



ASL SHAKESPEARE PROJECT

LESSON PLAN 16: “The Clothes Make A Man”

SECTION Shakespeare; SUBSECTION Theatre in London; MOVIE 4 (Costume & Disguise)

SECTION Shakespeare; SUBSECTION Theatre in London; MOVIE 2 (Sumptuary Laws)

OBJECTIVES

- > To explore disguise as part of the theme of appearance vs. reality
- > To discuss the use of clothing in identification of social class
- > To relate the use of clothing to the theme of the folly of ambition.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Society in Elizabethan England was divided into two classes: nobility and everyone else. Nobility were born with wealth and family status. Strict laws were passed to ensure the separation of the classes. Certain articles of clothing, colors, and fabrics were reserved for the aristocracy. Dressing above one’s station was considered immoral and unethical.

Twelfth Night makes symbolic use of clothing to represent desire for higher social status, sexual ambiguity, and disguise.

WHAT TO DO

1. Identify clothing used as a symbol in modern culture and in your school. What clothing conventions do the cliques in your school follow?
2. Study how organizations such as the Girl Scouts use clothing to show rank, honor, and status?
3. Identify photos of clothing worn in different locations. What are the fabrics and materials used to show wealth and power?
4. Discuss the role of the following clothing passages related to the themes listed in the lesson objective:

EXAMPLE	THEME	POINTS TO CONSIDER
Viola’s dress as a boy	Disguises	Status as a single woman; love triangles and identity confusion
Olivia’s veil	Appearance vs. Reality	Her veil as a symbol of grief but also as a shield against romantic advances
Feste’s multi-colored fool’s costume	Appearance vs. Reality	Feste’s clothing represent his role in society but not his true wit.
Malvolio’s fantasy about wearing a velvet gown	The Folly of Ambition Social Class	Malvolio fantasizes about marrying up in social class

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EXAMPLE	THEME	POINTS TO CONSIDER
Malvolio’s steward’s chain	Social Class	Sir Toby Belch’s reminder to Malvolio of his social status
Malvolio’s yellow stockings, cross-gartered	The Folly of Ambition	A low-class dress style used to impress Olivia
Feste’s priest’s robe	Disguises	Dress as a crucial part of fooling someone

SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK THE CLASS

1. Why does Viola disguise herself as a boy?
2. How does Olivia recognize that Cesario (Viola) is a “gentleman” even though he doesn’t wear “noble” clothing, or clothing of a higher social class?