

Simply Charlotte Mason presents

# *Twelfth Night*

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*Shakespeare in Three Steps*

by Rebekah Shafer

*An enjoyable and simple approach to  
some of the greatest literature ever written—  
the plays of William Shakespeare!*

Now you can help your students become familiar with Shakespeare's imaginative stories, memorable characters, and brilliant lines in **three simple steps: read the story, hear the script, and watch the play.**

*Shakespeare in Three Steps* provides everything you need:

- **A well-written story version of the play** by E. Nesbit or Charles and Mary Lamb—classic narratives that have been providing a wonderful introduction to Shakespeare's plays for decades;
- **The complete script of the play** with helpful notes to explain unusual terms or add to your understanding of Shakespeare's stories, characters, and lines;
- **An outlined plan for walking through the script**, divided into manageable portions with quick recaps, scene introductions, and summaries that will guide you each step of the way;
- **Script highlights**, featuring well-known or just ponder-worthy lines, that will gently introduce the Bard's genius and cultivate an appreciation for his wonderful way with words;
- **Parental advisories** to give you a heads-up on scenes that may contain material inappropriate for children;
- **Helpful lists** of the characters in the scenes and the number of lines each one speaks, so you can assign parts knowledgeably for reading sessions or acting roles;
- **Candid reviews** of several video recordings of the play to save you time previewing and help you select a suitable presentation for your students to watch and enjoy.

*“To become intimate with Shakespeare in this way is a great enrichment of mind and instruction of conscience”—Charlotte Mason*

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**Charlotte Mason**  
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*Shakespeare in Three Steps*  
**Twelfth Night**

by Rebekah Shafer

Recommended for Grades 2–12

Comedy

Summary: Two twins, brother and sister, are shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria. The sister, believing her brother to be drowned and worried that Illyria might not be safe for her, decides to disguise herself as a man. In her new garb she presents herself at the Duke's court as a pageboy and quickly becomes a favorite, hiding her growing love for the Duke beneath the guise of devoted friendship. The Duke, meanwhile, is attempting to win the hand of another fair lady. This lady refuses the Duke, steadfastly grieving the death of a family member to the point of oblivion—unaware even of the chaos being wreaked by her other mischievous relatives, until the Duke sends his new page to woo her in his stead. Unfortunately, the lady falls for the seeming pageboy, and the ensuing chaos is not sorted out until the twin brother arrives.

Shakespeare in Three Steps: Twelfth Night  
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# Shakespeare in Three Steps

Understand and enjoy Shakespeare's plays by following these three steps.

**Step 1: Read the story.**

Read aloud the story version of the play to get familiar with the main characters and plot.

**Step 2: Hear the script.**

Listen to each scene on the audio dramatization and follow along in the script, or assign students to read aloud the various characters' lines themselves.

**Step 3: Watch the play.**

Enjoy a live or recorded presentation of the play.





## Step 1: Read the story.

Ask students: Have you ever known twins who looked so much alike it was difficult to tell them apart? Explain that, in *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare decided to capitalize on that effect and wrote a comedy based on people being mistaken for one another.

Read aloud the story version of *Twelfth Night* below to get familiar with the main characters and plot. Feel free to divide the story in half, reading half now and the rest next time. If desired, help the students create a list of the main characters with a brief description of who each one is to help them keep everybody straight in their minds as you go along.

# Twelfth Night

(from *Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare for Children* by E. Nesbit)

Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, was deeply in love with a beautiful Countess named Olivia. Yet was all his love in vain, for she disdained his suit; and when her brother died, she sent back a messenger from the Duke, bidding him tell his master that for seven years she would not let the very air behold her face, but that, like a nun, she would walk veiled; and all this for the sake of a dead brother's love, which she would keep fresh and lasting in her sad remembrance.

The Duke longed for someone to whom he could tell his sorrow, and repeat over and over again the story of his love. And chance brought him such a companion. For about this time a goodly ship was wrecked on the Illyrian coast, and among those who reached land in safety were the captain and a fair young maid, named Viola. But she was little grateful for being rescued from the perils of the sea, since she feared that her twin brother was drowned, Sebastian, as dear to her as the heart in her bosom, and so like her that, but for the difference in their manner of dress, one could hardly be told from the other. The captain, for her comfort, told her that he had seen her brother bind himself "to a strong mast that lived upon the sea," and that thus there was hope that he might be saved.

Viola now asked in whose country she was, and learning that the young Duke Orsino ruled there, and was as noble in his nature as in his name, she decided to disguise herself in male attire, and seek for employment with him as a page.

In this she succeeded, and now from day to day she had to listen to the story of Orsino's love. At first she sympathized very truly with him, but soon her sympathy grew to love. At last it occurred to Orsino that his hopeless love-suit might prosper better if he sent this pretty lad to woo Olivia for him. Viola unwillingly went on this errand, but when she came to the house, Malvolio, Olivia's steward, a vain, officious man, sick, as his mistress told him, of self-love, forbade the messenger admittance.

Viola, however (who was now called Cesario), refused to take any denial, and vowed to have speech with the Countess. Olivia, hearing how her instructions were defied and

## Notes

*Twelfth Night* is a festival marking the coming of Epiphany, which concludes the Twelve Days of Christmas. This play was originally written as a *Twelfth Night* entertainment for the close of the Christmas season.

The play's alternate name is *What You Will*.



## Step 2: Hear the script.

Make a copy of the script on pages 39–130 for each student who can read. Work your way through the script over several sittings, as outlined on the following pages. Each session will follow a sequence similar to the one below:

- Use the notes to introduce each scene. Highlight the featured lines if desired.
- Listen to the scene(s) on the audio dramatization and follow along in the script, or assign students to read aloud the various characters' lines themselves.
- Invite any questions or comments, then set it aside until next time.

## Notes

*We recommend  
The Arkangel  
Shakespeare audio  
dramatizations.*

## Act I, Scenes 1–2

- ❑ Ask students what they recall from last time’s reading of the story of *Twelfth Night*. Explain that the play divides the story into five parts, called Acts. Some of the acts are divided into smaller portions, called Scenes. Today they will listen to Act I, Scenes 1–2. Read the scene summary to give students the context for the lines they will be hearing.

*Scene Summary:* Duke Orsino of Illyria is head over heels in love with the fair lady Olivia, and has sent one of his attendants to her to see if she will grant him any sign of favor. Olivia, however, is mourning the death of her brother and insists that she will do nothing but grieve for the next seven years.

Meanwhile, on the seacoast, a few survivors have washed up from a shipwreck. Among them is the woman Viola. Saddened that her brother Sebastian appears to have drowned, and a little frightened at being on her own in a strange land, Viola convinces the captain of the ship to disguise her as a boy. Once she is disguised she adopts the name Cesario and plans to present herself at the royal court as a pageboy.

- ❑ Distribute a copy of the script to each student who can read.
- ❑ (Optional) Take a sneak peek at these lines from the script and enjoy Shakespeare’s wording.

» Scene 1, Lines 25–33: The Duke’s attendant relates to the Duke what Olivia is doing with her time.

VALENTINE

So please my lord, I might not be admitted,  
But from her handmaid do return this answer:  
The element itself, till seven years’ heat,  
Shall not behold her face at ample view;  
But, like a cloistress, she will veiled walk,  
And water once a day her chamber round  
With eye-offending brine: all this to season  
A brother’s dead love, which she would keep fresh  
And lasting in her sad remembrance.

» Scene 2, Lines 47–61: Viola persuades the Captain to help her with her plan.

*Shakespeare wrote the lines of his plays in both prose (conversational speaking) and poetry.*

*PERSON: Prose lines will look like this.*

*PERSON  
Poetry lines will look like this.*

VIOLA

There is a fair behavior in thee, captain;  
And though that nature with a beauteous wall  
Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee  
I will believe thou hast a mind that suits  
With this thy fair and outward character.  
I prithee, and I'll pay thee bounteously,  
Conceal me what I am, and be my aid  
For such disguise as haply shall become  
The form of my intent. I'll serve this duke.  
Thou shall present me as an eunuch to him;  
It may be worth thy pains. For I can sing  
And speak to him in many sorts of music  
That will allow me very worth his service.  
What else may hap, to time I will commit;  
Only shape thou thy silence to my wit.

- ❑ Listen to Act I, Scenes 1–2, on the audio dramatization (approx. 7 minutes) and follow along in the script, or assign students to read aloud the various characters' lines themselves. If you are assigning students to read aloud, the following list might be helpful; it details the characters who speak and the approximate number of lines each one has in this scene.

- The Duke Orsino (31 lines)
- Curio, a gentleman attendant (2 lines)
- Valentine, another attendant (9 lines)
- Viola, survivor from the wreck (33 lines)
- The Captain of the wrecked ship (31 lines)



### Step 3: Watch the play.

Now that you and your students are familiar with the story line and the script, you are ready for the best part of this study: watch a presentation of the play! Check for any local live performances that you could attend, or watch a video recording. (See video reviews below.)

#### Video Recording Reviews

- Set in Victorian England, the 1996 version from Renaissance Films features Helena Bonham Carter, Imogen Stubbs, and Steven Mackintosh, with director Trevor Nunn, and makes the story line very clear using a movie style. Ironically, this clarity is often achieved through rearranging the order of scenes or intermixing elements from various scenes. The movie begins with a narrator and some extraneous acting to set up the background of the twins and the shipwreck. After the opening credits, the play starts with Act 1, Scene 2, first. The script is delivered faithfully but with omissions to keep things simpler and moving along. The acting is superb throughout, and the screenplay does an admirable job of developing each character. Though many scenes are comic, the clown, portrayed by Ben Kingsley, is played as more of a melancholy persona in this version. This enjoyable presentation is rated PG. Parents may want to note the following advisories: Viola is transformed from a young woman into a pageboy during the opening credits, which includes some brief images and actions of questionable taste; at one point, Viola/Cesario is called into the room where Count Orsino is bathing and she carefully averts her gaze; a nude statue is featured in the scene where Malvolio discovers the counterfeit letter; and Sir Anthony suffers a knee to the crotch in the duel scene. (*Approx. 133 minutes*)
- The 2013 Globe Theatre's faithful reconstruction uses an all-male cast in Elizabethan costumes, few props, and a simple stage set—authentic performance practices during Shakespeare's day. This live performance, starring Mark Rylance and Stephen Fry and directed by Tim Carroll, is true to the script and delivers an outstanding comedy. Music is provided by time-period instruments and songs, and during the intermission between Acts 2 and 3 the cast sings a period song with the clown. The only parental advisory is during Act 1, Scene 3, when Maria casts a glance at her chest during the "buttery-bar" line. All in all, an accurate and hugely fun presentation appropriate for all ages. (*Approx. 175 minutes*)
- The Stratford Collection includes a 1986 version, starring Seana McKenna and Nicholas Pennel, directed by Alan Erlich. This presentation was filmed as a play. It seems to have more of a serious, dignified feel rather than playing up the comedy of the plot. The actors were impressively adept at delivering their lines; they excelled in

#### Notes

*Be sure to do your research to avoid any unpleasant surprises when watching Shakespeare productions. Unfortunately, some directors feel compelled to add unnecessary visual elaborations on the text. Preview any video presentation and check with someone who is directly involved with any live production to find out how it aligns with the original script and how appropriate it is for children.*





