



ELA Virtual Learning

English 218 Introduction to Literature

Lesson: May 19, 2020



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Objective/Learning Target:

- Read and comprehend literature, including drama, independently and proficiently.
- Draw conclusions, infer, and analyze by citing relevant and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including where the text leaves matters uncertain.
 - Read and comprehend informational text independently and proficiently.



Bell Ringer:

Now that the reading is finished, what did you think of *Twelfth Night*?

****Start a document to record your response to this and the work which follows on later slides.**

Learn - Shakespeare: Gender and Identity

Throughout much of *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare plays with ideas of gender and identity. Viola immediately decides she must dress as a man to gain employment with Count Orsino, which leads to Olivia falling for her in her disguise as Cesario. This is sometimes referred to as the gender bender trope and is found in literature throughout time and cultures.

There are many reasons for the gender bender to be employed in a play. It can be for laughs, to cause trouble or drama, or to make a social comment, among others. Consider the roles of men and women in Shakespeare's time; why do you think this playwright so often used this trope?

Also consider the consequences of this being used throughout the play and its possible effects on the outcomes for the characters when the character's actual gender is revealed.

Learn - Shakespeare: Gender and Identity

Let's face it - in Shakespeare's time, even more than now, gender has its benefits and its drawbacks. There was an extreme power imbalance, so much so that women were not even allowed on the stage. In the 1600s, if a female character was part of the play, that person was a man, dressed as a woman. So, the character of Viola, playing Cesario, is a man, dressed and made up as a woman, who is dressed as a man. Hmmm...

With crossdressing being so prevalent in that time, as a common occurrence to play female characters, and in particular in Shakespeare's comedies as part of the plot, do you think it speaks to gender fluidity in that time, or just a means to an end?

Learn - Shakespeare: Gender and Identity

From an article in *Shakespeare Studies*, [Kemp](#) comments on Sebastian's inability to "see" Viola as his sister.

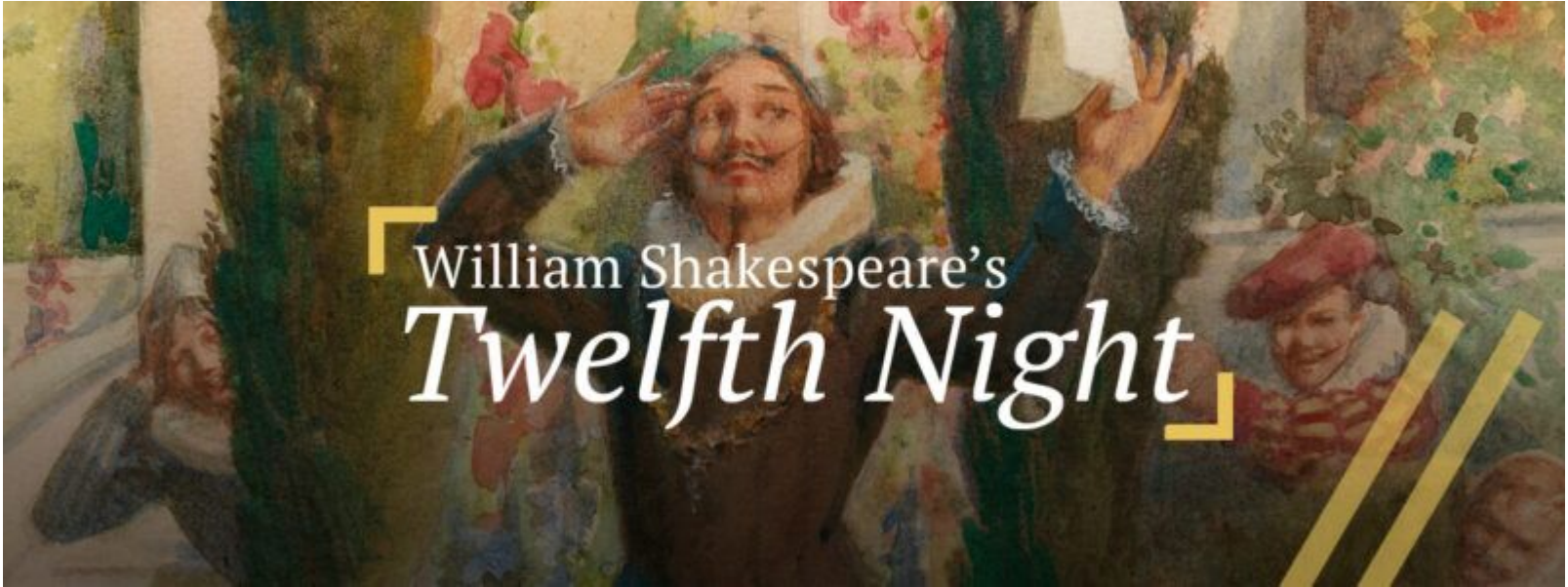
When Sebastian encounters Cesario at the end of *Twelfth Night*, he thinks Cesario looks, not like his lost sister, but like himself, as he marvels "Do I stand there? I never had a brother" (5.1.222). Even when Cesario explains that he had a father named Sebastian, and a brother also named Sebastian, and that he comes from their home of Messaline, Sebastian does not see his sibling in the person standing before him: Were you a woman, as the rest goes even, I should my tears let fall upon your cheek, And say "Thrice-welcome, drowned Viola!" (5.1.235-37) Sebastian's inability to

Learn - Shakespeare: Gender and Identity

recognize Viola as Viola is rooted in his inability to believe she is not a man. He sublimates any doubt about gender to a doubt about identity. At the level of cognition, this cedes ontological and intimate knowledge of a person to the knowledge of their gender, seeming to suggest Sebastian knows his own sister less than he imagines he knows this stranger's genitals.

Was Shakespeare making a comment about the relationship between gender and identity?

Kemp, Sawyer K. "‘In That Dimension Grossly Clad’: Transgender Rhetoric, Representation, and Shakespeare." *Shakespeare Studies (0582-9399)*, vol. 47, Jan. 2019, pp. 120–126. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=afh&AN=138977004&site=ehost-live.



You have finished your reading of *Twelfth Night*. Use this to respond to the assignment on gender.

Practice:

Twelfth Night - Respond to two-to-three of the following in a short essay related to gender. In your thesis, be sure your choices are clear. There are other prompts on the next slide. Include two or more quotes from the play in your response. Use your best scholarly writing and MLA formatting.

In what ways does Shakespeare explore and challenge gender stereotypes in *Twelfth Night*?

In what ways does comedy reflect a society's attitudes and values?

Do societal values and attitudes affect the audience's reaction to Viola/Cesario's cross-dressing?

What potential difference could this make to the confusion caused and the comedic effect, especially on *Twelfth Night*?

Practice:

Sebastian describes his sister as having ‘a mind that envy could not but call fair’ (2.1.29). In Act 3, Scene 1, when Viola converses with the fool, Feste, she joins in with his banter. If she had not been dressed as a man, would Shakespeare have still written that in, why or why not?

When cisgender actors participate in androgyny or cross-dressing, do audiences impose societal attitudes and values in judgments about actor identity?

Response Criteria

(Answers will Vary)

- Check your written response to make sure it meets the following criteria:
 - Did you write in complete sentences?
 - Did you use standard conventions (spelling, punctuation, grammar)?
 - Did you answer the questions?
 - Did you use MLA formatting in all things, including a proper MLA header?

Sample Appropriate Response:

Bellringer - Responses will vary, but should provide a general opinion of the play.

Practice: An example is on the following slide.

Example of quality response:

Though essays will vary, depending on choice of prompts to address, the linked essay shows what a quality essay for this assignment may look like.

[Twelfth Night Gender Essay](#)