

away, come away, death"), that will suit Orison's mood, or a song of "good life" for Sir Toby and Sir Andrew (in II.iii) which suits their total immersion in the pleasure of the moment.

By the end of the fifteenth century, the ritous Feast of Fools, now associated with Epiphany, had been driven out of the church itself and forced to adopt less overtly blasphemous forms. In secular society, however, it continued to flourish during Shakespeare's lifetime. But whatever it is called, the play *Twelfth Night* remains one of the best-loved comedies of Shakespeare, an uproarious comedy shot through with darker tones of violence and passion. The second part to the play's title, 'What You Will', is an open-ended festive invitation by Shakespeare to his audiences. They can choose to enjoy the play as a simple, romantic comedy with a happy ending, but they are also free to take note of the festive tone woven into this unique comedy written by this mature Bard. [Approximately 693 words]

TITLE & SUBTITLE

'Twelfth Night', the title of the play, refers to the feast of the Epiphany on 6th January, when the wise men were supposed to have given Jesus his gifts. 'Twelfth Night' is the last "bash" before the Christmas tree gets taken down and therefore a festival where people are expected to enjoy themselves by drinking, eating and having lots of raucous fun—or to be specific what one wishes. This connects the subtitle of the play 'What You Will' as the celebrations portrayed in the play includes trickery and disguises that invert gender and class roles: Viola disguises herself as a boy but falls in love with her master; the servant Maria impersonates her mistress; and Feste and Fabian help fool their superior, the steward Malvolio. Malvolio himself becomes convinced that his mistress Olivia loves him while she actually falls for a different servant, Viola.

The occasion of Twelfth Night was an occasion of merriment, a time when the normal order of things was overturned (as it is with carnival), a period in which the usual rules and customs did not apply. The members of the household clearly live up to the occasion. In her influential study *The First Night of Twelfth Night*, Hotson notes, in the freedom of Twelfth Night, you do what you will, say what you will, and that is exactly what the members of Olivia's household do-- what they will. There are references within the play to Christmas, as Sir Toby drunkenly attempts something that sounds like the "Twelve Days of Christmas" song. Thematically, there are links to this period of time, which was a time of feasting and revelry; the reveling, pranks, and merriment within the play resemble activities that are characteristic of Twelfth Night, which was the culmination of the Christmas season, and a time of much festivity.

Those, who are unconvinced by arguments for the appropriateness of *Twelfth Night* often prefer the play's other title. In fact, *Twelfth Night* is Shakespeare's only play with two titles: *Twelfth Night, or, What You Will*. The phrase "What You Will" expresses the topsy-turvy atmosphere of the play. While connecting the subplot of *Twelfth Night* to the subtitle of the play, Michael Taylor compares the passive posturing of Orsino, who reflects the acceptance of events shaped by a carefree or festive approach, to the more active stance of Viola, who aptly captures the essence of the subtitle, "What You Will." Olivia and Orsino both retreat from reality in their respective emotional indulgences: Orsino's in unrequited love and Olivia's in grief for her brother. Malvolio, however, believes he can change his reality through sheer force of will and therefore also acts according to the subtitle in his quest for greatness. It is therefore clear that the meaning of *Twelfth Night's* subtitle has specific connection to the play's subplot concerning Malvolio. It should also be noted that Olivia is the only character in the play to actually utter the words of the subtitle, when she says to Malvolio, "If it be a suit from the count, I am sick, or not at home what you will to dismiss it" (1.5.109-110). In telling Malvolio to use his discretion as steward and to do "what [he] will," Olivia gives him permission to use any form of falseness to prevent the disruption of her mourning.

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