

Act 1: introducing the main characters - the lovers



This sample project links to the listen live/download audio clip

Essentials

As the play progresses, listen out for and make a note of comic references and the type of humour used. Begin by listing the references in Act 1 Scene 1 under the following headings:

- Physical humour (funny walks, falling over, slapstick etc)
- Verbal humour (clever wordplay, puns)
- Comedy based on somebody's physical appearance
- Comedy based on somebody's class
- Comedy based on somebody's race
- Comedy based on somebody's gender
- Characters placed outside their natural environment
- Comedy that uses sex or sex appeal
- Black comedy (including gallows humour)
- Satire/political comedy
- Any other types of comedy (describe them)

In your own words define the term 'melancholy'.

Write a short character study, outlining your first impressions of Duke Orsino.

- What is his status in society?
- Do you think he's really in love, or in love with the idea of being in love?
- How do you feel about him? Do you sympathise with him?

Write a short character study, outlining your first impressions of Olivia.

- Without meeting her, what image do we get?
- Do we believe she is truly closed off to love for seven years?
- Is she being overly dramatic or do you sympathise with her loss?

As the play progresses, listen out for and make a list of references to:

- Melancholy
- Characters who wear a disguise or alter their appearance – who are they deceiving?
- Pagan and Christian images – are they in opposition?
- Music – how is it used and to what effect?
- Love – is it fantastical or other worldly, does it alter perceptions?
- Madness
- Chaos or misrule



Your students should update these character studies and references to repeated ideas and images, supported by quotation. Make sure they note down who said it, when they said it and what they meant. Students may find it useful to devote a separate sheet of paper for each.



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Level 1

Level 2

Level 3



Do we hope that Orsino will win Olivia? Does Shakespeare want us to like Orsino from the start?



Divide the class into small groups to devise and role play a scene in which Curio and Valentine are questioned by a spy sent from Olivia to discover what type of man the Duke really is. Allocate the roles and have other members of the group direct the scene (or rotate the roles in a larger group).

Make sure the spy questions both men on:

- What type of man is Duke Orsino?
- Does he really love Olivia?
- Would he make her a good husband?



In addition to beginning a list of references and uses of music in *Twelfth Night*, consider:

- What type of soundtrack would you use in a film version of the play and why?
- Suggest favourite tracks that could be used to highlight the action.

Extensions



The Elizabethans produced guides telling young men how to make a good impression on ladies through the use of fine words and phrases.

- Write an Elizabethan guidebook of fine phrases and expressions of love to impress the opposite sex.

