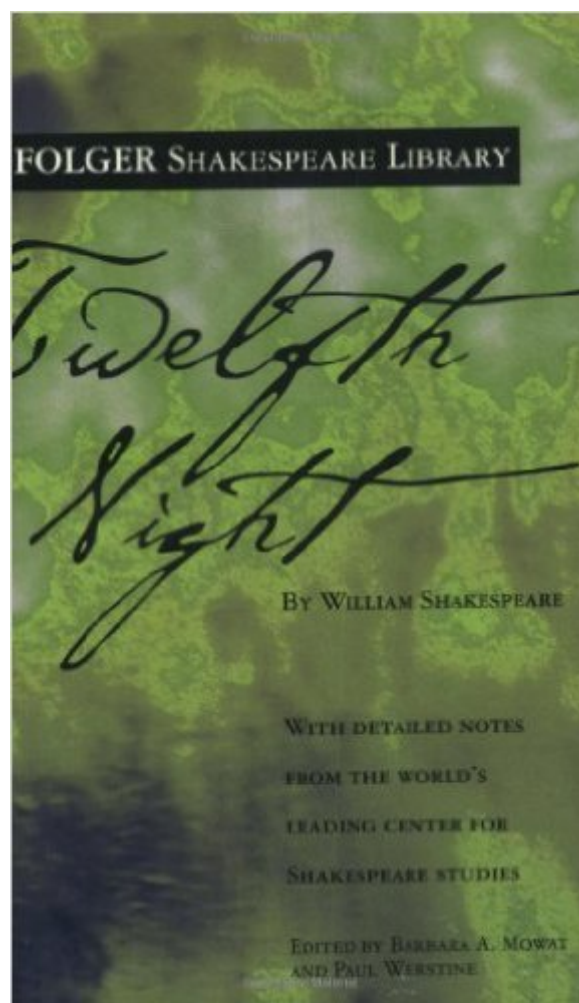


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Twelfth Night (Folger Shakespeare Library)



Synopsis

Named for the twelfth night after Christmas, the end of the Christmas season, *Twelfth Night* plays with love and power. The Countess Olivia, a woman with her own household, attracts Duke (or Count) Orsino. Two other would-be suitors are her pretentious steward, Malvolio, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek. Onto this scene arrive the twins Viola and Sebastian; caught in a shipwreck, each thinks the other has drowned. Viola disguises herself as a male page and enters Orsino's service. Orsino sends her as his envoy to Olivia only to have Olivia fall in love with the messenger. The play complicates, then wonderfully untangles, these relationships. The authoritative edition of *Twelfth Night* from The Folger Shakespeare Library, the trusted and widely used Shakespeare series for students and general readers, includes:

- Freshly edited text based on the best early printed version of the play
- Full explanatory notes conveniently placed on pages facing the text of the play
- Scene-by-scene plot summaries
- A key to the play's famous lines and phrases
- An introduction to reading Shakespeare's language
- An essay by a leading Shakespeare scholar providing a modern perspective on the play
- Fresh images from the Folger Shakespeare Library's vast holdings of rare books
- An annotated guide to further reading

Essay by Catherine Belsey

The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, is home to the world's largest collection of Shakespeare's printed works, and a magnet for Shakespeare scholars from around the globe. In addition to exhibitions open to the public throughout the year, the Folger offers a full calendar of performances and programs. For more information, visit Folger.edu.

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Customer Reviews

For a long time I would not let my students use No Fear because I wanted them to be able to read the play in Shakespeare's words, but when I tried to discuss the plays with them, I always felt like I was the only who read the play. (I use it for Hamlet as well.) After I let them use it the first time, I was so excited to hear my students' comments on the play because they actually understood what they were reading. When they write about the play and when we discuss it, we use Shakespeare's words. We also compare the modern words and Shakespeare's words. I really like the No Fears and recommend them to people who really want to understand Shakespeare. I have taught high school and am now teaching at a university, so I know the No Fears are great on both levels.

There are several really worthwhile editions of Twelfth Night, but don't overlook this one. The Foreword and notes are excellent and useful; the format's sturdy and readable. It's a good copy to have for the scholar/performer/director.

Please notice that G.H.'s in-house review above does not refer to the recording pictured above, nor do any of the reviews so far. What follows refers only to the Naxos set. There are now three complete recordings of Twelfth Night available. We have the older and elegantly read version on Harper Audio with Dorothy Tutin as the best Viola of the lot. Acted with a bit more verve though with less poetry is the Arkangel Shakespeare recording with a Scottish Malvolio and a cast of younger sounding actors who are making names for themselves in Great Britain. However I am very impressed with the "Twelfth Night" that is one of the latest additions to the Naxos Classic Drama series. By far, this is the best-produced "Twelfth Night." One actually feels he is hearing an actual stage performance with all of the action but with the loss of none of the poetry. Perhaps the Viola does sound a little maturer than imagination would have her and the Sir Toby Belch a little less belchy sounding than others. None of the Feste's sing as marvelously as did Peter Pears on the long deleted Marlowe Society recording (also with Tutin); however, on this Naxos set David Timson stays nicely in tune--and directs the production to boot. And he keeps things moving neatly along, which is saying a lot for Shakespeare recordings. The CD version has the advantage of excellent tracking cues for not only each scene but for key points within the scene. The Harper CDs give a new track only for each new scene and the tapes (of course) are quite useless in that regard. The Arkangel series at present exists only on tapes but they are planning to reissue the entire series on CDs. So this Naxos release is the one of choice so far.

The Folger Shakespeare edition of this play gives it a leg up on other versions as far as homeschooling goes. First, the text of the play appears on the right-hand pages, leaving the left-hand pages for glosses, text notes, and illustrations that clarify numerous allusions in the play. Second, sections in the introductory material explain Shakespeare's language, life, and theater, as well as the print history of the play. In the closing material, the editors have included textual notes, an essay entitled "'Twelfth Night': A Modern Perspective" by Catherine Belsey, an annotated list for further reading, and a key to famous lines in the play. Most useful for homeschooling, perhaps, are the lesson plans available at the Folger web site in either PDF or print version. This play served as the basis of the popular movie *She's the Man*, which can be viewed as a follow-up for comparison and discussion.

Each of the Harper/Caedmon Audio series of Shakespeare's plays, originally recorded in the 60s by the Shakespeare Recording Society and now being reissued on cassette, lives up to a high standard of performance. But the "Twelfth Night" recording is, in my view, the best. The stellar cast includes a young Vanessa Redgrave as Olivia, and a hilarious Willoughby Goddard as Sir Toby. The scenes where Paul Scofield as Malvolio is deceived with a forged letter into thinking that Olivia loves him have a side-splitting humor that comes through even though the play is nearly 400 years old. The sound quality is excellent. I would have to say that this is the crown jewel of the whole Caedmon series.

The Oxford Shakespeare series is one of my favorites because of its extensive and helpful annotations and insightful commentary and analysis. Editorial choices, make sense and serve the story. I teach and direct Shakespeare productions and find that Oxford helps my actors understand the text!

I had to read Twelfth Night for my British Literature class. I'm homeschooled in 12th grade, so I don't have a teacher helping me understand the language. I remembered using another edition of No Fear Shakespeare in the past (A Midsummer Night's Dream) for my 8th grade English class, so I decided to try it again. This story is amazing, and I'm grateful to be able to fully understand it now. I read through it in a couple of days and honestly enjoyed every moment of it. What I love is that I was able to easily look over to the original text when I wanted to get a feel for the writing style - important with this story, because it includes a lot of songs and poetry - but the translations make it easier to understand. I got an A on my book report which I never would've achieved without the help

of Spark Notes!

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