

Do the three
characters trapped in
the 'love triangle'



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Twelfth Night is an interesting blend of the sadness of separation between brother and sister, romance as each of them falls in love, farcical comedy filled with mostly gentle sarcasm and irony, and a “ bang-up happy ending” for the brother and sister, re-united and also now loved by the one each loves. In between there is the intriguing complexity of mistaken identities, plots to fool foolish characters, and a couple of pompous characters who get what they deserve. The play’s main characters all have very different personalities.

Viola, or “ Cesario”, is a character for whom the reader immediately feels sorry for. With her parents dead she is stranded on an unknown land with her only love in the world, her brother Sebastian, lost somewhere perhaps even dead. Viola has to disguise herself as a man to survive and this brings great rewards to her in the end. Even though she is being someone else throughout her time in Ilyria. Viola is often dishonest during the play, throughout her time disguised as Cesario she has to tell a string of lies but this is so she can survive.

There are other lies that she tells throughout the play, which could give the reader an impression that she is a liar. Viola falls into a trap immediately when she starts to feel attracted towards the Duke Orsino, she is at this time disguised as Cesario and the duke is wondering why he is having feelings for this other man. Viola thinks she won’t be able to get the Duke Orsino, this could be for a number of reasons but two of these are because of background.

Viola, being an orphan, has had few chances to interact with members of the opposite sex and feels that the Duke is way out of her league and also because she is disguised as a man. If Viola was to have any chance of getting with the Duke Orsino she would have to reveal her true identity. You can understand what a hard and difficult time this must have been for Viola and that deceit was the only option for her. The Catch 22 situation which Viola is makes things awkward between her and the Duke and it then that the Duke Orsino's arrogant side starts to be unveiled.

In the first chapter it is obvious that the Duke is spoilt and pompous, e is upset and feeling sorry for himself because he cannot get the woman of his dreams, Olivia. He takes his emotions out on members of his court and others around him. When asked b a servant in he would like to go hunting, Duke Orsino replies " Why so I do, the noblest that I have. O when mine eyes did see Olivia first, Methought she purged the air of pestilence. That instant was I turned into a hart, and my desires, like fell and cruel hounds, E'er since pursue me. " (Act 1, Scene 1).

In this scene the Duke is outwardly showing his emotions, he is feeling heart-broken and is in need of someone merry around him. Not the boring members of his court that he has to usually put up with. When Viola disguises herself as Cesario and begins working in the Duke's court she provides a cheerful and colourful atmosphere. This is the start of a complex love triangle. Viola has feelings for the duke and she tries hard to resist his temptations and get on with her work but his charms and good looks make it hard for Viola to avoid Orsino's lure.

Viola sees another side to him, he is not just an arrogant man chasing Lady Olivia, the Duke has another side to him. Viola soon makes the duke see that he could be falling in love, at the time the Duke is getting drawn ever closer to Cesario and is wondering if he is turning gay, but at the end all is revealed and the Duke does in fact get the woman that he has been looking for so long, Viola. Viola obviously has great psychological powers if she can turn a petulant man into a very caring and loving male figure. She is obviously a caring and honest character beneath all the lies in her life.

At the end of the play Viola is re-united with her lost brother Sebastian, even if it was after a state of complete complication, and she marries the Duke Orsino. Viola gets her just rewards for the important and caring role she plays in the play. The Duke Orsino is often quoted as being un-deserving. The character gets a happy ending but arguably not the ending that is rightfully deserved. Viola successfully manages to change his attitude and ways of life. The Duke first appears to the reader as a very arrogant and bigheaded male.

He feels as though everyone bows down to him but this is not the case. At no point during the play is the Duke really taught his manners, he just assumes he will always get his way. Perhaps when he and Viola do get married at the end is it undeserved on his half but perhaps that is weighed out by the fact that Viola is arguably the most deserving character in the play that deserves a just reward. The Duke has let Lady Olivia take over his life, this has made him even more twisted than usual and at point during the play the Duke Orsino threatens to kill Cesario.

One of the reasons why Orsino may not be finding his true love is because deep down he lacks confidence and perhaps has been bullied in his life or un-loved, so he bullies other people and is unsure how to love. He wastes a lot of his time sulking and feeling sorry for himself, generally trying to get attention, that he doesn't notice that his true love is right in front of his eyes, Viola. Because Viola is disguised as Cesario it is hard for him to see that he has in fact fallen in love and often crushes aside Cesario with a sense of insecurity, for example when he sends her to go and woo Lady Olivia on his behalf.

This action is the main catalyst for the formation of the love triangle. At the end the Duke Orsino does miss out on the love of Lady Olivia but he does fall in love with Viola. I do not think the Duke deserves this. Viola, who is worthy of so much better than him, was chasing him throughout the adventure and it seems as though Viola is a "second best" for the Duke because he cannot persuade Lady Olivia to be with him. I think that Orsino gets a lucky ending to the story to be paired up with Viola. At first she thought she was out of his class, perhaps she was.

She thought the Duke was too good for her but perhaps it was the other way round. The third part of the love triangle is Lady Olivia. Originally the Duke Orsino sends Viola (Cesario) to woo Olivia for him. He thinks very highly of her and wants her to love her. But when Viola is on her mission to get Orsino and Olivia together she is in fact trapping herself in a very complex situation. Her closeness with Orsino forms the relationship with those two that we have heard about. But Because Olivia thinks that Viola (disguised as Cesario) is a man she starts to fall for Viola.

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Olivia starts to relate to Cesario's masculinity and begins to fall for "is" sensitive and caring side. Olivia tells Viola many things and at point expresses her feelings towards Viola, to which Viola says "I am not what I am". Viola then leaves leaving Olivia thinking about what has happened. Olivia gets caught in a prank played on Malvolio, which can portray her to the reader as a bit of a bully, attacking those who are weaker. Malvolio is honest to Lady Olivia throughout the play and I believe her actions towards him are harsh to say the least.

Although it was Lady Olivia's servants and Sir Toby that played the prank, it was Lady Olivia that help invent for the idea. When Sebastian turns up at the end a very confusing end starts. With Olivia mistaking Sebastian for her twin sister Viola (Cesario). At the end Olivia and Sebastian get with each other, with Sebastian not knowing what is going on. This turns out to be quite lucky with Sebastian and Olivia then linking up. Sebastian is also reunited with his long sister Viola. I think that at the end of Twelfth Night Viola gets the rewards she justly deserves.

She gets a man whom she loves and will cherish for the rest of her life. She is a very honest and caring character and for this reason I believe she deserves the man of her dreams. On the other hand, the Duke is a nasty piece of medicine and I don't believe that he deserves Viola. He is a love-sick fool and I think is worthy of no woman in Ilyria. Viola is also re-united with her lost twin brother who, quite conveniently, becomes the latest victim of Lady Olivia's craze. In the end most characters get a happy ending, but I believe only Viola gets the ending she deserves.