the priority of the two plots—a switch-up that echoes the switch-ups of servants and nobles that traditionally occurred during the Twelfth Night holiday. Falling deeper and deeper into the trouble caused by *Cesario's* disguise, *Olivia* seems desperately in love—she thinks she, like *Malvolio*, is really going mad.

The extensive exchanges between the various characters here draws out the metaphorical similarities between physical fighting and the "battle of the sexes" that has been going on (and conducted through messengers). It also goes on so long as to make the duel absolutely ridiculous. The dirty double entendres involving swords and sheathes draw attention to the fact that *Viola* has concealed her gender and that that is a problem: just as she cannot engage in the battle of love with *Orsino*, she cannot fight a man in a duel here.

Sir Toby, who is the "director" of this little "play-within-the-play" is irritated to have the events that he has set in motion interrupted. Once again, *Antonio* shows the deep devotion of his "love" for *Sebastian*, in contrast to the petty emotions that *Sir Andrew* expresses.

Viola's disguise brings love-melancholy to her and *Olivia*. It also harms *Antonio*, who has given *Sebastian* honest and open friendship. The confusion that *Viola's* disguise causes—like the confusion that *Maria*, *Sir Toby*, and friends have deliberately caused *Malvolio*—starts to make *Antonio* seem mad to everyone around him.

As the officers pull him away, **Antonio** explains to them that he saved the life of this boy when he was drowning at sea. He shouts that "**Sebastian**" should be ashamed of himself. The officers drag Antonio off. **Viola**, meanwhile, is filled with sudden hope that her brother is still alive. She rushes off to search for him.

Once everyone has left, **Sir Andrew** vows that he will pursue and defeat **Cesario**. He runs off, with **Sir Toby** and **Fabian** following.

Act 4, scene 1

Near **Olivia's** house, **Feste** runs into **Sebastian**, whom he mistakes for **Cesario**. Feste asks Sebastian to return and speak with Olivia. Confused, Sebastian offers Feste some coins to leave him alone. Feste is about to run off with the money when **Sir Andrew** appears, trailed by **Sir Toby** and **Fabian**. Sir Andrew punches **Sebastian**. Stunned for a moment, Sebastian then punches Sir Andrew back, asking "are all the people mad?" (4.1.24) in Illyria. Feste rushes off to tattle to **Olivia**. Sir Toby and Sebastian begin to fence.

Olivia rushes in, ordering **Sir Toby** to stop. Olivia sends Toby away, while begging "**Cesario**" (in fact, **Sebastian**) not to be offended. Once **Sir Toby**, **Sir Andrew**, and **Fabian** have sulked off, Olivia apologizes profusely to "Cesario" and asks him to return with her to her house. Sebastian fears that he is mad or dreaming, and yet he is also overwhelmed by attraction to Olivia. If this is a dream, he says, he would like to keep on sleeping! He accepts the invitation and leaves with Olivia.

Act 4, scene 2

Back at **Olivia's** house, **Maria** and **Toby** have locked **Malvolio** in a dark chamber to cure his "madness." Outside the chamber, Maria instructs **Feste** to put on a gown and beard she has procured and to pretend to be a "great scholar" (4.2.10), "Sir Topas." Maria goes to fetch Sir Toby while Feste puts on the gown. When they return, Sir Toby is delighted: "the knave," he says, "counterfeits well" (4.2.19).

"Sir Topas" goes to the door of **Malvolio's** cell. Malvolio tries desperately to enlist him as an ally; Sir Topas parries his every attempt, telling him that the dark room he is in is really light as day. Malvolio begs Sir Topas to test whether or not he is mad by asking him a question. Sir Topas asks, "[W]hat is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl?" Malvolio replies (correctly) that Pythagoras argued that the human soul might just as well inhabit the body of a bird. Sir Topas asks what Malvolio thinks of this; Malvolio (who, we will recall, is a Puritan) says that he thinks nobly of the soul and does not in any way approve of Pythagoras' opinion. Sir Topas replies that Malvolio must remain in the darkness then: he will not be let out until he believes that a human soul could just as well inhabit the body of a bird. With this "Sir Topas" leaves Malvolio, who cries out after him.

Sir Toby, amused, mocks **Malvolio's** desperate cries. But he confides in Maria that they must find a way out of this prank to avoid irritating **Olivia** any further. The two sneak off to Sir Toby's bedroom.

Back in his clown personality, **Feste** returns to **Malvolio's** cell. Malvolio begs Feste to bring him a candle, pen, ink, and paper, so that he can write a letter asking **Olivia** for help. Feste agrees to deliver the letter, but first dallies for a while, teasing Malvolio.

The outcome of the "duel" provides the first glimmer of the potential reuniting of *Viola* and *Sebastian*. *Viola's* excitement in running off to try to find *Sebastian* shows her deep devotion to her brother.

Sir Andrew continues to show ridiculous persistence.

Viola's disguise continues to create confusion, even chaos. Here, *Sebastian's* real confusion about whether anyone is crazy replaces all the flowery language of love and valor. With the physical comedy of the fist fight, things go really topsy-turvy...

Olivia's passion contrasts comically with *Sebastian's* befuddlement. His repeated questioning of whether he is literally crazy recalls the tendency of *Orsino* and *Olivia* to speak this way in their love-melancholy. Yet, *Sebastian* seems far more pragmatic than they are—if a rich, beautiful lady loves him, he won't resist by playing games.

The subplot of the prank on *Malvolio* is coming to a peak. Costume changes and role playing on stage also create another play-within-the-play, drawing attention to the theme of performance.

Sir Topas' question about Pythagoras is pseudo-intellectual, thus parodying *Malvolio's* pretentiousness. Yet Feste's Q&A with *Malvolio* also reflects the themes of inconstant love and changing identity. Over the course of the play, the powerful love that *Orsino* and *Olivia* claim to feel is directed at so many different people that it becomes meaningless—it might as well be aimed at a bird. Similarly, *Sebastian* and *Viola/Cesario's* identities are also confused multiple times, raising questions about the constancy of a "soul" or of one's internal nature. If a mere disguise can transform *Viola* into a man, why can't her soul inhabit a bird?

Here, in a rather unromantic off-stage culmination of the low plot, *Toby* and *Maria* get together.

The spectacle of the servant teasing his superior is precisely what took place on the Twelfth Night holiday (see Background Info for more on this holiday).

Act 4, scene 3

In another room in **Olivia's** palace, **Sebastian** is wandering around, trying to make sense of what has happened. Sebastian wishes that he could find **Antonio** to get his advice, but for some reason Antonio wasn't at the Elephant Inn when Sebastian went to meet him. Sebastian keeps turning over the facts: it seems as if either he or Olivia must be mad.

Unlike the other lovers, who say that they are mad in order to emphasize the extreme intensity of their love, Sebastian really does have good reason to worry about his sanity.



Sebastian's thoughts are interrupted when **Olivia** enters with a priest. She begs Sebastian to agree to marry her secretly at once. Then, when Sebastian is ready, they can then make their marriage known and have another celebration, commensurate with Olivia's wealth and social standing. Sebastian agrees. The priest leads him and Olivia away.

As with Toby and Maria, the wedding takes place off-stage. This drives home the point that the focus of the play is not about the consummation of love, but rather the ridiculous way that people act when wooing.



Act 5, scene 1

In front of **Olivia's** house, **Feste** holds the letter that Malvolio has written begging for Olivia's help. As **Fabian** tries to get Feste to let him read it, **Orsino** arrives with **Cesario** and several others. After exchanging some casual banter with Feste, Orsino sends the clown to inform Olivia of his arrival.

As Feste and Fabian engage in a kind of power struggle over the letter, Orsino arrives and shows who has the real power.



While **Orsino** waits, the officers barge in with **Antonio**. **Cesario** defends Antonio—noting that Antonio saved him from **Sir Toby** and **Sir Andrew**—but concedes that he did seem crazy. Orsino asks Antonio why he came to Illyria, where he knew it would be dangerous for him. Antonio explains that he came to serve the “ingrateful boy” (5.1.72)—**Cesario**, whom he still mistakes for **Sebastian**. He says that he saved this “boy” from a shipwreck and, from then on, followed and defended him, “pure for his love” (5.1.78) Yet, when Antonio was arrested, the boy ignored him, refusing even to return the purse, which Antonio had lent him. **Cesario** is mystified. Orsino asks when the boy Antonio is talking about arrived in Illyria. Antonio replies that they arrived today, having spent the past three months together. As Olivia approaches, Orsino tells Antonio that he is mad, considering **Cesario** has been in Illyria for the past three months.

The characters' use of indirect language like “ingrateful boy” draws attention to the fact that confusion about Viola/Cesario's and Sebastian's identities is reaching a climax. Antonio's description of his “pure love” for his master really is impressive. He hasn't just talked about his love, as all the other characters do, he has acted on it and shown his master nothing but devotion. Some critics argue that this extreme devotion can only be motivated by homoerotic desire on Antonio's part, but one can also see it as offering a contrast to all the other loves on display in the play. Only Antonio's love is pure, honest, and completely out in the open.



Olivia demands to know where **Cesario** has been. Has he broken his marriage promises to her already? **Cesario** is confused. **Orsino**, who now thinks that **Cesario** has wooed Olivia in secret, grows enraged. He tells Olivia he should kill her out of “savage jealousy” (5.1.113), or kill **Cesario** to spite Olivia, although he holds his page boy dear. **Cesario** replies that to give Orsino rest, he would die a thousand deaths: he loves Orsino more than he will ever love a wife. Horrified, Olivia fetches the priest who has just married her to **Sebastian**. The priest confirms that he has sealed an “eternal bond of love” (5.1.151) between Olivia and **Cesario**. Hearing this, Orsino storms off, disgusted, while **Cesario** struggles to stop him.

Orsino's rhetoric about his “jealousy,” like many of his other speeches, is clichéd. He always seems to be playing a part, rather than feeling true emotions. In the escalating confusion, Viola/Cesario declares her thwarted desire for Orsino and love-melancholy more directly than ever before: both “rest” and “dying” are English Renaissance terms for sexual climax. The Priest, seeking to restore order, only adds to the chaos.



As **Orsino** is leaving, **Sir Andrew** enters, bleeding and calling for a surgeon. He accuses **Cesario** of injuring him. General puzzlement descends upon the group. **Sir Toby**, also bleeding, enters with **Feste** and joins in accusing **Cesario**. **Olivia** sends them away to have their injuries tended and demands to know who is actually responsible.

With Andrew and Toby's dramatic entry, the comic subplot of the servants returns, adding to the bewilderment about Cesario's identity. The Viola/Cesario disguise resides at the center of nearly all of the chaos in Twelfth Night.



At this moment, **Sebastian** rushes in, apologizing to **Olivia**, begging her pardon for having hurt her kinsman. Everyone is astonished. **Orsino** exclaims that Sebastian and **Cesario** are identical: “one face, one voice, one habit, and two persons” (5.1.208). **Antonio** says, “an apple, cleft in two, is not more twin” (5.1.216), while Olivia exclaims that what they are seeing is like magic, “most wonderful” (5.1.217).

Once Sebastian and Cesario are together, all the confusion that has been set in motion by Viola's disguise can be resolved. However, at first, many of the characters seem to think that they are hallucinating—the twins in front of them seem to have traded, or lost, identities.



Through a series of questions, **Sebastian** and **Viola** identify each other and rejoice: they are reunited! Yet, Viola says to the confused onlookers, Sebastian should not embrace her until she has discarded the “masculine usurped attire” (5.1.241) that has been her costume, and proven who she is to everyone's satisfaction. To do this, she must return to the **Captain** who saved her from their shipwreck, knows her story, and has her old clothes.

Overjoyed to be reunited with the brother she loves, and out of mourning, Viola discards her class- and gender- disguise. But to dispel the madness that she has set in motion, she will require someone else to confirm her story independently.



Sebastian turns to **Olivia** to explain: all that time, she wanted to marry a woman. **Orsino** reassures Olivia, telling her that the twins have noble blood. He then turns to **Viola** and says that he often heard **Cesario** swear that he would never love a woman as he loves Orsino. Is it true? Viola affirms that it is. Then, Orsino continues, she should give him her hand and let him see her in her “woman's weeds” (5.1.265) or clothing. Viola replies that the **Captain** who brought her to shore from the shipwreck has her clothes. But he is currently tied up in some legal suit led by Malvolio, a servant of Olivia's...

Finally, all the confusion about gender and identity that Viola's disguise created starts to be tidied up. Yet Orsino's love seems almost ridiculously fickle, as he instantly changes its object from Olivia to Viola. In addition, just as Olivia seemed attracted to Cesario's womanly features, Orsino now is attracted to Viola not after she has appeared as Viola, but while she is still in the costume of the Cesario.



Olivia instantly agrees to take care of this minor detail—which reminds her that, distracted by her own “frenzy,” (5.1.273), she has completely forgotten about **Malvolio**. At this moment, **Feste** enters, holding Malvolio's letter. The letter warns Olivia that Malvolio will show the world how she wronged him: he still has the letter in which Olivia instructed him to adopt the costume and behavior for which all the others have called him mad. Olivia remarks that the letter does not sound like it was written by someone crazy. She sends **Fabian** to fetch Malvolio from the cell where he has been imprisoned.

Olivia's reference to her own “frenzy”—a word for both madness and sexual desire—and the parallel between Malvolio's letter and the love letters that have preceded it, reinforce the theme of how close love can be to madness. The confusion caused by the servants' deception, is about to be clarified, like that caused by Viola's costume has been.



Waiting for them to return, **Olivia** asks **Orsino** to think of her as a sister and offers to host a wedding feast for all four of them. Orsino accepts. He releases her from his service and from the persona of **Cesario**.

It seems that all confusions and conflict have been tidied up.



Malvolio enters with **Fabian**. Fuming, he presents **Olivia** with **Maria's** trick letter. After a quick examination, Olivia replies that the handwriting is **Maria's**, and she realizes that **Maria** and the others must have pulled a prank on Malvolio. Although Olivia initially promises Malvolio that she will let him punish the guilty parties, **Fabian** defends himself, as well as **Sir Toby** and **Maria**—who, he reports, have just been married. He convinces Olivia that, all in all, the whole thing was a good joke, not to be taken too seriously. **Feste** interjects that it was he who played **Sir Topas**. Enraged, Malvolio declares that he will revenge himself on everyone present, and storms off-stage. Orsino sends **Fabian** to try to appease him, because they still need news from **Viola's** loyal **Captain**.

Now the servants' comic subplot is fully resolved. Yet Malvolio never gets any sort of revenge or even much sympathy for the prank he has had to endure. Instead, he gets only humiliation. The fact that he walks offstage furious, while everyone else is celebrating shows how love can be cruel, despite the happy ending worked out here.



Orsino says that when the **Captain** has given his account, he and **Viola** and **Olivia** and **Sebastian** will be properly married. Aside, he adds that as long as **Viola** is still dressed as **Cesario**, he will call her “**Cesario**” and think of her as a man, but that once he has seen her in her “other habits” (5.1.376) she will be his mistress and the queen of his love. All exit.

In the moment of resolution, the homoerotic aspect of Orsino's attraction is particularly present: he affirms that he still thinks of Viola as a pageboy, besides using the more conventional metaphors of master and mistress.



After the others have departed, **Feste** remains alone on stage, singing a melancholy song about growing old that ends with the gloomy refrain: “The rain it raineth every day” (5.1.381).

This melancholy ending, like Malvolio's departure, shows that despite the temporary happy ending for the lovers, life is still full of sadness and death. That the play ends with its “lowest” character on stage is appropriate to the inversion of hierarchy associated with the real Twelfth Night festival. It also reminds the audience of the parallels between the workings of the play and the deceptions and performances it contains.



Important Quotes

Act 1 Quotes

If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me excess of it; that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die. — *Orsino*, 1.1-3

So full of shapes is fancy
That it alone is high fantastical. — *Orsino*, 1.1.14-5

I am a great eater of beef, and I believe that does harm to my wit. — *Sir Andrew Aguecheek*, 1.3.79-80

I would I had bestowed that time in the tongues, that I have in fencing, dancing and bear-baiting: O, had I but followed the arts! — *Sir Andrew Aguecheek*, 1.3.85-7

Thy small pipe
Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
And all is semblative a woman's part. — *Orsino*, 1.4.32-4

Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage. — *Feste*, 1.5.17

Better a witty fool than a foolish wit. — *Feste*, 1.5.32

He is very well-favored and he speaks very shrewishly; one would think his mother's milk were scarce out of him. — *Malvolio*, 1.5.149-51

Lady, you are the cruellest she alive
If you will lead these graces to the grave
And leave the world no copy. — *Cesario*, 1.5.224-6

Make me a willow cabin at your gate
And call upon my soul within the house;
Write loyal cantons of contemned love
And sing them loud even in the dead of night;
Halloo your name to the reverberate hills
And make the babbling gossip of the air
Cry out 'Olivia!' O, You should not rest
Between the elements of air and earth
But you should pity me. — *Cesario*, 1.5.251-9

Act 2 Quotes

Not to be a-bed after midnight is to be up betimes. — *Sir Toby Belch*, 2.3.1-2

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O, stay and hear; your true love's coming. — *Feste*, 2.3.39

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter:
What's to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty:
Youth's a stuff will not endure. — *Feste*, 2.3.43-8

Am I not consanguineous? Am I not of her blood? — *Sir Toby Belch*, 2.3.71

Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale? — *Sir Toby Belch*, 2.3.108-9

My purpose, indeed, is a horse of that color. — *Maria*, 2.3.158

I was adored once too. — *Sir Andrew*, 2.3.171

Let still the woman take
An elder than herself: so wears she to him,
So sways she level in her husband's heart:
For, boy, however we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn,
Than women's are. — *Orsino*, 2.4.28-34

Then let thy love be younger than thyself,
Or thy affection cannot hold the bent. — *Orsino*, 2.4.35-6

Now the melancholy god protect thee, and the tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffeta, for thy mind is a very opal. — *Feste*, 2.4.72-3

Viola: My father had a daughter loved a man,
As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman,
I should your lordship.
Orsino: And what's her history?
Viola: A blank, my lord. She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy
She sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed? — 1.4.105-14

I am all the daughters of my father's house
And all the brothers too. — *Viola*, 4.4.119-20

Now is the woodcock near the gin. — *Fabian*, 4.5.78

I may command where I adore. — *Malvolio*, 4.5.98

Be not afraid of greatness: Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em. — *Malvolio*, 4.5.130

Act 3 Quotes

This fellow's wise enough to play the fool,
And to do that well craves a kind of wit. — 3.1.57-8

O world! how apt the poor are to be proud. — *Olivia*, 3.1.124

Love sought is good, but given unsought is better. — *Olivia*, 3.1.153

Why, this is very midsummer madness. — *Olivia*, 3.4.53

Go hang yourselves all! You are idle shallow things; I am not of your element. — *Malvolio*, 3.4.113

If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction. — *Fabian* 3.4.118-9

Out of the jaws of death. — *Antonio*, 3.4.340

Act 4 Quotes

There is no darkness but ignorance. — *Feste*, 4.2.41

Leave thy vain bibble-babble. — *Feste*, 4.2.93-4

Act 5 Quotes

Give me thy hand
And let me see thee in thy woman's weeds. — *Orsino*, 5.1.264-5

Why have you suffered me to be imprisoned,
Kept in a dark house, visited by the priest,
And made the most notorious geck and gull
That e'er invention played on? Tell me why. — *Malvolio*, 5.1.331-4

Thus the whirligig of time brings its revenges. — *Feste*, 5.1.356

I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you. — *Malvolio*, 5.1.384

ThemeTracker™

The LitCharts ThemeTracker is a mini-version of the entire LitChart. The ThemeTracker provides a quick timeline-style rundown of all the important plot points and allows you to track the themes throughout the work at a glance.

Themes	Scene	
	Back-story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Olivia's brother dies. Olivia goes into mourning, vowing she will receive no visitors for seven years. – Orsino falls in love with Olivia. – Viola and Sebastian are shipwrecked off the coast of Illyria. They are separated. Each thinks the other has died.
	1.1	– Orsino's servant Valentine returns from Olivia's house to tell him that she rejects his wooing and will not see him.
	1.2	– Viola washes up on the coast of Illyria. Believing her brother dead, she decides to dress up as the pageboy Cesario and go work for Orsino .
	1.3	– Sir Toby and his friend Sir Andrew Aguecheek carouse at Olivia's house after a night of drinking.
	1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Orsino sends Cesario, the pageboy, to woo Olivia in his stead. – Viola, in the costume of Cesario, realizes that she is in love with Orsino.
	1.5	– As Cesario attempts to woo Olivia on behalf of Orsino , Olivia falls in love with "him."
	2.1	– Sebastian shows up on the coast of Illyria with his devoted companion Antonio . He decides to go to Orsino's territory. Despite danger to himself, Antonio follows.
	2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Unwittingly helping Olivia in her plot, Malvolio catches up with Cesario and gives him Olivia's ring (which he has been told is Orsino's, refused by his mistress). – Although at first confused, Viola understands quickly that Olivia has fallen in love with her—or, rather, with the character of Cesario.
	2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew are up late, carousing in the house; Maria shows up and tends to them, with only a light scolding. – Malvolio, however, arrives and scolds them harshly. Maria devises a prank to play on Malvolio, earning Sir Toby's affection.
	2.4	– Orsino continues to indulge in his love-melancholy for Olivia . He sends Cesario once again to go woo Olivia .
	2.5	– Malvolio intercepts Maria's forged letter just as planned and falls for her prank. He will dress up and do all the ridiculous things that the letter instructs.
	3.1	– Olivia declares her love openly to " Cesario ." " Cesario " explains that he cannot reciprocate.
	3.2	– Sir Andrew , having witnessed the scene of tenderness between Olivia and the pageboy, resolves to challenge Cesario to a duel, with Sir Toby's encouragement.
	3.3	– When Antonio and Sebastian arrive in Orsino's part of Illyria, they decide to split ways for an hour as Sebastian explores the city.
	3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In his yellow-stocking, gross-gartered costume, Malvolio acts in a way that convinces Olivia he is mad; she places him in the hands of Sir Toby. – Sir Toby goads Sir Andrew and Cesario into their duel. Despite reluctance on both sides, they are about to fight when Antonio shows up and tries to defend Cesario (thinking he is Sebastian). – Policemen arrive and haul Antonio off. When Antonio criticizes "Sebastian" (Cesario) for abandoning him, for the first time Viola feels hopeful that her brother might still be alive.
	4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sir Toby and Sir Andrew mistake Sebastian, who is just arriving, with Cesario. They attack him. – Olivia shows up, calls an end to the fight, and invites Sebastian back with her to her house. Sebastian is confused but follows.
	4.2	– Sir Toby has locked Malvolio in a dark cell to cure him of his "madness." Feste dresses up as Sir Topas and debates with Malvolio .
	4.3	– Despite Sebastian's confusion, he assents to marry Olivia . A Priest arrives and quickly carries out the ceremony.
	5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Orsino and Cesario arrive at Olivia's house. Olivia, thinking that it is Cesario who she has just married, demands to know where he has been. Orsino, thinking that his pageboy has duped him and wooed Olivia for himself, flies into a rage. – Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Sebastian appear from where they have been fighting off stage. Everyone is shocked. – Viola reveals herself. She and her brother are joyfully reunited. – Seeing Viola for what she really is, Orsino declares himself to be in love with her and asks for her hand in marriage. – A detail causes the happy couples to remember Malvolio. Olivia has him let out of his cell. He storms off bitterly as the happy couples celebrate.

Theme Key

	Desire and Love
	Melancholy
	Madness
	Deception, Disguise, and Performance
	Gender and Sexual Identity
	Masters and Servants