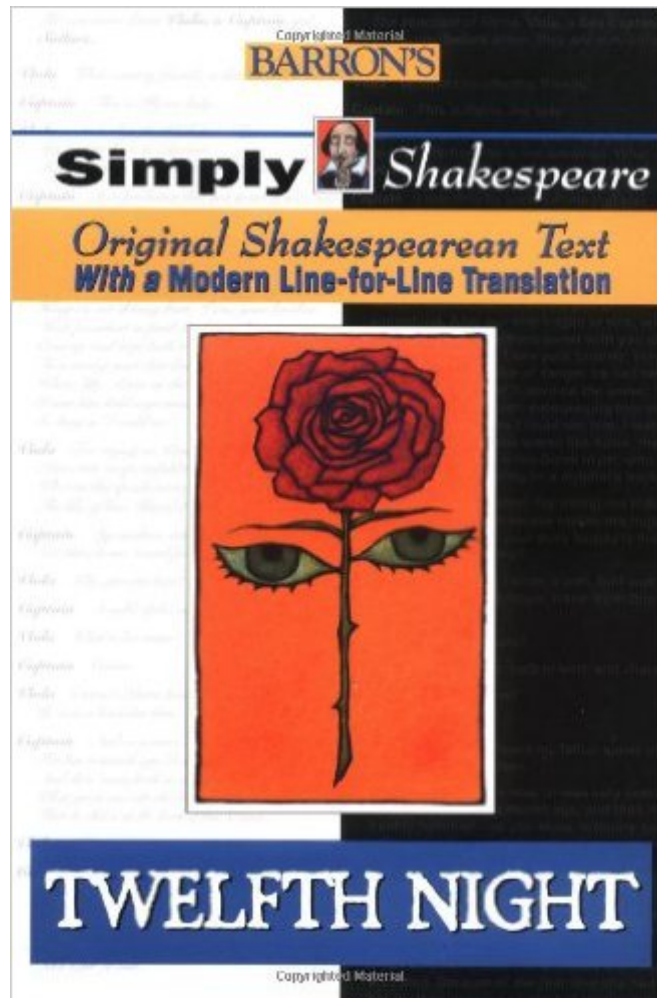


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# Twelfth Night (Simply Shakespeare)



## Synopsis

Because Orsino is hopelessly in love with the aloof Countess Olivia, he doesn't notice Viola, who, disguised as a boy, is in love with him. This comedy's plot bristles with intrigues galore, but all finally ends happily as lovers are paired. Books in this new, illustrated series present complete texts of Shakespeare's plays. However, the lines are set up so students can see the bard's original poetic phrases printed side-by-side and line-by-line with a modern "translation" on the facing page. Starting in the late 1580s and for several decades that followed, Shakespeare's plays were popular entertainment for London's theatergoers. His Globe Theatre was the equivalent of a Broadway theater in today's New York. The plays have endured, but over the course of 400+ years, the English language has changed in many ways; which is why today's students often find Shakespeare's idiom difficult to comprehend. Simply Shakespeare offers an excellent solution to their problem. Introducing each play is a general essay covering Shakespeare's life and times. At the beginning of each of the five acts in every play, a two-page spread describes what is about to take place. The story's background is explained, followed by brief descriptions of key people who will appear in the act, details students should watch for as the story unfolds, discussion of the play's historical context, how the play was staged in Shakespeare's day, and explanation of puns and plays on words that occur in characters' dialogues. Identifying icons preceding each of these study points are printed in a second color, then are located again as cross-references in the play's original text. For instance, where words spoken by a person in the play offer insights into his or another character's personality, the "Characters" icon will appear as a cross-reference in both the introductory spread and the play proper. Following each act, a closing spread presents questions and discussion points for use as teachers' aids. Guided by the inspiring format of this fine new series, both teachers and students will come to understand and appreciate the genius of Shakespeare as never before.

## Book Information

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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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