

Explore and debate the function of the fool Feste within this dramatic comedy. To what extent does he offer honest insight to both characters and the audience?

In the play Twelfth Night, Feste offers abundant honest insight to both characters and the audience through consistent and varied use of both song and humorous wit.

Feste initially appears to be limited by his appearance as a fool, seemingly seen as simply a jester, and entertainer by the likes of Sir Toby, yet he regards himself as a "corrupter of words". Taken literally, this could mean that he has a self-proclaimed spiteful side to him; he is a character who twists and devalues. Feste also comments on his own character when he says, "I wear not motley in my brain", which indicates that he could feel constrained by his title; though he may look like a fool, he is not one intellectually. This is one of the first indicators within the play that Feste is a keen observer of the world around him and acts as an overall summary of his character.

It seems throughout Twelfth Night that Feste holds no significant relationships with any character in particular, even Olivia, whom Feste manages to outsmart within the first act, showcasing his wit and knowledge when Olivia says "take the fool away", and reversing this remark back to her, branding her the fool: "to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven". It is this type of logical and fast-paced thinking that defines Feste as a character; Feste holds no relationship of note with any other character, so therefore acts like an outsider himself, a parallel to the audience who also act as observers to both the main plot and the sub-plot and move between households.