

# REEL TO REAL TEACHERS' RESOURCE

## *Twelfth Night*

Understand more about the world of the film  
Key Stage 3–5: English, Drama and History

# INTO FILM

# V&A

# Reel to Real: Twelfth Night

## Key Stage 3–5: English, Drama and History

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### Introduction

This resource is intended for teachers to use with their students on site at the V&A. It was created as part of a partnership with education charity Into Film.

The resource explores the film *Twelfth Night*. It guides students to objects in the Museum that provide context for the film and for Shakespeare's plays. We suggest that groups divide into pairs to follow the activities.

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### Film summary

Shakespeare wrote *Twelfth Night* in around 1601–2. It is a comedy of mistaken identities and unrequited love. This film version from 1996 is set in the late 19th century.

At the opening of the film, identical twins Viola and Sebastian are shipwrecked and separated, each believing the other to be dead. Viola dresses in her brother's clothes and seeks refuge in the court of Duke Orsino. She quickly falls in love with him, but he is in love with Olivia, a beautiful countess. Olivia rejects Orsino, and, believing the disguised Viola to be a man, falls in love with her. The comedy ensues.

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### At the Museum

Visit the following V&A galleries to provide a context for *Twelfth Night*. Use this resource in conjunction with the V&A Map.

**Britain 1500–1760**, Level 2, Room 57

Find the Great Bed of Ware. Sir Toby Belch refers to this object in the play, though the line is missing from the film.

'And as many lies as will lie in thy sheet of paper, although the sheet were big enough for the bed of Ware in England, set 'em down.'

Shakespeare included reference to this large bed because it was famous and his audience would have understood the joke about its size. What might be an equivalent object or reference today?

**Paintings**, Level 3, Room 82, The Edwin and Susan Davies Galleries

Find the painting Shakespeare's Principal Characters by Thomas Stothard. The painting is on the wall to the right of the arched entrance. It hangs in the middle of the wall.

Shakespeare's characters were a fashionable topic for artists by the end of the 18th century. Characters from *Twelfth Night* can be seen from left to right in the painting: Olivia, Malvolio, Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek. What aspects of the characters is the artist trying to emphasise? After seeing the film, discuss how the performers differ or are similar to this depiction.

**Theatre & Performance**, Level 3, Room 106

Find Mr William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories & Tragedies (First Folio). It is in Room 106, in the case next to the rhinoceros.

The *First Folio* was published in 1623. Without it, *Twelfth Night* would not have appeared in print. It contains phrases that Shakespeare devised, some of which we still use today:

'It's Greek to me...' 'In a pickle...'

'The more fool you...' 'Dead as a doornail...'

Why do you think we still use these phrases and what does this say about Shakespeare's influence?

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### Follow-up activities/find out more

The V&A's collections are rich in material linked to Shakespeare's works and his time.

For images of performers and designs from past productions visit <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>. Search for 'Twelfth Night'

Download the Shakespeare Trail, a tour of objects in the V&A related to the playwright and his work: [http://www.vam.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/241047/Shakespeare\\_trail.pdf](http://www.vam.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/241047/Shakespeare_trail.pdf)

The National Video Archive of Performance (NVAP) is a collection of recordings of live UK theatre. It includes live recordings of *Twelfth Night* and other Shakespeare productions, which can be viewed by groups free of charge at the V&A. Contact [bookings.office@vam.ac.uk](mailto:bookings.office@vam.ac.uk) to make an appointment. A full list of recordings is available here: [www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/nvap/](http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/nvap/)

Continue learning through film by setting up a free Intro Film Club at your school. [www.filmclub.org/register](http://www.filmclub.org/register). Access a catalogue of over 4000 film titles including those in the Reel to Real programme, as well as curriculum-linked resources created in partnership with the V&A. <http://www.intofilm.org/>