

Olivia, May I?: Movement in *Twelfth Night*

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Lesson Overview

Students will evaluate the dynamics of the scene using a basic movement game to figure out how Viola's words fail and succeed in wooing Olivia.

Time: One 45-minute class period

Materials: Folger edition of *Twelfth Night*

What To Do

1. Assign students the roles of Olivia and Viola. Have the students stand at either end of the room. Assign one student as the class record keeper. This student will track the movements of the actors toward each other.
2. Tell the remainder of the class that they will act as referees for the game, which is modelled after the popular children's game, "Mother, May I...?"
3. Begin with 1.5.166. This dialogue is almost exclusively between Olivia and Viola. The objective of the game is to observe what lines Viola uses that allow her to woo Olivia successfully. The students playing Viola and Olivia should read each exchange of dialogue, Viola first and then Olivia. The class should then determine whether Viola may take one or two steps forward towards Olivia, OR take one or two steps back, based on Olivia's response to Viola.

For example:

Viola: "The honorable lady of the house, which is she?"

Olivia: "Speak to me. I shall answer her. Your will?"

4. Ask students if Viola may take steps forward or steps back, and why. The student playing Viola should move accordingly.
5. After finishing the game, ask students to consider the following questions:
 - At what point in the scene was Olivia least interested in Viola? That is, when did Viola have to take steps back and why?

- At what point does Olivia become most interested, or fall in love with, Viola? How do you know? Did the language change in some way? You might ask them to look carefully at Olivia's usage of prose and verse in this exchange.
- Was there a point in the scene that they felt Olivia should have been taking steps towards Viola? When and why?
- How does this scene and Olivia's new love for Viola complicate the plot of the play?

Assessment

Open ended response: how does the form of this scene mirror the characters and their inner conflicts? Use evidence from the scene as well as the play to support your answer.
