

List of characters

Illyria

The Duke's court

ORSINO Duke of Illyria

VALENTINE a courtier

CURIO a courtier

Musicians

Lords

Officers

The Countess's household

OLIVIA a countess

SIR TOBY BELCH her uncle

MALVOLIO her steward

FESTE her fool

MARIA her gentlewoman

FABIAN a servant

A PRIEST

A SEA CAPTAIN

The visitors

VIOLA later called Cesario

SEBASTIAN her twin brother

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK suitor to Olivia

ANTONIO a friend to Sebastian

Sailors

The action of the play takes place in Illyria



Orsino calls for music to feed his hunger for love. He reflects that love is like the sea, absorbing and devaluing every other experience. He claims to be completely obsessed by his love for Olivia.

Themes

Love – or infatuation? (in fours)

The opening lines of the play suggest that it will be about love. But they also introduce questions that the play will revisit as it progresses. What sort of love? What is love? Orsino appears to be the most 'in love' of all the characters, but many people believe that he is not truly interested in Olivia – he just enjoys wallowing in his emotions. Is Orsino in love, or just infatuated?

- Prepare four versions of lines 1–15 (for example, spoken thoughtfully, sadly, pompously and comically), with one person working on each. Think about which lines you will stress, where you will pause and what actions you will add.
- Perform your versions to each other; then talk together about which is the most effective. Do you think Orsino's language is that of a true lover, or of someone who is in love with being in love?



surfeiting over-filled

That strain again play that again
dying fall fading rhythm

quick and fresh alive and vigorous

validity and pitch high value
falls into abatement is lessened
fancy love
high fantastical
intensely imaginative

hart male deer (Orsino puns on 'heart')

purged rid/removed (often in medical or religious sense)
pestilence plague
fell savage

1 Play on!

In the production shown in the image above, subtle lighting and music were used to draw the audience into the world of Illyria. Orsino directly addressed the audience and demanded that they listen.

- How would you present this scene on stage? What type of music would you use? Would you play up the comedy at the point when Orsino changes his mind ('That strain again', then 'Enough; no more')?
- Make notes on the set, the costumes and the general impression you would wish to create of Orsino and his court. These should form the first part of a Director's Journal, in which you can record your ideas about staging the play as you read on.

Twelfth Night

or What You Will

Act 1 Scene 1


Orsino's palace

Music. Enter ORSINO, Duke of Illyria, CURIO, and other Lords

ORSINO	If music be the food of love, play on; Give me excess of it, that surfeiting, The appetite may sicken and so die. That strain again, it had a dying fall; O it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound	5
	That breathes upon a bank of violets, Stealing and giving odour. Enough; no more. 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before. O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou, That, notwithstanding thy capacity,	10
	Receiveth as the sea. Nought enters there, Of what validity and pitch so'er, But falls into abatement and low price Even in a minute. So full of shapes is fancy, That it alone is high fantastical.	15
CURIO	Will you go hunt, my lord?	
ORSINO	What, Curio?	
CURIO	The hart.	
ORSINO	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.	20

Enter VALENTINE

How now, what news from her?

 Valentine tells of Olivia's vow to mourn her dead brother for seven years. Orsino says that this reveals how she will love him totally. Viola, landed safely after shipwreck, fears for her brother's life.

1 Olivia – first impressions (in pairs)

Valentine returns with bad news – Olivia has vowed to become a nun for seven years, not even seeing the sky, to mourn for her brother:

- Discuss what her decision and Orsino's response tell us about these two characters.

Stagecraft

Shipwrecked

It is clear from the first few lines of Act 1 Scene 2 that Viola and the Captain have been shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria. However, Shakespeare provides no stage directions and it is therefore up to the director to decide whether the shipwreck is seen or not. In some productions of the play, each scene flows swiftly into the next without delay for scene shifting. The shipwreck scene can provide an opportunity to use special effects and transport the audience from Orsino's palace to the coast.

- Write a list of reasons why you might 'stage' or 'not stage' the shipwreck. Share and discuss your ideas with a partner or a small group.

element sky

seven years' heat seven summers

behold ... ample view see more of her than is necessary in public

a cloistress a nun secluded from the world

eye-offending brine bitter tears

season preserve

fine frame exquisite form

rich golden shaft Cupid's arrow of love

affections else other feelings

liver, brain ... thrones (the liver was thought to be the ruler of passions, the brain of reason and the heart of emotion)

filled satisfied

bowers leafy, secluded places

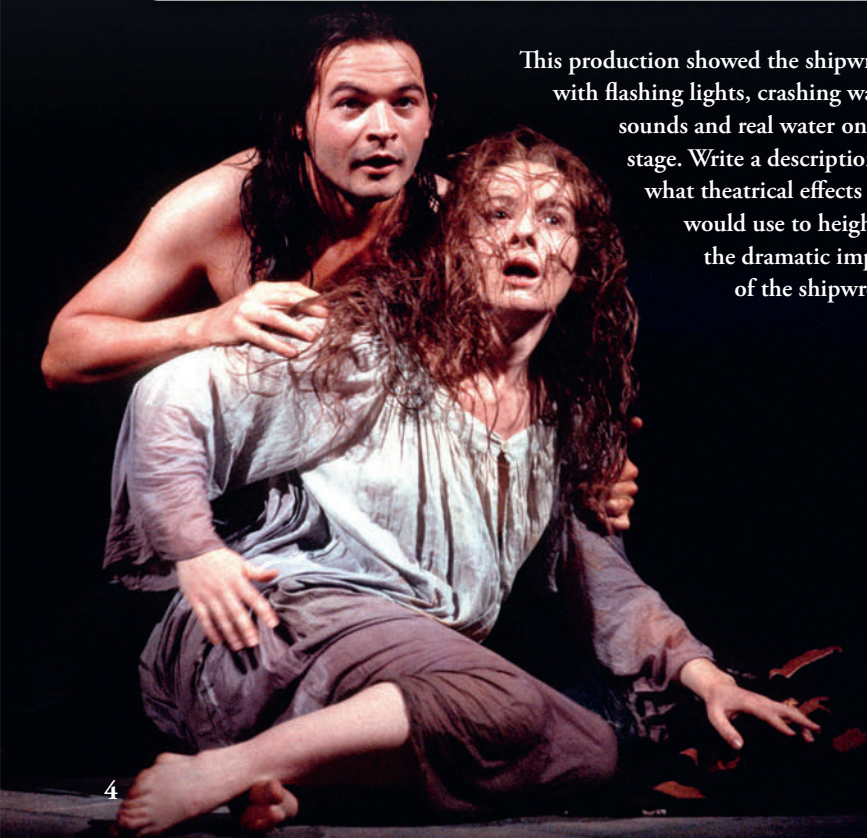
This production showed the shipwreck with flashing lights, crashing waves sounds and real water on the stage. Write a description of what theatrical effects you would use to heighten the dramatic impact of the shipwreck.

Elysium heaven, a peaceful welcoming place

Perchance (line 5) perhaps

perchance (line 6)
by good fortune

perchance (line 7 – Viola now plays on both meanings of the word)



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Excerpt
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VALENTINE	So please my lord, I might not be admitted, But from her handmaid do return this answer:	25
	The element itself, till seven years' heat, Shall not behold her face at ample view; But like a cloistress she will veiled walk, And water once a day her chamber round With eye-offending brine; all this to season	30
	A brother's dead love, which she would keep fresh And lasting, in her sad remembrance.	
ORSINO	O she that hath a heart of that fine frame To pay this debt of love but to a brother, How will she love, when the rich golden shaft	35
	Hath killed the flock of all affections else That live in her; when liver, brain, and heart, These sovereign thrones, are all supplied and filled Her sweet perfections with one selfsame king!	
	Away before me to sweet beds of flowers:	40
	Love-thoughts lie rich when canopied with bowers.	

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 2
The sea-coast of Illyria

Enter VIOLA, a CAPTAIN, and Sailors

VIOLA	What country, friends, is this?	
CAPTAIN	This is Illyria, lady.	
VIOLA	And what should I do in Illyria? My brother, he is in Elysium.	
	Perchance he is not drowned: what think you, sailors?	5
CAPTAIN	It is perchance that you yourself were saved.	
VIOLA	O my poor brother! And so perchance may he be.	



The Captain reassures Viola that her brother may also have survived the shipwreck. He tells of Orsino's love for Olivia, and says that Olivia's grief for her brother's death has made her a recluse.

1 'Arion on the dolphin's back' (in threes)

The Captain uses **imagery** (see pp. 164–5) from classical mythology to describe Sebastian's escape from the shipwreck. He compares it with that of Arion, a legendary Greek musician. Arion leapt overboard to escape sailors who wished to murder him. A dolphin, enchanted by Arion's music, carried him safely to shore. The Captain's story gives Viola hope, and it also echoes the power of music suggested in Scene 1. Some stage productions show Sebastian's struggle to survive. Others leave it to the audience's imagination.

- a Imagine you are directing the play, and want the audience to see what happens to Sebastian. Prepare a performance of lines 11–17. Use pictures, projections, action to one side or at the back of the stage or even tableaux (freeze-frames) to show Sebastian's 'acquaintance with the waves'.
- b Perform your scene to another group. Afterwards, discuss the success of your staging, and consider different effects that you could create to maximise the scene's dramatic impact.

2 Reports are coming in (in pairs)

You are a television or radio crew in Illyria. Reports are coming in that a ship has crashed on the coast, but none of the passengers has been found (remember that no Illyrian has discovered Viola or Sebastian).

- a One of you should be the news presenter in the studio and another the reporter on the scene. Prepare a dialogue in which the presenter interviews the on-scene reporter, and known details of the events of the shipwreck are revealed. You should also speculate about what might have happened, and about the possible identities of the missing passengers.
- b With another pair, extend the news segment by having the reporter interview witnesses at the scene or having the presenter speak to shipwreck experts in the studio. Think about all the possible sources of news details – for example, the Captain who saved Viola might be able to pass on some details to you. You need to be quick, though, as your interview will be transmitted live after only a few minutes of preparation!

driving drifting
provident full of foresight

lived floated

hold acquaintance with
cope with, stay afloat on

gold gold coins
unfoldeth to encourages
Whereto ... authority
your speech supports this
The like of him that he too survived

very late recently


murmur rumour
prattle gossip

abjured rejected, renounced

Till ... estate is until the time is right to reveal my true identity
compass achieve, bring about
suit advances

CAPTAIN	True, madam, and to comfort you with chance, Assure yourself, after our ship did split, When you, and those poor number saved with you, Hung on our driving boat, I saw your brother Most provident in peril, bind himself (Courage and hope both teaching him the practice) To a strong mast that lived upon the sea; Where like Arion on the dolphin's back I saw him hold acquaintance with the waves So long as I could see.	10 15
VIOLA	For saying so, there's gold. Mine own escape unfoldeth to my hope, Whereto thy speech serves for authority, The like of him. Know'st thou this country?	 20
CAPTAIN	Ay, madam, well, for I was bred and born Not three hours' travel from this very place.	
VIOLA	Who governs here?	
CAPTAIN	A noble duke in nature as in name.	25
VIOLA	What is his name?	
CAPTAIN	Orsino.	
VIOLA	Orsino! I have heard my father name him. He was a bachelor then.	
CAPTAIN	And so is now, or was so very late; For but a month ago I went from hence, And then 'twas fresh in murmur (as you know What great ones do, the less will prattle of) That he did seek the love of fair Olivia.	30 35
VIOLA	What's she?	
CAPTAIN	A virtuous maid, the daughter of a count That died some twelvemonth since, then leaving her In the protection of his son, her brother, Who shortly also died; for whose dear love (They say) she hath abjured the sight And company of men.	 40
VIOLA	O that I served that lady, And might not be delivered to the world Till I had made mine own occasion mellow What my estate is!	
CAPTAIN	That were hard to compass, Because she will admit no kind of suit, No, not the duke's.	 45

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 Viola says that she trusts the Captain. She plans to disguise herself as a man and become an attendant to Orsino.
In Scene 3, Sir Toby Belch complains that Olivia's mourning prevents all enjoyment.

Themes

Appearance versus reality (in pairs)

In lines 48–9, Viola states one of Shakespeare's favourite themes: you can't judge by appearances. A beautiful appearance may conceal corruption ('nature with a beauteous wall / Doth oft close in pollution'). Much of *Twelfth Night* is about the difference between appearance and reality.

- Work out a tableau to illustrate Viola's comment. Show this to another pair, holding the tableau for thirty seconds. Discuss the similarities and differences between your tableaux and respective interpretations of Viola's line.
- Within moments of Viola's wise words about appearance, she is seeking to disguise her own 'outward character' to meet the 'form of [her] intent'. What is her purpose here? Discuss this with your partner, and try to refer to the play script to support your ideas.
- Discuss what you think Viola is hoping to achieve in her disguise. Is she trying to hide something other than her femininity? Why does she, as a noble woman, disguise herself even when she is told a noble duke rules this country? Would he not help her return home?

Shakespeare provides very little direction about the casting of characters, but the choice of actor can have a big impact on the 'physical' comedy of the play. The Maria and Sir Toby in this image are not 'funny to look at' and yet their actions are comical. In pairs, discuss the ways in which actors playing Maria and Sir Toby might add actions to their comic lines to make the audience laugh more.

fair behaviour trustworthiness

bounteously generously

Conceal me what I am
disguise my true identity

haply appropriately

The form of my intent
my purpose

It may be worth thy pains
you will be rewarded

allow prove

hap happen

Only ... wit do as I say and don't
tell anyone about this

eunuch castrated male servant
with a high-pitched voice

mute dumb servant

plague pain, annoyance

By my troth honestly

cousin close relative (in Elizabethan
times, 'cousin' was loosely used)

VIOLA There is a fair behaviour in thee, captain,
 And though that nature with a beauteous wall
 Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee
 I well believe thou hast a mind that suits 50
 With this thy fair and outward character.
 I prithee (and I'll pay thee bounteously)
 Conceal me what I am, and be my aid
 For such disguise as haply shall become
 The form of my intent. I'll serve this duke. 55
 Thou shalt present me as an eunuch to him –
 It may be worth thy pains – for I can sing,
 And speak to him in many sorts of music
 That will allow me very worth his service.
 What else may hap, to time I will commit, 60
 Only shape thou thy silence to my wit.

CAPTAIN Be you his eunuch, and your mute I'll be;
 When my tongue blabs, then let mine eyes not see.

VIOLA I thank thee. Lead me on.

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 3

A room in Olivia's house

Enter SIR TOBY BELCH and MARIA


SIR TOBY What a plague means my niece to take the death of her
 brother thus? I am sure care's an enemy to life.

MARIA By my troth, Sir Toby, you must come in earlier o' nights. Your
 cousin, my lady, takes great exceptions to your ill hours.

SIR TOBY Why, let her except, before excepted. 5

MARIA Ay, but you must confine yourself within the modest limits of
 order.

SIR TOBY Confine? I'll confine myself no finer than I am: these clothes
 are good enough to drink in, and so be these boots too; and they
 be not, let them hang themselves in their own straps. 10

 Maria warns Sir Toby that his drunkenness will be his downfall. She is scornful of Sir Andrew Aguecheek (a wooer of Olivia), thinking him stupid. Sir Andrew enters and immediately displays his foolishness.

Language in the play

Word juggler (in threes)

Sir Toby is a great juggler with words, even when drunk. His description of Sir Andrew is full of mockery – he says one thing but means another: Sir Toby calls Sir Andrew ‘tall’, meaning courageous, when he probably thinks him cowardly. Sir Andrew is cast in many productions as tall but slight and weak to accentuate this. Other descriptions also had double meanings for Elizabethan audiences:

- ‘**viol-de-gamboys**’ a sexual joke: a musical instrument held between the knees, like the cello
- ‘**without book**’ implies Andrew learnt by heart without understanding
- ‘**nature**’ picked up by Maria and turned into ‘natural’ (meaning ‘idiot’)
- ‘**Castiliano vulgo**’ ‘Look solemn’ (like a Castilian from Spain), or ‘Think of all Sir Andrew’s money’ or ‘Talk of the devil’ or ‘More Spanish wine!’

For a modern audience, wordplay can often be lost without such explanations, and this lessens the impact of the comedy.

- Prepare a performance of lines 1–50. Using the descriptions above, try to provide the audience with a visual or physical clue about the joke that is being made. Show your performance to another group and see whether your actions have the desired results.

1 A ‘foolish knight’?

Sir Andrew Aguecheek’s entrance provides the opportunity for great comedy, as we have heard so much about him (not much of it flattering) before he appears on stage.

- a Read through lines 11–35, and complete a table like the one below to explore what Maria and Sir Toby mean in these lines.

What Maria says about Sir Andrew	What she means	What Sir Toby says about Sir Andrew	What he means

- b Draw one picture of Sir Andrew based upon what Maria says, and another based on what Sir Toby says. Label the features shown in the picture with quotations from lines 11–35. Consider how the pictures are different, and why.

quaffing drunkenness

ducats gold coins

prodigal spendthrift (someone who spends a lot of money)

viol-de-gamboys bass viol or viola de gamba

gust appetite, relish

prudent sensible

gift of a grave be dead

substractors slanderers

there is a passage in my throat
I am breathing

coistrill worthless fellow, knave

o’t’toe upside down

parish top spinning top (a toy)

shrew small mouse

Accost greet courteously

front her... assail her Sir Toby defines the word ‘accost’ with terms of military engagement and sexual double-meanings