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



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the play 'Twelfth Night', Shakespeare bases the plot around a variety of different themes. The themes of disguise, music, loss and death are subtly introduced, however, the main theme of love is dramatically introduced by Orsino's first line;

'If music be the food of love play on'.

As well as using a variety of themes, 'Twelfth Night' incorporates the different kinds of love that can have an effect on people. These types of love range from brotherly love to instantaneous love and from unrequited love to impossible love. The use of the theme of love enables almost everybody to relate to events in the play. Love evokes a number of emotions and is a main ingredient, which brings comedy into the play.

In Act 1: 1 we see Olivia's reaction to the death of her brother. Olivia takes grieving very seriously;

'... she hath abjured herself from the sight and company of men',

and takes a vow of chastity. She plans to mourn her brother for seven years and she hides herself from the world;

'But like a cloisters she will veil'd walk'.

Olivia chooses to dwell on her loss and her strict mourning period could be seen as selfish as life must go on. However, Olivia uses her brother's death to shut herself away from life.

In Act 1: 5 Feste tries to prove Olivia a fool for taking her mourning period to such an extent. Feste cleverly tells Olivia that her brother's soul is in hell. She protests and insists that his soul is in heaven; Feste then uses his quick-witted nature and says; 'The more fool madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven...'

Another example of brotherly love is shown when we meet Viola after the shipwreck in Act 1: 2. She too 'suffers the loss' of a beloved brother but unlike Olivia, Viola takes decisive action following his apparent death. She reacts sensibly and practically to a traumatic situation.

She desperately wants her brother to be alive;

'O my poor brother! And so perchance may he be!'

However she realises that she must react calmly and productively to get by in life; 'I'll serve this Duke....'. Viola's love for Sebastian makes her determined and persistent to carry on.

In Act 2: 1 we see Sebastian's caring nature and his mourning for his sister; 'She is drown'd already, sir, with salt water though I seem to drown her remembrance again with more'.

Sebastian shows intense feelings of love and the desire to be reunited with his sister. When he sees Viola dressed as Cesario, he says if she were a woman;

'I should let tears fall upon your cheek, And say, 'Thrice welcome, drowned Viola'.

Viola's determination and Sebastian's deeply affectionate feelings towards his sister depict the closeness between the siblings.

Instantaneous love is the most frequent type of love experienced by the characters throughout the play.

In Act 1: 1 we learn how Orsino fell in love with Olivia from a distance; 'When mine eyes did first see Olivia first, me thought she purged the air of pestilence'.

This sighting of Olivia puts Orsino in a melodramatic, melancholy, lovesick mood. These feelings, however, start to eat away at him. Here he uses food imagery,

'If music be the food of love play on'

and also shows his changeable fickle character when he says,

'Enough; no more. 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.'

This could also mean that if he has too much of a good thing, i. e. love, he will become sick of it and stop loving Olivia.

Orsino can't express his feelings for Olivia and it is not long before we find that Olivia is actually in love with Viola/Cesario. We know that this is

instantaneous love because Viola is dressed as a man, and she has fallen for his appearance.

It is evident that Olivia likes Viola/Cesario because she takes off her veil, '... in the sight and company' of a 'man', when he/she comes to woo her for Orsino. She tells Viola/Cesario that she cannot love Orsino and says,

'Let him no more-unless you come to me again.'

Here she tells Orsino to stop wooing her, unless he is to send Viola/Cesario to do so.

Olivia does not comprehend how it is possible to fall in love so quickly;

'Even so quickly may one catch the plague?'

'To creep in at mine eyes' could also indicate love at first sight.

Desperate to see Viola/Cesario again, Olivia sends Malvolio after the youth, telling him;

'He left this ring behind him'.

It is in Act 2: 2 when Malvolio confronts Viola with the ring, Viola realises that Olivia loves her;

'She loves me sure; the cunning of her passion, Invites me in this churlish messenger.'

Instantaneous love is also introduced when Olivia and Sebastian meet, when she tries to prevent Sir Toby from drawing sword on whom she believes to be Cesario. Sebastian immediately falls in love with Olivia;

'If it be thus a dream, still let me sleep!'

and despite her calling him Cesario, agrees to marry her.

Although Orsino loves Olivia for her outward appearance he also falls for Cesario's inner character. He appreciates Viola/Cesario's trustworthy character and after only a short period of time a strong bond has between the two;

'I have unclasped to thee my secret soul'.

In Act 1: 5 Orsino comments on Viola's womanly attributes and nature;

'Diana's lip is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe is as the maiden's organ shrill and sound'.

This is a good example of irony as Orsino is not yet aware that Viola/Cesario is actually a woman.

After spending much time alone with Orsino, Viola falls in love. Her feelings start to fester, as she can't express her love due to her disguise;

'But let concealment like a worm i'th' bud Feed on her damask cheek'.

Viola is very subtle about her feelings towards Orsino yet she cleverly and indirectly tells him that she loves him;

'As it may be perhaps, were I a woman, I should your lordship.'

It is in Act 5: 1 that Viola openly declares her love for Orsino. Orsino angrily leaves and Viola follows telling Olivia that she is going;

'After him I love, more than I love these eyes, more than my life. '

This explicit declaration of love comes despite Viola being disguised as a man. She also declares her love implicitly in the 'willow cabin' speech in Act 1: 5 during, which she expresses the passion and rawness in the love that she has for Orsino.

Impossible/forbidden love is also featured in the play. In Act 1: 3 Sir Andrew tells of how he plans to woo Olivia but worries;

'Your niece will not be seen, or if she be, it's four to one, she'll none of me'.

Sir Toby, then, misleadingly says to Sir Andrew;

'Tut there's life in't man.'

Here Sir Toby is telling Sir Andrew where there is life there is hope. Sir Andrew does not realise when people are taking advantage of his gullibility to make him the butt of their jokes.

In Act 3: 2 Sir Toby persuades Sir Andrew to challenge Viola/Cesario to a duel in order to impress Olivia;

'there is no love-broker in the world can more prevail in mans commendation with woman that report valour.'

In a final attempt to woo Olivia Sir Andrew agrees to the duel with Cesario. This is an example of irony, as we know his attempts will not be triumphant as Olivia is in love with Cesario.

Malvolio also has feelings for Olivia but his feelings are for selfish motives; 'To be count Malvolio!'

Here Malvolio dreams of marrying Olivia even though he is merely a steward. He then says ; 'There is example for it: the Lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe.'

He says this to justify his dreams and to make himself believe that he will have a chance of 'love' with Olivia.

He is gulled into feeling that he in fact does have a chance with Olivia when Maria leaves a fraudulent letter 'from Olivia'. Malvolio's self-love allows him to assure himself that Olivia did in fact write the letter and that she does love him.

Malvolio doesn't need much persuading and he immediately sets about following the letters instructions;

'He's in yellow stockings' which are 'most villainously cross gartered.'

It seems that Malvolio 'does obey every point of the letter', showing his foolish, self-absorbed nature.

We, again, know that Malvolio doesn't have a chance of happiness with Olivia, not only because she is in love with Cesario but also because he is 'merely a steward'.

One of the more successful relationships that develops from friendship to love is that between Sir Toby and Maria. In the earlier scenes of the play we see the flourishing relationship between the two. They subtly show their feelings to one another throughout the play. This is evident whilst they indulge in verbal banter. Maria makes their early friendship obvious when she tells how she worries about Toby's luxurious lifestyle;

'That drinking and quaffing will undo you'.

Toby, however, expresses his feelings in a more crude way;

'board her, woe her, assail her'.

The formulating plan to 'gull' Malvolio strengthens Maria and Toby's relationship;

'I could marry that wench for this device'.

Toby refers to Maria using comic comparisons, 'she is a beagle true bred' and 'good night Penthesila', commenting on her diminutive size.

In Act 2: 5 Toby greet Maria with;

'How now, my metal of India?'

proving that he thinks highly of her, comparing her to pure gold. We see how far their relationship has progressed when in Act 5: 1 Fabian informs the characters; 'Maria writ the letter, at Sir Toby's great importance, In recompense whereof he hath married her'.

The most memorable example of love in the play is that of Orsino's for Viola. Not only does the idea of a man falling for 'another man' add comedy value to the play, it also provides some touching heart rendering scenes. Many of these scenes evoke sympathy towards Viola as she can't express her returned feeling for Orsino due to her disguise;

'my father had a daughter loved a man as it might be perhaps, where I a woman I should your lordship'.

In Twelfth Night the theme of love brings comedy to the play and evokes a number of feelings such a sympathy, wonder, confusion and of course laughter. It also confronts issues, which many people can relate to, making Twelfth Night a fun and memorable play.