

HYPERION
EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, or *What You Will* gets an update in this modern-day retelling, with the familiar love quadrangle and mistaken assumptions about identity taking place at Arden High, where fairies and magic coexist with a diverse group of human teens.

After years of despised plaid skirt uniforms, Vi Messaline is heading to public school—and high school—for the first time. She was supposed to share this fresh start with her twin brother, Sebastian, who, at the last minute, decided he'd rather continue at St. Anne's, a boarding school for high school students.

Missing him, and sad and confused by his decision, Vi starts at Arden High, where she's greeted by her tour guide, Tanya, who is not just a fairy, but Queen of the Fairies. Tanya, who also runs the social committee, takes Vi under her wing and insists that Vi help with the Twelfth Grade Night dance planning. At the meeting, Vi is quickly folded into a new friend group and discovers a way to pursue her creative interests by joining the AHS online magazine at the invitation of the coeditor, Maria.

Also on the magazine staff is the poet-slash-influencer Orsino, who Vi soon finds herself daydreaming about. But Orsino, who assumes Vi's gender-nonconforming personal style means she likes girls and is dating Maria, has his own crush—on Olivia. Olivia is part of Vi's new circle of LARP friends and the object of a few other crushes, including Vi's friend Andrew and the annoying Melvin. Maria, Andrew, and Olivia's cousin Toby decide to humiliate Melvin by tricking him into believing that Olivia wants to go to the dance with him. Meanwhile, Orsino recruits Vi to help woo Olivia, neither of them realizing that Olivia has her own crush—on Vi.





Vi gets to know Olivia better and finds out that she recently lost her father, as did Vi. She also develops a creative songwriting partnership with Orsino, who she still hopes will become more than a friend even though he is desperate to take Olivia to the Twelfth Grade Night dance but can't seem to ask her. Olivia decides to ask Vi to the dance but mistakes Sebastian's Instagram account for Vi's and messages him her invitation instead. Sebastian accepts, and Olivia, thinking that her date is Vi, spreads her good news on social media—totally crushing Orsino.

At the dance, confusion reigns. Olivia is there with Sebastian, thinking he is Vi. Vi is hiding from Orsino, and Melvin creates a spectacle to clear his name. When Vi finds Sebastian at the dance, they finally talk, and Vi can see how she and Sebastian can still grow together even though they are apart.

Once it becomes clear to everyone that there are two Messalines at the dance and that Vi's interest is in Orsino, Olivia steps back, only to make a connection with Maria (and offering Melvin a dance in friendship). Sebastian finds a new dance partner in Puck, and Orsino and Vi share an onstage kiss before performing the song they wrote together.

APPROACHES FOR USING *TWELFTH GRADE NIGHT* IN THE CLASSROOM OR LIBRARY

TEXT PAIRING

Help students understand the timeless and universal nature of Shakespeare's themes by offering *Twelfth Grade Night* as pre-reading or post-reading for *Twelfth Night*, or *What You Will*. Pairing these two titles provides opportunities for students to make connections between texts, discover similar themes at work in different genres and contexts, and extend their analysis of each text by:

- comparing and contrasting the plot lines and characters
- analyzing and discussing the similar motifs, symbols, plot events, and characters
- analyzing similarities between protagonists and discussing the differences in the perspectives of the characters in each of the texts
- discussing the roles that identity, gender, and sexual orientation play in the texts
- discussing how the authors' viewpoints are played out in the texts
- identifying and analyzing use of literary devices
- making text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections

OTHER TEXTS TO PAIR WITH *TWELFTH GRADE NIGHT* COULD INCLUDE:

Film: *Just One of the Guys*
She's the Man
Motocrossed
Twelfth Night (1996)

Stage Productions: *Twelfth Night* (Texas Shakespeare Festival)
Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare as performed at Penn State (PBS LearningMedia)

Books: *The Last True Poets of the Sea* by Julia Drake
Manga Shakespeare: Twelfth Night adapted by Richard Appignanesi; illustrated by Nana Li

Music: *Twelfth Night* by Shaina Taub (original score from the Public Theater's Public Works production of *Twelfth Night*)

Articles: "*Adolescence and the Teenage Crush*" by Dr. Carl Pickhardt (CommonLit)
"*Should We Scoff at the Idea of Love at First Sight?*" by James Kuzner (CommonLit)



TEXT SETS

Twelfth Grade Night can be either a starting point or welcome addition to a **text set**. Text sets are collections of resources in a variety of formats—articles, essays, histories, short stories, novels, picture books, poems, music, photographs, maps, video, film, art, artifacts, etc.—and complexity levels. By contemplating resources that offer them many different perspectives, students gain a deeper understanding of topics, concepts, and themes.

Consider including *Twelfth Grade Night* in themed text sets that focus on love, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity, expression, and attribution. *Twelfth Grade Night* would also fit well into an “Introduction to Shakespeare” or “Based on Shakespeare” text set.

Text sets can also be student generated. As students read and identify themes and ideas of the graphic novel, they can work alone or in small groups to build their own text sets that focus on exploring what interests them. As they build their text sets, they should note why they included each resource and what specific connections it helped them to make. They should also come up with questions about their theme or issue for future users of their set to wonder about and research. Have students make their text sets available to the entire class via Padlet or another curation platform to help broaden knowledge and perspectives on a variety of topics.

RESOURCES:

- AdLit.org: Text Sets: [*Maximizing Students’ Voice and Choice*](#)
- Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy: [*Building Background Knowledge Through Reading: Rethinking Text Sets*](#)
- Choice Literacy: [*Student-Created Text Sets*](#)

BOOK CLUB

A book club or literature circle approach to reading *Twelfth Grade Night* is an excellent way to promote productive student conversation as students read, then share their personal responses and their thoughts on topics and themes addressed in the book, such as identity, love, family, friendship, bullying, and music. Book clubs or literature circles can also go hand in hand with paired texts or text sets, giving students opportunity to discuss ideas across multiple texts.

Because book clubs are reader-response centered, having students keep a response journal will help support student responsibility and ownership of the book club. Students can use their journal notes, drawings, observations and questions as a jumping-off point for discussions. **Discussion questions** in this guide can help spark and support big-picture discussion. Also ask students to come up with at least three items—a comment about something in the book that excites them, an inference, question, or quote to unpack—to possibly discuss each time their group meets. During discussions, ask them to keep track of their conversation by taking notes.

After finishing the book, have students compile the best of their own discussion questions and favorite resources and organize them as a discussion guide to share with future book clubs.

RESOURCES:

- Collaborative Classroom: [*Effective Literacy Circles and Book Clubs*](#)
- Edutopia: [*Making the Most of In-Class Book Clubs*](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions can be used for class or small-group discussion or offered to students as reflective writing prompts. For even more meaningful discussions, encourage readers to develop their own questions by noting themes and ideas they find interesting or connections they make from the book to their own lives and the world around them.

1. *Twelfth Night*, or *What You Will* by William Shakespeare is usually categorized as a comedy or romantic comedy and, like most of Shakespeare's plays, uses humor. What would you categorize *Twelfth Grade Night* as and why?
2. How is *What You Will*, Shakespeare's alternate title for *Twelfth Night*, relevant to *Twelfth Grade Night*, particularly to the ending?
3. Why do you think the creators of this book chose to tell the story in a graphic format? How do the images and text work together to communicate the story and support the plot? In what ways does the graphic novel format help develop the overall themes of the book?
4. How is *Twelfth Grade Night* similar to or different from other graphic novels you've encountered? How did the graphic format affect the pacing of the book? How does color play an active role in the storytelling? What about this story did you feel was particularly well-suited to the graphic format?
5. If you were in Vi's shoes on the first day of school at Arden High, would you have done anything differently? Why or why not?



6. Disguise is a significant element of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. In *Twelfth Grade Night*, how does Vi express or hide her identity? How does Vi's outward appearance shape others' perceptions of her and with what results? How do you feel about the perceptions or expectations people have about you based on your expression of your identity?



7. Orsino says to Vi, “I think you’re amazing... but because you dress kind of guy-ish... I kind of thought that meant you only liked girls?” What were your own preconceived notions of what Vi’s gender identity, sexual orientation, and personality might be based on how she was drawn? And for Orsino, Olivia, Maria, Toby, Andrew, and Melvin?
8. Orsino puts a lot of energy into professing his love for Olivia. How smitten do you think he really is? How much love do you see in the volatile relationship between Tanya and Ron? What is love, and how does one know they are really in love? What other types of love does the book explore?

9. Several characters in the book are coping with loss yet seem to deal with it in different ways. What is Vi grieving? How does she handle her grief? What does the story have to say about grief and healing?
10. What theme of the story is emphasized or supported by the motif of social media, especially the use of social media to facilitate mistaken identities? How does this relate to other ways messages are used to communicate or to miscommunicate throughout the book?
11. How does social media impact the lives of the characters in *Twelfth Grade Night*? What are some of the benefits and problems of how social media is used at Arden High? How is the social media experience in the book similar to or different from your own social media experiences?
12. What kind of character is Melvin? What’s his purpose in the story? Why do Maria, Toby, and Andrew trick Melvin? Do you sympathize with him? Why or why not? Do you think it is ever acceptable to deceive someone? Why or why not?
13. What are the origins of the name for Arden High School? What purpose does having fairies at Arden High serve in the book? What do you make of the school’s faculty? What other references to Shakespeare and his works did you discover in *Twelfth Grade Night*?

ACTIVITIES

If music be the food of love, play on

Have students **create their own music playlists** for *Twelfth Grade Night*. Start by discussing the role of music in the book and let students talk in small groups about current favorite playlists and their own experiences making and listening to playlists.

Next, have students consider the playlist they are going to create for *Twelfth Grade Night*. If you want students to further explore the theme of love and how they relate to it, ask them to choose songs that embody their own reactions to at least five different scenes in the book. Have them title each scene and pair it with a song that evokes emotions and ideas about love similar to those they felt when reading. Students should write a paragraph for each song that explains their choices and offers details about what the lyrics, music, rhythm, or melodies express in relation to the theme.

If you want students to further focus on character analysis, ask them to choose a character and make at least five song choices based on that character's traits and the kinds of relationships they have with other characters. For each song in the character's playlist, students should explain how the song and song genres they've selected relate to the character's motivations, actions, and words.

Have students develop their music collection on SoundCloud, Spotify, or YouTube and provide a link in their annotated playlists so they can be shared with the class.

If this were played upon a stage now

Improve student engagement and help strengthen comprehension and communication skills with a **Reader's Theater production** of *Twelfth Grade Night*. Often an underutilized strategy in secondary classrooms, Reader's Theater has students reading aloud a script adapted from literature, without props, costumes, or sets. While there's no memorization of lines and readers can perform by reading from their script from their desks or the front of the classroom, readers should read with plenty of expression.

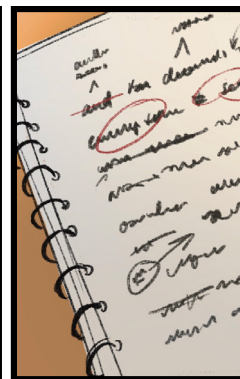
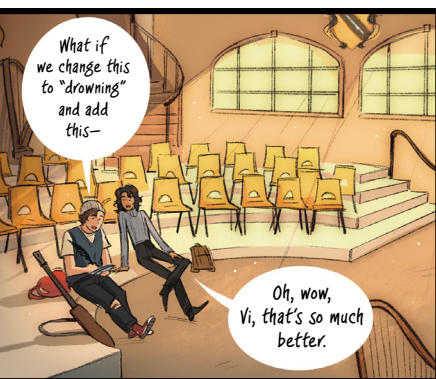
Reader's Theater also offers students the opportunity to adapt their own scripts. Assign acts and/or scenes from *Twelfth Grade Night* to small groups of students and have them create a script. To describe the setting and action and provide transitions between scenes, students will need to script a narrator in addition to identifying and adapting all other speaking parts. Ask students to all use the same script format to make the entire script easy for all readers to follow. When student groups have their draft scripts, have them exchange with each other to read the script over, editing it as necessary.

Once the script is finalized, ask for volunteers or assign roles. Switch up readers for different acts to ensure everyone gets a chance to participate. Make sure every student has a copy of the script to follow along during the performance. Consider having students perform for other classes or record performed scenes to use as book trailers.



Let there be gall enough in thy ink

- **Write for the AHS online magazine.** Ask students to write, as Maria, her editorial confession, “What I Learned from Bullying a Bully.” Or have students create a poem, editorial, article, or story written from the perspective of another character from the book as their magazine submission.
- Pair students to **write a song** together. Vi and Orsino decide to write lyrics together for Vi’s music, capturing how they each feel about someone they love. Have your students pairs complete at least two verses and a chorus that focus on a theme or topic from the book. Encourage them to share ideas and imagery that are personal and specific, bring their ideas together, and create an interesting song with a unified message.
- Have students **write to continue a story line** of the book. Students can choose which characters to follow and create a new scene for, but they have to write it in the style and language of Shakespeare! Ask them to try their hand at iambic pentameter, Shakespearean insults, using thou/ thy/thine and appropriate Shakespearean verb endings, as well as include some of the vocabulary of Shakespeare’s day.
- Ask students to **write a short poem** and create an image for the poem for Orsino’s poetry Instagram. Get them to first take a look at the work of other Instapoets and talk about what poetry on Instagram is like. Then, writing as Orsino, have them focus on a theme from the book and incorporate figurative language into a poem that would fit in well with other Instapoetry. Their poem should be highly visual with attention clearly paid to colors, font, and image choices.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Molly Booth is the author of *Saving Hamlet* and *Nothing Happened* a total Shakespeare nerd. In high school, she was a stage manager for three different community theatres, which almost killed her. She graduated from Marlboro College and went on to study more Shakespeare (twist!) at University of Massachusetts Boston. Molly is a freelance writer and editor and has been published on TheMarySue.com, McSweeney's.net, HelloGiggles.com, and various other websites. She cohosts a Bard-centric podcast, Party Bard, and directs a lovely, hilarious, and fierce group of homeschooled teen Shakespearean actors. Molly lives in Massachusetts, where she spends a lot of time with family and friends, and the rest attending to her queenly cat and loaf-of-bread-shaped dog. You can visit her online (please do!) at mollybooth.com.

Stephanie Kate Strohm is the author of *Twelfth Grade Night* (Arden High #1); *Once Upon a Tide: A Mermaid's Tale*; *Prince in Disguise*; *Love à la Mode*; *It's Not Me, It's You*; *The Date to Save*; and *That's Not What I Heard*. She lives and writes in Los Angeles. You can find her online at www.StephanieKateStrohm.com and on Twitter and Instagram @StephKateStrohm.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jamie Green (they/them) is a book illustrator, content creator, and alum of Ringling College of Art and Design '20. In high school, they were all about fandom culture, LGBTQIA topics, and anime/manga, which was perfect training to illustrate a romcom love triangle graphic novel (art school probably helped, too). When they aren't doing illustration for books, they can be found tattooing, lifting weights, or exploring outdoors. You can find Jamie on Instagram and Twitter @JamieMGreenArt or just Jamie Green on YouTube.



Photo Credit: Jason Poulin

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RACHAEL WALKER, (belleofthebook.com) created this guide with insights from teen reader Karina Lazorchak. Rachael consults on a wide variety of educational programs and multimedia projects, and develops educational materials and reading resources for children, parents, and teachers.

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