

**Study material :
II M.A. ENGLISH
SUB CODE: 18PEL7
SHAKESPEARE**

TWELFTH NIGHT - SUMMARY

Shakespeare is the greatest of English playwrights. He has written thirty seven plays which include comedies, tragedies and historical plays. Twelfth Night is a popular Comedy of Shakespeare. Duke Orsino, Sebastian, Viola (Cesario) , Olivia, Sir.Toby, Sir.Andrew, Maria, Malvolio, Fabian and Feste are the major characters of the play. Triangular love and mistaken identity are the major themes/motifs of this play.

Viola is shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria and she reaches ashore with the help of a Captain. She has lost contact with her twin brother, Sebastian, whom she believes to be drowned, and with the aid of the Captain, she disguises herself as a young man under the name Cesario and enters the service of Duke Orsino. Duke Orsino has convinced himself that he is in love with Olivia, who is mourning the recent deaths of her father and brother. She refuses to see entertainments, be in the company of men, or accept love or marriage proposals from anyone, the Duke included, until seven years have passed. Duke Orsino then uses 'Cesario' as an intermediary to profess his passionate love before Olivia. Olivia, however, falls in love with 'Cesario', setting her at odds with her professed duty. In the meantime, Viola has fallen in love with Duke Orsino, creating a love triangle: Viola loves Duke Orsino, Duke Orsino loves Olivia, and Olivia loves Viola disguised as Cesario.

In the comic subplot, several characters conspire to make Olivia's pompous and puritan steward, Malvolio, believe that Olivia has fallen for him. This involves Olivia's riotous uncle, Sir Toby Belch; another would-be suitor, a silly squire named Sir Andrew Aguecheek; her servants Maria and Fabian; and her witty fool, Feste. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew engage themselves in drinking and revelry, thus disturbing the peace of Olivia's household until late into the night, prompting Malvolio to chastise them. Sir Toby famously retorts, "Dost thou think, because *thou* art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?".

Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Maria plan revenge on Malvolio. They convince Malvolio that Olivia is secretly in love with him by planting a love letter, written by Maria in Olivia's handwriting. It asks Malvolio to wear yellow stockings cross-gartered—a colour and fashion that Olivia actually hates—to be rude to the rest of the servants, and to smile constantly in the presence of Olivia. Malvolio finds the letter and reacts in surprised delight. He starts acting out the contents of the letter to show Olivia his positive response. Olivia is shocked by the changes in Malvolio and agreeing that he seems mad, leaves him to be cared for by his tormentors. Pretending that Malvolio is insane, they lock him up in a dark chamber. Feste visits him to mock his insanity, both disguised as a priest and as himself.

Meanwhile, Viola's twin, Sebastian, has been rescued by Antonio, a sea captain who previously fought against Orsino, yet who accompanies Sebastian to Illyria, despite the danger, because of his admiration for Sebastian. Sebastian's appearance adds the confusion of mistaken identities to the comedy. Taking Sebastian for 'Cesario', Olivia asks him to marry her, and they are secretly married in a church. Finally, when 'Cesario' and Sebastian appear in the presence of both Olivia and Orsino, there is more wonder and confusion at their physical similarity. At this point, Viola reveals her identity and is reunited with her twin brother.

The play ends in a declaration of marriage between Duke Orsino and Viola, and it is learned that Sir Toby has married Maria. Malvolio swears revenge on his tormentors and stalks off, but Orsino sends Fabian to placate him.

VIOLA :

Viola is a memorable creation of Shakespeare. Viola's actions produce all of the play's momentum. She is a young woman of Messaline. In the beginning, Viola is found shipwrecked on the shores of Illyria and separated from her twin brother, not knowing whether he is alive or dead, the Sea Captain tells her that this place is ruled by the Duke Orsino, who is in love with Countess Olivia. Viola wants to serve her, but, finding this impossible, she has the Sea Captain dress her up like a eunuch, so she can serve the Duke instead.

Viola chooses the name Cesario and secures a position as a page working for the Duke. Orsino then entrusts Cesario (Viola) to express his love for Olivia, without knowing that Viola had begun to fall in love with him. When Viola hears this, she is heartbroken but listens reluctantly. Cesario continues to pass messages back and forth between the Duke and Olivia, but

this eventually places her in somewhat of a quandary: she is forced by duty to do her best to plead Orsino's case to Olivia, but an internal conflict of interest arises when she falls in love with Orsino, and Olivia, believing her to be male, falls in love with her. Upon receiving a ring from Olivia's steward, Viola contemplates the love triangle her disguise has created, admitting only time can solve it.

When Sebastian, Viola's lost twin, arrives alive and well in Illyria with a pirate named Antonio, the chaos of mistaken identity ensues because of their remarkably similar looks, only made more similar due to Viola dressing up as a male. The absurdity of the identity crisis builds until Sebastian and Viola as Cesario meet for the first time, and eventually recognise one another. Olivia and Sebastian have already been secretly married, as she mistook him for Cesario, and Sebastian, ignorant of the foregoing love triangle, was simply entranced by a beautiful woman. Ultimately then, given what he has witnessed, Orsino admits that he will no longer pursue Olivia, agreeing to love her as his sister, and decides to take Viola as his wife once she quits her disguise.

DUKE ORSINO :

Orsino is one of the central characters in the play. He is the Duke of Illyria.. He is a powerful nobleman who is trustworthy and kind to everyone he meets. A bachelor, Orsino is in love with the beautiful Lady Olivia , and he constantly compares his love for her with music. He finds himself becoming more and more fond of his new page boy, Cesario (Viola in disguise), the daughter of a nobleman who knew Duke Orsino.

Viola falls in love with Orsino, despite continuing to plead his case to Olivia. But then Olivia, under the impression that Viola was Cesario, falls in love with her. Later, when Viola's twin brother Sebastian comes to Illyria, he is mistaken as Cesario by Olivia and is asked to marry her, to which he agrees. At the end of the play, when the confusion over the identities of Viola and her twin Sebastian is resolved, and Orsino comes to know Viola's true identity, he agrees to take Viola as his wife.

Orsino, as seen in the play, is a very passionate man. Being in love with the idea of love, he sees Olivia and immediately thinks up a fantasy, convincing himself any passion inside him is only for her. But when his page boy "Cesario" begins to work with him, he becomes fond of the

boy, which is one reason to explain why he is easily able to switch his love from Olivia to Viola (Cesario) in the end.

Orsino is in love with the idea of being in love and is depressed about this, so when he says "if music be the food of Love play on" he is trying to cure his depression, and Shakespeare uses a metaphor about feeding love, that refers back to the "food of love".

OLIVIA :

Olivia is the third major character in the play. She is a beautiful lady of noble birth who lives in Illyria. Before the play begins, she has recently lost her brother who was her guardian after her father died. This loss has made her grief-stricken and she has refused to see anyone who does not reside in her household and declared that she will be in mourning for seven years.

Because of her wealth and beauty, Olivia attracts various men (Malvolio, Sir Andrew Aguecheek) who wish to marry her. The play begins with the Duke of Illyria, Orsino, pining away over his love for Olivia while she refuses to accept him as a suitor. Sir Andrew has been invited to her household by Sir Toby, and Andrew hopes to use his stay to make Olivia his bride. Malvolio uses his position as steward to gain her affections.

Despite all of the rumpus going on at her home, Olivia refuses all visitors until Orsino sends his new page, the protagonist of the play, Viola, to call on her. Viola has been recently shipwrecked and she has taken on the disguise of a boy so that she may work for Orsino with no one knowing her true identity. During the shipwreck, Viola was separated from her brother, Sebastian, and she believes that he has died.

Olivia quickly falls in love with the witty Cesario (Viola's name when she is in disguise) because Cesario is unafraid of saying what he/she is thinking, even though Cesario never says anything nice to Olivia (except, of course, when speaking Orsino's messages). Cesario also compliments Olivia on her beauty, something that helps heal Olivia's heart from the losses she has recently incurred.

Olivia attempts to woo the young Cesario/Viola and repeatedly asks/lures him to come back to her estate by using various tricks and problems. Olivia eventually comes to the conclusion that she must marry him. However, in a case of mistaken identity, she marries Viola's

twin brother, Sebastian. All ends well, however, because Sebastian and his sister are extremely similar.

The climax of the play takes place at Olivia's estate. It is here that Olivia and Sebastian are hastily married, Viola and Sebastian rediscover each other, Malvolio is rescued, and Orsino proposes to Viola.

Sebastian : He is the twin brother of Viola . This leads to mistaken identity and a lot of delightful complications in the play. In the beginning of the play, Viola mentions that her brother Sebastian is drowned in the sea. The next appearance of Sebastian denies this, as he has been rescued by Antonio, a sea Captain who looks after Sebastian at some risk to himself. Their journey brings them to the country Illyria , ruled by Duke Orsino. Meanwhile, Viola has disguised herself as a male page named Cesario and works for the Duke. A love triangle situation ensues, where the Duke is in love with Countess Olivia , Viola falls in love with the Duke, and Olivia falls in love with Viola, thinking she is a man.

Because they look so much alike, when Olivia sees Sebastian later, after he has not backed down from a challenge by Sir.Andrew, she thinks he is "Cesario". She asks him to marry her, to which Sebastian agrees. When Viola appears with the duke, the siblings are reunited and the Duke resolves to marry Viola.

MALVOLIO :

Though seemingly a minor character, Malvolio is a highly complex man, warranting serious attention. In the play, Malvolio is defined as a kind of puritan. He despises all manner of fun and games, and wishes his world to be completely free of human sin, yet he behaves very foolishly against his stoic nature when he believes that Olivia loves him. This leads to major conflicts with characters such as Sir. Toby Belch, Sir.Andrew and Maria, mistress of the household.

Much of the play's humour comes from Maria, Feste, Toby Belch, and Andrew Aguecheek tormenting Malvolio with drinking, joking, and singing. Later in the play, Maria devises a way to have revenge upon Malvolio, and proposes it to Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Feste. Maria composes a love letter in Olivia's handwriting, and leaves it so Malvolio will find it. Beforehand, Malvolio had been wishing to marry Olivia. The letter convinces Malvolio that

Olivia loves him, and leads Malvolio to think that Olivia wishes him to smile, wear yellow stockings and cross garters. Olivia is in mourning for her brother's death, and finds smiling offensive, and yellow is "a colour she abhors, and cross garters a fashion she detests", according to Maria. When Malvolio is imprisoned for being a supposed lunatic after acting out the instructions in the letter, Feste visits him both as himself and in the guise of "Sir Topas the curate", and torments Malvolio by making him swear to heretical texts, for example, Pythagorean precepts. At the end of the play he vows, "I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you" for his public humiliation, and Olivia acknowledges that he has "been most notoriously abused."

SIR. TOBY

Sir Toby is the kinsman of Olivia. He is an ambiguous mix of high spirits and low cunning. He first appears in the play's third scene, when he storms onto the stage the morning after a hard night out, complaining about the sombre melancholy that hangs over his niece's household. "What a plague means my niece to take the death of her brother thus? I'm sure care's an enemy to life." This immediately establishes Sir Toby at the opposite pole from the languishing melancholy which dominated the first scene (including Orsino's speech, "If music be the food of love..."), identifying him as a force for vitality, noise and good cheer, as his name suggests.

At the beginning Sir Toby appears to be friends with another character, Sir Andrew, a guest of Olivia, Sir Toby's niece. However as the play progresses, it transpires that Sir Toby is just taking advantage of Sir Andrew's riches.

His tormenting of the steward Malvolio is similarly double-edged in its tone of "sportful malice". The plot against Malvolio is generally considered a comic highlight of the play, but critics have often complained of its cruelty. The play ends with the quarrel still unresolved, and Olivia warning that Malvolio "hath been most notoriously abused".

Though he taunts Malvolio with the demand "Art any more than a steward?", he only does so after Malvolio has threatened him with being turned out if he doesn't reform his ways. Indeed part of Malvolio's complaint is that Sir Toby and his companions are not acting like noblemen by drinking and singing, but like "tinkers" in an "alehouse". His appreciation of Maria, though couched in terms that might not please every woman: "She's a beagle, true-bred",

and eventual marriage, shows that he thinks his title of no particular account compared to his love for her.

Sir. Andrew Aguecheek

Sir Andrew is a foolish knight who appears as the so-called friend of Sir Toby Belch. He is a guest at the home of Sir Toby's niece Lady Olivia, where Sir Toby, a drunkard and glutton, resides. Although we are not made aware of Sir Andrew's family or connections, it is said that his annual income is 3,000 ducats, a significant amount and roughly equal to that of a skilled craftsman of the period, leading us to assume that he is a gentleman of some leisure. Ineptly, Sir Andrew attempts to court Olivia, and her rejection of him, in favour of dashing Cesario, prompts Sir Andrew to challenge Cesario to a duel. His slow-witted nature allows Sir Toby perfect opportunity to take advantage of him, openly admitting that by misusing Sir Andrew's generosity and gullibility, he has milked him for approximately two-thirds of his stated income. Sir Andrew fancies himself a great dancer and swordsman, and the scenes where he ineptly engages in these activities are points of physical comedy in the play. Sir Andrew's age is not made clear, but it is assumed that he is a number of years younger than Sir Toby.

Sir Andrew and Malvolio are probably the only characters whose situation at the end of the play is not as favourable as in the beginning. Amongst three happy couples and a humiliated Malvolio in the final scene, Sir Andrew has already made his closing exit, following Sir Toby's open insults toward him. Friendless and deep in debt, this ending echoes one of Sir Andrew's better known lines, from the third scene of the second act: "I was adored once too." The negative outcome for Sir Andrew, combined with his having been the subject of jokes and Sir Toby's greed, is a strain of melancholy in an otherwise comical play.

Feste

Feste is the traditional Shakespearean fool figuring in Twelfth Night. He is attached to the household of Olivia. He has apparently been there for some time, as he was a "fool that the Lady Olivia's father took much delight in". Although Olivia's father has died within the last year, it is possible that Feste approaches or has reached middle age, though he still has the wit to carry off good 'fooling' when he needs to, and the voice to sing lustily or

plaintively as the occasion demands. He is referred to by name only once during the play, in answer to an inquiry by Orsino of who sang a song that he heard the previous evening. Curio responds "Feste, the jester, my lord; a fool that the lady Olivia's father took much delight in. He is about the house". Throughout the rest of the play, he is addressed only as "Fool," while in the stage directions, he is mentioned as "Clown."

Feste seems to leave Olivia's house and return at his pleasure rather too freely for a servant. (At the very least he is doing some free-lance entertaining over at the house of Orsino. His habit of roaming gets him into trouble with Lady Olivia: when we first see him, he must talk his way out of being turned out—a grim fate in those days—for being absent, as it were, without leave. He succeeds, and once back in his lady's good graces, he weaves in and out of the action with the sort of impunity that was reserved for a person nobody took seriously.

SUMMARY OF ROMEO AND JULIET

Shakespeare has written tragedies involving complex characters like Macbeth, Hamlet, Othello and King Lear. On the other hand, Romeo and Juliet by Shakespeare is a tragedy of the young, star-crossed lovers, Romeo and Juliet. As the play begins, a long-standing feud between the Montague and Capulet families continues to disrupt the peace of Verona, a city in northern Italy. A brawl between the servants of the feuding households prompts the Prince to threaten both sides to keep the peace on pain of death. Benvolio advises his lovesick friend Romeo, (son of Montague), to abandon his unrequited love for Rosaline and seek another.

That night, Capulet holds a masked ball to encourage a courtship between his daughter, Juliet, and Paris, a relative of the Prince. Concealing their identities behind masks, Romeo and Benvolio go to the ball, where Romeo and Juliet fall in love at first sight, but at the end of the evening discover their identities as members of the opposed families. On his way home from the feast, Romeo climbs into Capulet's orchard to glimpse Juliet again. Juliet appears at her balcony, and the couple exchange vows of love, agreeing to marry the next day.

Romeo asks Friar Laurence to perform the marriage ceremony. Though initially reluctant, he finally agrees, hoping to reconcile the families, and marries Romeo and Juliet that afternoon.

Meanwhile, Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, sends Romeo a challenge to a duel. Romeo refuses to fight when Tybalt confronts him because they're now related. However, Mercutio, Romeo's quick-tempered friend, intervenes and accepts the challenge. Romeo tries to part the other two as they fight, but Mercutio is fatally wounded under Romeo's arm. To avenge Mercutio's death, Romeo kills Tybalt and then flees.

The Prince announces Romeo's banishment for Tybalt's murder. Romeo, in hiding at the Friar's cell, becomes hysterical at the news of his sentence and tries to kill himself, but the Friar promises to make Romeo's marriage to Juliet public and gain the Prince's pardon. Romeo and Juliet celebrate their wedding night before he leaves at dawn for Mantua.

That morning, Juliet discovers that her father has arranged for her to marry Paris on Thursday. The Capulets, unaware that Juliet is grieving for Romeo's exile rather than Tybalt's death, believe the wedding will distract her from mourning. Distressed at the prospect of a false marriage and isolated from her family, Juliet seeks advice from Friar Laurence, who offers her a sleeping potion to make her appear dead for 42 hours. During this time, the Friar will send a message to Romeo in Mantua so that Romeo can return to Verona in time for Juliet to awake.

Juliet returns home and agrees to marry Paris. In a moment of euphoria, Capulet brings the wedding forward from Thursday to Wednesday, thereby forcing Juliet to take the potion that night and reducing the time for the message to reach Romeo.

Early on Wednesday morning, Juliet's seemingly lifeless body is discovered and she is placed in the family tomb. Because an outbreak of the plague prevents the Friar's messenger from leaving Verona, Romeo now receives news of Juliet's death instead. Desperate, Romeo buys poison from an apothecary and returns to Verona.

Late that night, Romeo enters the Capulet tomb, but is confronted by Paris, whom he fights and kills. Still unaware that Juliet is in fact alive, Romeo takes the poison and dies. The

Friar, arriving too late, discovers the bodies as Juliet begins to stir. He begs her to leave with him, but Juliet refuses, and then stabs herself with Romeo's dagger.

As dawn breaks, the Watch arrives, closely followed by the Prince, who demands a full inquiry into what has happened. The two families then arrive, and the Friar comes forward to explain the tragic sequence of events. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet finally bring the feud to an end as Montague and Capulet join hands in peace.

ROMEO:

Thanks to Shakespeare's play, the name 'Romeo', in popular culture, has become nearly synonymous with the rash and passionate archetypal lover. Romeo, in *Romeo and Juliet*, does indeed experience a love of such purity and passion that he kills himself when he believes that the object of his love, Juliet, has died. The power of Romeo's love, however, often obscures a clear vision of Romeo's character, which is far more complex.

Even Romeo's relation to love is not so simple. At the beginning of the play, Romeo pines for Rosaline, proclaiming her the paragon of women and despairing at her indifference toward him. Taken together, Romeo's Rosaline-induced histrionics seem rather juvenile. Romeo is a great reader of love poetry, and the portrayal of his love for Rosaline suggests he is trying to re-create the feelings that he has read about. After first kissing Juliet, she tells him "you kiss by the book," meaning that he kisses according to the rules, and implying that while proficient, his kissing lacks originality. In reference to Rosaline, it seems, Romeo loves by the book. Rosaline, of course, slips from Romeo's mind at first sight of Juliet. But Juliet is no mere replacement. The love she shares with Romeo is far deeper, more authentic and unique than the clichéd puppy love Romeo felt for Rosaline. Romeo's love matures over the course of the play from the shallow desire to be in love to a profound and intense passion. One must ascribe Romeo's development at least in part to Juliet. Her level-headed observations, such as the one about Romeo's kissing, seem just the thing to snap Romeo from his superficial idea of love and to inspire him to begin to speak some of the most beautiful and intense love poetry ever written.

Yet Romeo's deep capacity for love is merely a part of his larger capacity for intense feeling of all kinds. Put another way, it is possible to describe Romeo as lacking the capacity for

moderation. Love compels him to sneak into the garden of his enemy's daughter, risking death simply to catch a glimpse of her. Anger compels him to kill his wife's cousin in a reckless duel to avenge the death of his friend. Despair compels him to suicide upon hearing of Juliet's death. Such extreme behavior dominates Romeo's character throughout the play and contributes to the ultimate tragedy that befalls the lovers. Had Romeo restrained himself from killing Tybalt, or waited even one day before killing himself after hearing the news of Juliet's death, matters might have ended happily. Of course, though, had Romeo not had such depths of feeling, the love he shared with Juliet would never have existed in the first place.

Among his friends, especially while bantering with Mercutio, Romeo shows glimpses of his social persona. He is intelligent, quick-witted, fond of verbal jousting, loyal, and unafraid of danger.

JULIET :

Juliet is an ill-fated young, tragic heroine of the Bard of Avon. Having not quite reached her fourteenth birthday, Juliet is of an age that stands on the border between immaturity and maturity. At the play's beginning however she seems merely an obedient, sheltered, naïve child. Though many girls of her age, including her mother—get married, Juliet has not given the subject any thought. When Lady Capulet mentions Paris's interest in marrying Juliet, Juliet dutifully responds that she will try to see if she can love him, a response that seems childish in its obedience and in its immature conception of love. Juliet seems to have no friends her own age, and she is not comfortable talking about physical relationship, as seen in her discomfort when the Nurse goes on and on about a sexual joke at Juliet's expense.

Juliet reveals her determination, strength, and sober-mindedness, in her earliest scenes, and offers a preview of the woman she will become during the four-day span of *Romeo and Juliet*. While Lady Capulet proves unable to quiet the Nurse, Juliet succeeds. . In addition, even in Juliet's dutiful acquiescence to try to love Paris, there is some seed of steely determination. Juliet promises to consider Paris as a possible husband to the precise degree her mother desires. While an outward show of obedience, such a statement can also be read as a refusal through

passivity. Juliet will accede to her mother's wishes, but she will not go out of her way to fall in love with Paris.

Juliet's first meeting with Romeo propels her full-force toward adulthood. Though profoundly in love with him, Juliet is able to see and criticize Romeo's rash decisions and his tendency to romanticize things. After Romeo kills Tybalt and is banished, Juliet does not follow him blindly. She makes a logical and heartfelt decision that her loyalty and love for Romeo must be her guiding priorities. Essentially, Juliet cuts herself loose from her prior social moorings—her nurse, her parents, and her social position in Verona—in order to try to reunite with Romeo. When she wakes in the tomb to find Romeo dead, she does not kill herself out of feminine weakness, but rather out of an intensity of love, just as Romeo did. Juliet's suicide actually requires more nerve than Romeo's: while he swallows poison, she stabs herself through the heart with a dagger.

Juliet's development from a wide-eyed girl into a self-assured, loyal, and capable woman is one of Shakespeare's early triumphs of characterization. It also marks one of his most confident and rounded treatments of a female character.

Friar Lawrence

Friar Lawrence occupies a unique position in *Romeo and Juliet*. In fact, he plays a crucial, tragic role in the play. He is a kindhearted cleric who helps Romeo and Juliet throughout the play. He performs their marriage and gives generally good advice, especially in regard to the need for moderation. He is the sole figure of religion in the play. But Friar Lawrence is also the most scheming and political of characters in the play: he marries Romeo and Juliet as part of a plan to end the civil strife in Verona; he spirits Romeo into Juliet's room and then out of Verona; he devises the plan to reunite Romeo and Juliet through the deceptive ruse of a sleeping potion that seems to arise from almost mystic knowledge. This mystical knowledge seems out of place for a Catholic friar; why does he have such knowledge, and what could such knowledge mean? The answers are not clear. In addition, though Friar Lawrence's plans all seem well conceived and well intentioned, they serve as the main mechanisms through which the fated tragedy of the play occurs.

Mercutio

With a quick wit and a clever mind, Mercutio is one of the most memorable characters in all of Shakespeare's works. Though he constantly puns, jokes, and teases ; sometimes in fun, and sometimes with bitterness, Mercutio is not a mere jester or prankster. With his wild words, Mercutio punctures the romantic sentiments and blind self-love that exist within the play. He mocks Romeo's self-indulgence just as he ridicules Tybalt's flaws. The critic Stephen Greenblatt describes Mercutio as a force within the play that functions to deflate the possibility of romantic love and the power of tragic fate. Unlike the other characters who blame their deaths on fate, Mercutio dies cursing all Montagues and Capulets. Mercutio believes that specific people are responsible for his death rather than some external impersonal force.

Nurse

The Nurse is a complex and colourful character. Her main role in the play is that of a secondary mother figure for Juliet. The Nurse clearly enjoys a closer relationship with Juliet than Lady Capulet does. This isn't surprising, given the amount of responsibility she had in caring for Juliet since her birth. The Nurse's affection for Juliet stems from the fact that she had a daughter named Susan who was the same age as Juliet, but who died young. Thus, just as the Nurse is a surrogate mother for Juliet, so too is Juliet a surrogate daughter for the Nurse. The Nurse demonstrates her affection for Juliet frequently. For instance, when Juliet sets out for the Capulet ball, the Nurse bids her farewell, saying: "Go girl; seek happy nights to happy days" . The Nurse is one of the few characters in the play who explicitly wish for Juliet's happiness. In addition to being emotionally supportive, the Nurse also works actively to ensure Juliet's good fortune, as when she serves as the go-between that enables Juliet's secret courtship with Romeo. The Nurse remains Juliet's ally to the end, and suffers greatly when she, along with the rest of the Capulet household, believes Juliet dead.

The Nurse is also a comic figure. She's extremely talkative, and one of her commonest verbal antics is that she constantly makes interjections and interrupts herself. She also frequently makes bawdy remarks. Often these two aspects come together, as when the Nurse tells Lady Capulet: "Now, by my maidenhead at twelve year old, / I bade [Juliet] come". The Nurse

only needs to say she's called for Juliet, but she interjects a strange oath, in which she swears by the "maidenhood" that she still had when she was twelve years old, further implying that she lost her virginity at thirteen. This non sequitur has nothing at all to do with the conversation at hand. The Nurse also often takes others' words literally, which results in humorous misunderstandings. For instance, she fails to understand the rhetorical sense of Lady Capulet's declaration, "Thou knowest my daughter's of a pretty age" . Whereas Lady Capulet simply means that Juliet is at a marriageable age, the Nurse answers earnestly, saying she knows Juliet's exact age: "Faith, I can tell her age unto an hour". These examples of humor come somewhat at the Nurse's expense, since they showcase her lower-class upbringing.
