

Shakespeare's Grotesque and Immoral Comedy, *12th Night*

Comic devices:

1. Role Reversal: Upper class acting like lower class characters, and vice versa. Men acting like women, and vice versa – Orsino, a rich man, acts like a woman – he's too emotional and cowardly. Maria, a servant, acts like she is in charge of the house. With quotations as evidence, prove that this is true. Use words like *portrays, demonstrates, implies*
Research English reserve and stoicism: how do these attitudes or 'philosophies' relate to the behaviors of Duke Orsino, a high-ranking noble, and the two lower ranking nobles, Sir Andrew and Sir Toby. Explain how Orsino acts like a stereotypical woman, and the sirs act like lower class drunkards.
2. Mistaken Identity: Viola, a woman, is mistaken for a man; her brother, Sebastian, is mistaken for her; Feste is mistaken for a priest.
3. Puns: many bad ones from Feste and Sir Toby Belch
4. Idiotic Behavior – Farcical behavior – (Feste, Toby and the Knight) and horrible songs and jokes
5. Insults – usually in this comedy insults work as part of role reversal.

Shakespeare's Insensitivity towards Social Problems

1. Eunuchs – the practice of castrating boys (Viola pretends to be a eunuch)
2. Classism – lower class people were not supposed to marry upper class ones, and vice versa
3. Puritanism – the persecution of Puritans in 17th century England (Malvolio is accused of being one). Puritans were widely persecuted and reviled in Shakespeare's time. For more information about them and King James, see below.

The Puritan Revolt and the Glorious Revolution

In the 17th century, England was marked by two revolutions known as the English Revolution or the Puritan Revolt and the Glorious Revolution. The Puritan Revolt was a conflict between the English monarch and the Parliamentarians, which resulted in the establishment of a republican commonwealth (! ^0 English Civil War! In 1688, the Glorious Revolution broke out, an event that culminated in the removal of King James II and the establishment of Parliament power over the monarch (! ^0 The Glorious Revolution! Through these two revolutions, the English monarchs realized that

they were responsible to their people. Ill will between the English monarch and the Parliamentarians evolved gradually ever since James VI of Scotland succeeded Queen Elizabeth I in 1603. As King James I of England, he had little understanding of its Parliament or the changing conditions of England (Lee and Paik).

In addition, he inherited an enormous royal debt and a religiously divided nation when he succeeded to the throne. As a king, he hardly summoned the Parliament. Moreover, when he needed to raise funds, he levied his own impositions instead of using Parliament-approved revenues (Lee and Paik).

He introduced his concept of divine rights of monarchy, which strained his relationship with the Parliament even more.

Under this concept he stated that the monarch had divine right to authority and was only responsible to God, rebellion was the worst political crime, and if a king ordered something evil, one should react with passive disobedience and be ready to accept penalty for not following orders (Lee and Paik).

Along with his ruling policies, his religious policies aroused opposition from the Parliament. The Puritans (made up most of Parliament) requested the monarch to reform the English Church. In response, James I displayed anti-Puritanism and supported the Anglican episcopacy (Lee and Paik).

Furthermore, James I aroused suspicions of showing favoritism to the Catholics.

He settled peace with Spain, which was a fervent Catholic nation, attempted to limit penal laws against Catholics, and arranged his son's marriage with the daughter of Henry IV of France, a Catholic monarch (Lee and Paik).

When James I died, the succeeding king inherited these bitter feelings between the English monarch and the Parliament (Lee and Paik).

Essay on Money in 12th Night

1. Money in Twelfth Night. Focus on the fact that Shakespeare portrayed his characters as spendthrifts who only value money and pay friends for ridiculous reasons and don't value

friendship. For example, Viola paid the captain for saying something kind, but since he saved her life she should have thanked him and offered to do almost anything for him. Meanwhile, the richest man, Orsino, seems to be a miser, as he never sends gifts to Olivia. Sir Toby Belch used his friend Sir Andrew so he could access his money. Additionally, consider that Viola received Antonio's wallet and still betrayed him to Orsino, as if she didn't value his life. Finally, remember that this is a story about three people trying to marry two rich people, and those two rich people being deluded about the people they're falling in love with.

Here is a page displaying occurrences of the word "money" in *Twelfth Night*:

<http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/search/search-results.php>

Here is a page displaying occurrences of the word "purse" (meaning *wallet*) in *Twelfth Night*:

<http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/search/search-results.php>

2. Demonstrate that Shakespeare attempted to make his audience laugh by portraying two foreign nobles, Orsino and Olivia, as terrible managers of their households, their personal lives and their emotions.
3. *Combine 1 & 2.*
4. Demonstrate that Shakespeare portrayed his Illyrian characters as fools in order to make his audience laugh at foreigners. Focus on love (include the weddings), friendship, and one other topic of your choice, possibly money or employment. Or focus on three of the above comic devices.