

Twelfth night theme – love as the cause of suffering essay sample

[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



In William Shakespeare's play Twelfth Night, love as the cause of suffering is one of the most prominent theme of the story. Even though this play ends in love and wedded bliss, Shakespeare also shows us that love can also cause pain. The characters often view love as a curse, something that is thrust upon you and you cannot easily or willingly escape. Examples include Malvolio's love for Olivia, the love triangle between Olivia, Duke Orsino, and Viola as Cesario, and Antonio's crush on Sebastian. There are countless occasions where unrequited love for another results in heartbreak and sorrow.

Malvolio is a social climber, he feels that if Olivia would love him his status would be higher. But because of his pompous attitude Olivia is definitely not in love with him, and the rest of the house finds him quite annoying. As revenge for being such a bother in the house, Maria plants a love letter addressed to Malvolio forged in Olivia's handwriting. Malvolio is then fooled into thinking that at last, his lady has fallen for him. "I do not now fool myself, to let my imagination jade me, for every reason excites to this, that my lady loves me!" (2. 5. 153) With this new information, Malvolio now has the confidence to show his love for Olivia. When he approaches her though, she thinks he has gone mad and sends him away to be locked up. Malvolio's love for Olivia has lead him to embarrassment, heartbreak and prison.

Lady Olivia has been fighting off Duke Orsino for a while, so after her brother and father's deaths, she goes into mourning for seven years, swearing she could never love another until then. Unfortunately for Olivia, this does not crush Duke Orsino's spirit, but only makes him want her more." O, when

mine eyes did see Olivia first: me thought she purged air of pestilence" (1. 1. 19). To make her love him back, Duke hires Cesario to woo Olivia for him. Duke can't seem to catch a break because Olivia then falls in love with Cesario. It is at this point in the story where the love triangle is created. During the time when Cesario is wooing Lady Olivia, Duke is confronted with strange feelings towards Cesario, which Cesario/Viola returns. It stands as Olivia loves Cesario/Viola, who loves Duke Orsino who loves Olivia. Each character suffers in sorrow as they cannot have who they desire, because of status, gender or love for another.

Antonio rescues Sebastian after the shipwreck that separated him from his twin, Viola. Antonio immediately takes a liking to Sebastian and helps get back on his feet. Sebastian heads to Duke Orsino's court to look for work, Antonio offers to help but Sebastian has to decline as Antonio is a wanted man and accompanying him on his journey would put him at risk. " But, come what may, I do adore thee so, / the danger shall seem sport, and I will go." (2. 1. 43-44) Antonio follows him anyways and ends up encountering Viola dressed as Cesario in the middle of a fight with Sir Andrew. Because Antonio thinks Cesario is Sebastian, he steps in to defend him, out of his love. Viola is confused because she's never met Antonio before.

But, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew recognize him as the wanted criminal that he is and turn him in to the authorities. Although Antonio is ultimately released he still ends up heartbroken as Sebastian ends up married to Olivia. In conclusion, Shakespeare shows us that love has two faces. One face shows us that love can be beautiful and can bring happiness, the other shows a

darker and more painful side where love can be heartbreaking and mournful. Malvolio's love for Olivia brings him happiness for a short while until he learns that it was all a scam. The love triangle between Duke Orsino, Lady Olivia and Viola as Cesario brings them bittersweet feelings as they are simultaneously happily in love and heartbroken with pain. Antonio is in love with Sebastian, but Sebastian ends up marrying Olivia. Antonio is heartbroken and leaves in disappointment. Shakespeare presents us with a negative view on the outcomes of love and brings his characters pain before they can experience love.