



Oregon
Shakespeare
Festival.

2023 Study Guide



Wikimedia Commons

Twelfth Night Holiday

- Also known as Epiphany Eve.
- Last night of the Twelve Days of Christmas.
- Christian holiday to celebrate the coming Epiphany.
- Epiphany is a feast day commemorating the visit of the Magi or wise men and the baptism of Jesus.
- Temporary suspension of rules and social orders.
- A popular Twelfth Night tradition was to have a bean and pea hidden inside a Twelfth Night cake. A man who finds the bean in his slice of cake becomes King/Lord of Misrule for the night, while a lady who finds a pea in her slice of cake becomes Queen/Lady of Misrule for the night.
- Servants were allowed to mix with their masters, sometimes even switching roles through disguises or by virtue of the coveted bean/pea.
- The Lord/Lady of Misrule was usually a peasant or commoner who led the drinking and debauchery.



Wikimedia Commons

Dawn Monique Williams: The Director

- Born in Oakland in 1978.
- Appears in the PBS Frontline special, *School Colors*, about racial politics at Berkeley High School 40 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*.
- She directed her first play, Eugène Ionesco's *The Lesson*, at 15 while a student at BHS.
- 2011 Directing Fellow of the Drama League of New York.
- 2013 Phil Killian Directing Fellow at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.
- 2016, Princess Grace Foundation USA Fellowship award in theatre. This Fellowship supported her 2017 production of *Merry Wives of Windsor*, at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.
- A poet, author, and scholar, frequently lecturing on contemporary Shakespeare performance.



Cobbe portrait of William Shakespeare, Wikipedia

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

- Born around April 23, 1564.
- Married Anne Hathaway at the age of 18. They had three children between 1583 and 1585.
- Became an actor and lead playwright for the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which became the King's Men when King James I was crowned in 1603.
- Wrote 37 plays, 2 epic poems and 154 sonnets over a 25-year career.
- *Twelfth Night* was written in 1601-1602.
- Died in his hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon on April 23, 1616.
- Buried in Stratford's Holy Trinity Church.

Before seeing/reading the play

1. *Twelfth Night* begins with a shipwreck. What do sea voyages and shipwrecks symbolize in Shakespeare's plays? What are the physical characteristics of a shipwreck? What might be the emotional characteristics of a shipwreck? Spiritual? Metaphorical? What other Shakespearean plays feature a shipwreck? These and other websites provide information:
<http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/Guides4/Shakeships.html>
<http://theshakespeareblog.com/2012/03/shakespeare-shipwrecks/>
<http://www.english-lecturer.com/lecturer-blog/shakespeare-storm-imagery/>

Some are born great, some achieve greatness, some have greatness thrust upon them.

2. What is melancholy? What is the relationship between melancholy and love? Between melancholy and mourning? What is melancholia? What did these words mean to people in the Renaissance? These and other websites provides more information:
<http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melancholia>
<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-sad-boys-renaissance>
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/melancholia>
3. Why do people make fun of other people? When is it acceptable to make fun of someone? When is it unacceptable? At what point does teasing become cruel? What is a scapegoat? What is the purpose of a scapegoat? These and other websites provide information:
<http://www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/scapegoat>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scapegoat>
4. What is a steward? What are the responsibilities of a steward? These and other websites provide information:
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/steward>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stewardship>
5. What is love? What is being in love? What is infatuation? What are the differences between these three concepts,—love, being in love, and infatuation? These and other websites provide information:
http://www.diffen.com/difference/Infatuation_vs_Love
<http://shakespeare.about.com/od/shakespearebasics/tp/Love-in-Shakespear.html>
6. In the Elizabethan view of the world, what did music symbolize? What are the Elizabethan assumptions about music? What does music mean in a Shakespeare play? These and other websites provide information:
<http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/elizabethan-music.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_in_the_Elizabethan_era

7. Consider these names: Viola, Olivia, Orsino, Malvolio, Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and Feste. What does each name mean? What does it sound like? What might these names reveal about the character(s)? These and other websites provide information:
<https://suite.io/jem-bloomfield/cxn2k4>
<http://www.shmoop.com/twelfth-night/characterization.html>
8. What is grief? What effect can it have on a person physically, emotionally, and psychologically? According to Kübler-Ross' theory, what are the five stages of grief? These and other websites provides more information:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grief>
<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/5-stages-of-grief/>
<https://www.healthline.com/health/stages-of-grief>
9. Read the first speech of *Twelfth Night*. What ideas are introduced in the speech? What might the show be about when viewed through the lens of this speech?
<https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/twelfth-night/read/1/1/>
<https://interestingliterature.com/2021/09/twelfth-night-if-music-be-the-food-of-love-play-on-speech-analysis/>
<https://nosweatshakespeare.com/quotes/famous/if-music-be-the-food-of-love-play-on/>



2023 costume design for Cesario in *Twelfth Night* by Melissa Torchia.

10. What are the elements of a Shakespeare comedy? These and other websites provide information:
<https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/an-introduction-to-shakespeares-comedy>
<https://shakespearequotesandplays.com/shakespearean-comedy-main-features-of-shakespeare-comic-plays/>
11. Research Shakespeare's fools and clowns. What is the difference between a fool and a clown? What is the difference between being a fool and being foolish? What is a wise fool? These and other websites provide information:
<https://www.enotes.com/topics/william-shakespeare/critical-essays/shakespeares-clowns-and-fools>
<https://blog.oup.com/2016/09/shakespeare-clowns-fools-infographic/>
<https://shakespeareanstudent.com/2023/04/01/shakespeare-fools/>
12. This 2023 production of *Twelfth Night* is inspired by early Blues and Jazz greats like Bessie Smith. Research Bessie Smith and early blues and jazz. What are the Blues? What makes a song fall into Blues and Jazz genres? How do these types of music convey emotion, specifically grief and joy? These and other websites provide information:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bessie_Smith
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bessie-Smith>
<https://cincyblues.org/education/difference-between-blues-and-jazz/>
<https://music.si.edu/spotlight/african-american-music/jazz-blues>

13. Research William Shakespeare's life and his sonnets. What were some events that might have caused him love, grief, or joy? Which sonnets express these emotions? These and other websites provide information:
<https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-life/>
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Shakespeare>
<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/shakespedia/william-shakespeare/william-shakespeare-biography/>
<https://nosweatshakespeare.com/sonnets/>



2023 costume design for Feste in *Twelfth Night* by Melissa Torchia.



2023 *Twelfth Night* set rendering. Designed by Edward E. Haynes Jr.

After seeing/reading the play

1. Refer to the sidebar on the holiday *Twelfth Night*. How are the events in the play related to the way this holiday was celebrated? The play is titled *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*. What is the significance of the title?
2. Refer to your research on William Shakespeare's life. Shakespeare was the father of a set of twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet died in 1595 at age 11; *Twelfth Night* was written in 1601 or 1602. Knowing this information, how do you think events in Shakespeare's life may be reflected in the play? Refer to your research on Bessie Smith and William Shakespeare. How do you think the director used their lives to add to the play? Compare and contrast the lives of Smith and Shakespeare. Which character in the play is most like Shakespeare and why? Which character is most like Bessie Smith and why?
3. Describe the relationships that exist before the play begins. Describe the relationships that begin during the play. Which are acknowledged? Which are secret and why? How are the secret relationships disguised? How do these relationships feed the tensions and conflicts? Which relationships are surprising and why?



2023 costume designs for Viola in *Twelfth Night* by Melissa Torchia.



2023 costume design for Olivia in *Twelfth Night* by Melissa Torchia.

4. A theme in the play is excess or having too much of something. Give examples of excess in the play in terms of attitude and behavior. What is this theme saying about characters and their journeys in the play?
5. Compare the women: Olivia, Viola, and Maria. In what ways are they powerful? In what ways are they influenced by others around them? What does Viola get from dressing as a boy? What does Olivia learn from being the head of her household? How is Maria able to elevate her station in life? In what ways are they in control of their lives? In what ways are they not?
6. The names Viola, Olivia, and Malvolio have a lot of the same letters in them. What relationship might Shakespeare be trying to draw among these three characters by choosing these names?
7. Refer to your research on Shakespearean clowns and fools. Olivia says, "There is no slander in an allowed fool..." (Act I, scene V, ln. 90-91) What was an "allowed fool" in Elizabethan and earlier societies? What was his status? What were his obligations? What were the pitfalls of his profession? Who is the "allowed fool" in Illyria? Who is a "wise fool"? Who is foolish? Who is a clown? What is the difference between being foolish and being a clown?

8. Olivia's household is caught somewhere between cloister and chaos: Malvolio would have no revelry; Sir Toby would have nothing but revelry. What does Shakespeare gain structurally in conflict, comedy, and romance by comparing these two lifestyles? In what ways do Malvolio's restrictions cause disorder? In what ways does Sir Toby's disorder cause the restrictions? What might be an appropriate balance? How would the balance change for different characters?
9. With the exception of Viola, Sebastian, Antonio, and the sea captain, the characters are from Illyria. How are these outsiders different? What do they bring to Illyria? How do they change the world of Illyria?

How does Shakespeare highlight the difficulties of love?

10. The sea is often seen as a symbol of transformation and rebirth. Which characters are associated with the sea and how? What transformation and rebirth do they bring?
11. A major theme in *Twelfth Night* is love and its power over those in love. Describe the love relationships in the play: Who loves whom? What is the nature of love? On what is it based? To what extent is it reciprocated? What actions are the characters compelled to take because of love? Where do they end up? How does Shakespeare highlight the difficulties of love? When does Orsino discover the difference between being in love with love and being in love? When does Olivia stop grieving and start living? Who wins at love? Who loses? What is each character willing to do for love? What is each not willing to do? Why might Shakespeare have written a play where love has winners and losers?
12. Refer to your research on the stages of grief. What stage is Olivia in at the beginning of the play? How has grief affected her? Who else is experiencing grief? How does it affect him or her? If you are also seeing *Rent* and/or *Romeo and Juliet* what characters experience grief and how does it affect them?

13. How is music described in the play? Listen to all the songs in *Twelfth Night* and study the lyrics. What is the tone of each song? How does each one propel the action in the scene? How does the song reflect or contrast with the mood of the scene? Why is music important in the play? Referring to your research on the significance of music to Elizabethans, explain what spiritual, or metaphysical, condition each song is reflecting or commenting on.
14. If you are seeing *Rent* and or *The Three Musketeers* compare and contrast how music is used to tell the story. How do the songs reflect or contrast with the mood of the scenes?



2023 costume design for Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night* by Melissa Torchia.

Members of Oregon Shakespeare Festival Education created the 2023 Study Guide for *Twelfth Night*. These suggestions were designed for students and teachers but may be enjoyed by audiences of all ages. They may be used without restriction for educational purposes.

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival is not responsible for the content of any website listed above. © Oregon Shakespeare Festival. No part of the 2023 Study Guide for *Twelfth Night* may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying or recording, or by an information storage and retrieval system, for professional or commercial purposes without permission in writing from the Oregon Shakespeare Festival Education. www.osfashland.org/education