

The use of deception is also prevalent in Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' in which, much like the Importance of Being Earnest, the entire plot revolves around the characters' misunderstandings and their resolution. Viola deceives the rest of the characters by posing as Cesario the servant boy. This creates chaos when Olivia falls in love with Cesario oblivious to the fact that he is actually a female as well as when Viola falls in love with Orsino who she can not confess her affections for due to the fact she is presenting herself as male and homosexuality is illegal during the Elizabethan period hence creating an intricate love triangle clouded in deception. This chaos is comedic because the audience know that Cesario is actually Viola and are aware of her inner thoughts due to her soliloquy which shows that Viola herself is amused that Olivia sees her as an attractive man but also concerned of breaking her heart when she finds out that he is actually a woman.

Another humorous deception in Twelfth Night is Toby and Maria's deception of Malvolio, they deceive him by forging a letter written in a hand made to imitate that of Lady Olivia's to trick Malvolio into thinking Olivia is in love with him causing him to act foolishly as he is driven by his ambition to become Lord of the house, an example of this is wearing bright yellow cross-gartered tights, excessively smiling and treating his superiors as inferiors by talking down to Sir Toby. This is comedic because the audience is aware of the plot against Malvolio and knows that he is being duped. This is also sometimes seen as a cruel deception rather than a comedic deception because it toys with emotions and eventually turns malevolent when Malvolio is incarcerated for following the instructions of the prank letter received from "Olivia" therefore deducting from the comedy as much of the audience stop finding it funny and their laughter turns to pity for Malvolio.

Overall, I think that the importance of deception is evident throughout comedies and it is clearly a central aspect as seen by its frequency of use in both Twelfth Night and The Importance of Being Earnest. Without it the majority of comedy and misunderstandings wouldn't be able to take place.