

How does viola
engage the
audience's interest in
acts 1-3 in twelfth
night?

[Life](#), [Death](#)



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Viola is the leading character in Shakespeare's dramatic comedy, Twelfth Night, which centres on mistaken identity. Viola is shipwrecked on the shores of Illyria during the opening scenes. She loses contact with her twin brother, Sebastian, whom she believes dead. Masquerading as a young page under the name Cesario, she enters the service of Duke Orsino. Orsino is in love with the bereaved Lady Olivia, whose father and brother have recently died, and who will have nothing to do with any suitors, the Duke included. Orsino decides to use "Cesario" as an intermediary. Olivia, believing Viola to be a man, falls in love with this handsome and eloquent messenger. Viola, in turn, has fallen in love with the Duke, who also believes Viola is a man, and who regards her as his confidant. We are introduced to Viola in Act 1 Scene 2 after she has been brought safely ashore from the shipwreck by some sailors. In the scene Viola hears a sailor's version of events which dramatically portrays her brother battling against the ocean, trying to stay alive like 'Arion on a dolphin's back'. She clearly fears her brother is dead, making the audience feel sympathy and pity for her. When she says 'And what should I do in Illyria? My brother, he is in Elysium.' she sounds like somebody who, having lost one of her dearest loved ones is now completely shattered, scared and alone. This increases the emotional bond already created between Viola and the audience. When she hears about Olivia who has turned into a recluse after the death of her brother she is amazed and wants to serve her and do likewise. This shows the audience just how much her brother's death means to her, as normally only widows go into such deep mourning. Later in the play, having learnt that Viola decided to disguise

herself as a boy, Cesario, the audience admires her skill and cunning. Not only has she managed to convince everyone that she is a man but has also done the job so well that after only a few days the Duke Orsino has told her all his secrets; 'Cesario, Thou know'st no less but all: I have unclasped To thee the book even of my secret soul.' However, as this is the first time we see Viola in her new persona we wonder how she has managed to do this. Clearly, she must not only be a great actor but also a very trustworthy, friendly and honest person to have had such an effect on the Duke after such a short time. This scene becomes even more interesting when Viola reveals she has in fact fallen in love with the Duke after he instructs her to pursue Olivia on his behalf. She says 'Yet a barful strife! Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife.' This sets up a very interesting encounter between Viola, who loves the Duke, and Olivia, who Viola is meant to try and convince to fall in love with the Duke. It builds suspense and gets the audience excited and thinking about what might happen. This means that the audience not only feels sorry for her but becomes more and this She clearly fears her brother is dead, making the audience feel sympathy and pity for her. When she says 'And what should I do in Illyria? My brother, he is in Elysium', Elysium being heaven. She sounds like somebody who, having lost one of her dearest loved ones is now completely shattered, scared and alone. This means that the audience not only feels sorry for her but becomes more and this She clearly fears her brother is dead, making the audience feel sympathy and pity for her. When she says 'And what should I do in Illyria? My brother, he is in Elysium', Elysium being heaven. She sounds like somebody who, having lost one of her dearest loved ones is now completely shattered, scared and

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