

There is much to admire in viola and much to laugh at in olivia essay sample

[Experience](#), [Laughter](#)



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I do agree with this statement, because the two characters are such a contrast to each other: Viola is the heroine of the play and the focus of the play is on her. She is a very determined character and had a strong personality, which you immediately pick up on. You realise straight from the start that she is very adventurous in what she does, as we see that she disguises herself as a man. She immediately picks up on being male and is quite convincing to other characters. When circumstances turn to love, we see that Viola has a heart capable of deep and pure love, even when she is posing as a man. Her love can also be very gentle and genuine, as in her love for Sebastian, her brother:

“ My brother is in Elysium.

Perchance he is not drowned: what think you sailors?”

Olivia, however, is less single minded and more changeable in temper and emotion. She is a perfect match to any man, as she is wealthy, high-ranking and considered to be beautiful by all, as we hear Orsino describing:

“ Make no compare

Between that love a woman can bear me

And that I owe Olivia”

Viola describes her as:

” Truly blent who’s red and white nature’s

Own sweet and cunning hand laid on”

We know that Viola is the heroine of the play, but realise that Olivia is the “Heroine of romance”, as she is more romantic than Viola and more popular with the men. This is because she is beautiful, charming and hard to obtain. Viola is also inexperienced with romance when being a man. We see that Olivia gives in very easily as she took the vow of seven years’ seclusion but then gave up on it as she fell in love. Olivia likes the idea of love and the love she has is an intense love, but one that she is not controlling. She is greedy for love and can very easily fall in love:

“ I do I know not what, and fear to find

Mine eye too great a flatter for my mind”

Throughout the play Viola is a stranger to the land, but shows courage in dressing as a man and entering the service of Orsino. Viola is the catalyst of the play who enters the locked-up stillness of Illyria and brings it to life. Therefore by being a new member of the community she brings a sense of freshness to the play and everyone is interested in her, as she is unknown. Viola’s arrival breaks up the stalemate of Orsino’s extravagant love for Olivia and dismantles Olivia’s self-imposed mourning. This then sets up the play for some action. Viola is alone for much of the play, unable to open up to anyone, and she very rarely confides in the audience, we can see this by the lack of soliloquies. All these points are points to admire her by as she deals with her problems a lot by herself.

We hear a lot about Olivia before she comes on stage for the first time:

Orsino, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Maria and Feste all mention her before she

appears on stage. This shows the popularity of Olivia and also shows how important she is:

“ O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first”

“ Sir Toby, you must come in earlier o’ nights: your cousin, my lady takes great exceptions to your ill hours.”

“ I’ll do my best to woo your lady”

“ My lady will hang thee for thy absence”

As we can see, the two characters are very different in themselves. We see that Viola is very determined in what she does, the problems that she faces are small problems that she can step over. When it comes to Olivia and problems, they are like a brick wall in front of her; we see this when Viola refuses the ring from Olivia. Olivia then feels stuck at this point. This is a point where you can admire Viola because of her bravery, and laugh at Olivia because she feels weak.

I feel that Olivia and Viola do change a lot during the course of the play, especially Viola; as it seems that she has found her inner-self and has boosted her self-confidence by being adventurous and posing as a man. I think that she feels more powerful as she knows that she can ‘ pull off’ the trick of dressing up as a man. Olivia changes as she realises that she is not so important and noticing that people admire her for her personality and not her power. This loves her ego and makes her more attractive to others.

The different views that they both have contrast a lot, which is strange because at first, Olivia is in love with Viola. But we do see Olivia and Viola understanding each other's different views a lot. We admire Viola here as she does not give up on it at all, but plays along with the game. We can also laugh at Viola here as we see that she is very gullible, as it is dramatic irony, and the audience knows that Viola is actually a woman, whereas Olivia does not. Dramatic irony plays a big part in this play as well as love and order and disorder.

The language that they both use is very important too, as we expect Viola to struggle with having to use the language of a man but we see that she does not struggle at all, which we admire her for:

“ If I did love you in my master's flame,

With such a suff'ring, such a deadly life,

In your denial I would find no sense,

I would not understand it.”

If anything, we see Olivia struggling when she is around Viola.

As we see the two different characters are strongly contrasted, where Viola's character is very strong and determined, Olivia we see as quite weak. So I do agree with the statement, as the characters are so different.

I do agree with the title, that there is much to admire in Viola and much to laugh at in Olivia, but at the same time there is still much to laugh at in Viola

and much to admire at in Olivia. We can laugh at Viola as she is really a man playing the part of a woman playing the part of a man. We have to question whether we can really take it seriously or not. We can admire Olivia mainly because of her status in society. She is the head of the household and has intense beauty. Many people in the play look up to her and so do we. At the end of the play we see that Olivia is the only one who sympathises for Malvolio and we respect her for this. We also look up to her for her sympathy towards her brother, as we know that it is not like Viola's situation, where there is a possibility that he might come back, but we know for sure that he is not coming back. We can therefore admire and laugh at both characters.