

One important difference between plays written in Shakespeare's time and those written today is that Elizabethan plays were published after their performances, sometimes even after their authors' deaths, and were in many ways a record of what happened on stage during these performances rather than directions for what should happen. Actors were allowed to suggest changes to scenes and dialogue and had much more freedom with their parts than actors today. Shakespeare's plays are no exception. In *Hamlet*, for instance, much of the plot revolves around the fact that Hamlet writes his own scene to be added to a play in order to ensnare his murderous father.

Shakespeare's plays were published in various forms and with a wide variety of accuracy during his time. The discrepancies between versions of his plays from one publication to the next make it difficult for editors to put together authoritative editions of his works. Plays could be published in large anthologies called Folios (the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays contains 36 plays) or smaller Quartos. Folios were so named because of the way their paper was folded in half to make chunks of two pages each which were sewn together to make a large volume. Quartos were smaller, cheaper books containing only one play. Their paper was folded twice, making four pages. In general, the First Folio is of better quality than the quartos. Therefore, plays that are printed in the First Folio are much easier for editors to compile.

Although Shakespeare's language and classical references seem archaic to some modern readers, they were commonplace to his audiences. His viewers came from all classes, and his plays appealed to all kinds of sensibilities, from "highbrow" accounts of kings and queens of old to the "lowbrow" blunderings of clowns and servants. Even his most tragic plays include clown characters for comic relief and to comment on the events of the play. Audiences would have been familiar with his numerous references to classical mythology and literature, since these stories were staples of the Elizabethan knowledge base. While Shakespeare's plays appealed to all levels of society and included familiar story lines and themes, they also expanded his audiences' vocabularies. Many phrases and words that we use today, like "amazement," "in my mind's eye," and "the milk of human kindness" were coined by Shakespeare. His plays contain a greater variety and number of words than almost any other work in the English language, showing that he was quick to innovate, had a huge vocabulary, and was interested in using new phrases and words.

DESIRE and love theme

Every major character in *Twelfth Night* experiences some form of desire or love. Duke Orsino is in love with Olivia. Viola falls in love with Orsino, while disguised as his pageboy, Cesario. Olivia falls in love with Cesario. This love triangle is only resolved when Olivia falls in love with Viola's twin brother, Sebastian, and, at the last minute, Orsino decides that he actually loves Viola. *Twelfth Night* derives much of its comic force by satirizing these lovers. For instance, Shakespeare pokes fun at Orsino's flowery love poetry, making it clear that Orsino is more in love with being in love than with his supposed beloveds. At the same time, by showing the details of the intricate rules that govern how nobles engage in courtship, Shakespeare examines how characters play the "game" of love.

Twelfth Night further mocks the main characters' romantic ideas about love through the escapades of the servants. Malvolio's idiotic behavior, which he believes will win Olivia's heart, serves to underline Orsino's own only-slightly-less silly romantic ideas. Meanwhile, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Sir Toby Belch, and Maria, are always cracking crass double entendres that make it

clear that while the nobles may spout flowery poetry about romantic love, that love is at least partly motivated by desire and sex. Shakespeare further makes fun of romantic love by showing how the devotion that connects siblings (Viola and Sebastian) and servants to masters (Antonio Sebastian and Maria to Olivia) actually prove more constant than any of the romantic bonds in the play.