In the kingdom of Illyria, a nobleman named Orsino lies around listening to music, pining away for the love of Lady Olivia. He cannot have her because she is in mourning for her dead brother and refuses to entertain any proposals of marriage. Meanwhile, off the coast, a storm has caused a terrible shipwreck. A young, aristocratic-born woman named Viola is swept onto the Illyrian shore. Finding herself alone in a strange land, she assumes that her twin brother, Sebastian, has been drowned in the wreck, and tries to figure out what sort of work she can do. A friendly sea captain tells her about Orsino’s courtship of Olivia, and Viola says that she wishes she could go to work in Olivia’s home. But since Lady Olivia refuses to talk with any strangers, Viola decides that she cannot look for work with her. Instead, she decides to disguise herself as a man, taking on the name of Cesario, and goes to work in the household of Duke Orsino.

Viola or Cesario quickly becomes a favorite of Orsino, who makes Cesario his page. Viola finds herself falling in love with Orsino a difficult love to pursue, as Orsino believes her to be a man. But when Orsino sends Cesario to deliver Orsino’s love messages to the disdainful Olivia, Olivia herself falls for the beautiful young Cesario, believing her to be a man. The love triangle is complete: Viola loves Orsino, Orsino loves Olivia, and Olivia loves Cesario and everyone is miserable.

Meanwhile, we meet the other members of Olivia’s household: her rowdy drunkard of an uncle, Sir Toby; his foolish friend, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who is
trying in his hopeless way to court Olivia; Olivia’s witty and pretty waiting-
gentlewoman, Maria; Feste, the clever clown of the house; and Malvolio, the
dour, prudish steward of Olivia’s household. When Sir Toby and the others take
offense at Malvolio’s constant efforts to spoil their fun, Maria engineers a
practical joke to make Malvolio think that Olivia is in love with him. She forges a
letter, supposedly from Olivia, addressed to her beloved, telling him that if he
wants to earn her favor, he should dress in yellow stockings and crossed garters,
act haughtily, smile constantly, and refuse to explain himself to anyone. Malvolio
finds the letter, assumes that it is addressed to him, and, filled with dreams of
marrying Olivia and becoming noble himself, and happily follows its commands.
He behaves so strangely that Olivia comes to think that he is mad.

Meanwhile, Sebastian, who is still alive after all but believes his sister
Viola to be dead, arrives in Illyria along with his friend and protector, Antonio.
Antonio has cared for Sebastian since the shipwreck and is passionately attached
to the young man so much so that he follows him to Orsino’s domain, in spite of
the fact that he and Orsino are old enemies.

Sir Andrew, observing Olivia’s attraction to Cesario, challenges Cesario to
a duel. Sir Toby, who sees the prospective duel as entertaining fun, eggs Sir
Andrew on. However, when Sebastian who looks just like the disguised Viola
appears on the scene, Sir Andrew and Sir Toby end up coming to blows with
Sebastian, thinking that he is Cesario. Olivia enters amid the confusion.
Encountering Sebastian and thinking that he is Cesario, she asks him to marry her.
He is baffled, since he has never seen her before. He sees, however, that she is
wealthy and beautiful, and he is therefore more than willing to go along with her. Meanwhile, Antonio has been arrested by Orsino’s officers and now begs Cesario for help, mistaking him for Sebastian. Viola denies knowing Antonio, and Antonio is dragged off, crying out that Sebastian has betrayed him. Suddenly, Viola has newfound hope that her brother may be alive.

Malvolio’s supposed madness has allowed the gleeful Maria, Toby, and the rest to lock Malvolio into a small, dark room for his treatment, and they torment him at will. Feste dresses up as "Sir Topas," a priest, and pretends to examine Malvolio, declaring him definitely insane in spite of his protests. However, Sir Toby begins to think better of the joke, and they allow Malvolio to send a letter to Olivia, in which he asks to be released.

Eventually, Viola and Orsino make their way to Olivia’s house, where Olivia welcomes Cesario as her new husband, thinking him to be Sebastian, whom she has just married. Orsino is furious, but then Sebastian himself appears on the scene, and all is revealed. The siblings are joyfully reunited, and Orsino realizes that he loves Viola, now that he knows she is a woman, and asks her to marry him. Finally, someone remembers Malvolio and lets him out of the dark room. The trick is revealed in full, and the embittered Malvolio storms off, leaving the happy couples to their celebration.
BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

William Shakespeare (26 April 1564 – 23 April 1616) was an English poet, playwright and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon". His extant works, including some collaborations, consist of about 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, the authorship of some of which is uncertain. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

Shakespeare was born and brought up in Stratford-upon-Avon. At the age of 18, he married Anne Hathaway, with whom he had three children: Susanna, and twins Hamlet and Judith. Between 1585 and 1592, he began a successful career in London as an actor, writer, and part-owner of a playing company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as the King's Men. He appears to have retired to Stratford around 1613 at age 49, where he died three years later. Few records of Shakespeare's private life survive, and there has been considerable speculation about such matters as his physical appearance, sexuality, religious beliefs, and whether the works attributed to him were written by others.
Shakespeare produced most of his known work between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were mainly comedies and histories and these works remain regarded as some the best work produced in these genres even today. He then wrote mainly tragedies until about 1608, including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, considered some of the finest works in the English language. In his last phase, he wrote tragicomedies, also known as romances, and collaborated with other playwrights.

Many of his plays were published in editions of varying quality and accuracy during his lifetime. In 1623, John Heminges and Henry Condell, two friends and fellow actors of Shakespeare, published the First Folio, a collected edition of his dramatic works that included all but two of the plays now recognized as Shakespeare's. It was prefaced with a poem by Ben Jonson, in which Shakespeare is hailed, presciently, as "not of an age, but for all time."

Shakespeare was a respected poet and playwright in his own day, but his reputation did not rise to its present heights until the 19th century. The Romantics, in particular, acclaimed Shakespeare's genius, and the Victorians worshipped Shakespeare with a reverence that George Bernard Shaw called “bardolatry”. In the 20th century, his work was repeatedly adopted and rediscovered by new movements in scholarship and performance. His plays remain highly popular today and are constantly studied, performed, and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world.