- KINDS OF HUMOUR
- SHAKESPEARE'S VIEWS ON LOVE AND MARRIAGE
- M.M REEVE'S STATEMENT

Shakespeare pedagogy Seven
Unit Topic: Model Answers

Objective: Students are able to answer examination type of questions that require critical judgement.

Materials: Models questions and answers prepared by the teacher.
Question 1

Write an essay on the different kinds of humour in the play

From the book 'Complete works of Shakespeare' we learn that Twelfth Night was also known as 'What you wish' which perhaps rings about a more hilarious connotation. Humour in Twelfth Night is embodied in various aspects all skillfully interwoven.

Of the many characters we can pick to show his or her role in providing humour toward the play Feste obviously deserves our attention. His very role is to provide comical scenes when a serious atmosphere prevails. In act one Olivia demands for an explanation for his absence and is quite serious about it. However the Clown, clowns himself out of the situation saying in Latin that a hood does not make a monk and proves that Olivia was the actual fool –
because she was mourning for a brother in heaven. In the Sir Topaz scene his clowning is very comical and hilarious. Here Malvolio's misery, a very pathetic and serious scene indeed is brought to balance with the Clown's foolery. His catchy songs and exchange of wit makes him a popular comedian.

In the case of Sir Andrew, humor forced through him, through his absurd statements and sometimes downright stupidity. "I am a great eater of beef" he sounds out. We can imagine how hilarious he would have appeared to the audience when he suggests the gift of his horse to Cesario if only he would withdraw from the duel. In the earlier scenes he follows Toby around pretending like a learned man and this only gives rise to more comical situations. In Act 1, Sir Toby asks him to greet Maria.

Toby: Accost, Sir Andrew, Accost...

Andrew: Good mistress Accost

Maria: My name is Mary Sir,

Andrew: Good mistress Mary Accost.

Again one cannot help but ridicule him, knowing him only too well to be foolish, we ask ourselves are we to sympathize with him for having failed to win Olivia's hand. Sir Toby and Cesario too sometimes puts themselves in very confusing situations. In Act 5 scene 1 Toby Belch confronts Sebastian thinking that he was
Cesario the coward, and gets beaten and wounded by Sebastian. And again in the case of Viola what a hilarious situation it would have been to see her bewilderment as to what she would do, when asked to cross-swords with Sir Andrew. "A little thing would tell you how much I lack of a man", she says pitifully. The audience would at the same time be entertained to some good flow of humorous language.

The language or if we may be permitted to say, the dialogue is often witty. In this respect we have to give some due respect to some of the main characters, like Viola, Feste and even Olivia.

Viola asks Feste 'Dost though live by thy tabor.'

Feste: No, Sir, by the church.

Viola: Art thou a churchman.

Feste: No such matter.. I do live at my house and my house stands by the Church.

Equally interesting is the conversation that follows at Olivia's court when Cesario comes to deliver his master's wish. He is met by Maria who inspite of all her superior wit fails to send him away. In the end she informs Olivia that 'He will talk to you and no more.' Such conversation and exchange of wit is interestingly funny and even capitulating between themselves. Such exchanges of wit and verbosity would have been a very entertaining stuff during Shakespearean days.
In describing the kinds of humour in Twelfth Night one can evidently see that costumes played an important part in giving a kind of a prelude to a comical atmosphere. One can imagine how Malvolio would have appeared with his stripped stockings displaying his air of Puritanism snobish attitude. It would definitely had been a hilarious situation when Malvolio appears in his usual stripped stockings before Olivia, after having read a letter supposedly written by her. The character of Feste again had to be clad in an attire that resembled a clown. We would remember Feste telling Olivia in the first Act that a hood does not make a monk. But this is exactly what he does in the Sir Topaz scene, to fool Malvolio held captive in the dark room. Let us not loose sight of the fact that Viola appears disguised as Cesario and how her attire forces her into many awkward situations. We cannot help but note with glee the actual situation when Olivia declares her love to her. How excited we feel to know, what Viola is going to do when Fabian comes to deliver the news that the knight has called her for a challenge – duel to death. Note again a twist of plot when Olivia in a rush, marry’s Sebastian who just happens to have dropped in a few minutes earlier in her place. How Sir Toby and Sir Andrew get beaten by Sebastian because they mistook him for Cesario. This confusion of character brought to a climax when Cesario and Sebastian meet. ‘An apple cleft into two is not more twin’ remarks Ontonio.
Lastly however the question of appropriate imagery must be settled so that it will harmonise with the theme and plot and the mood of the play. The playwright has used imagery that is original and downright funny. Sir Toby speaks of Andrew guts.

“If one can find enough blood in Andrew’s liver as to clog the foot of a flea, I will eat the whole anatomy.”

When Viola (Cesario) visits Olivia, Maria bullies her by asking her to hoist sail but Cesario replies that he has decided to hull there a little longer. Chesterton in his book ‘Chesterton on Shakespeare’ claims that Twelfth Night is not rich in imagery. Perhaps this could not have been the objective at all, moreover much of the dialogue is in prose. We feel however whatever imagery has been sparingly used, it has been used judiciously. This was the time when Shakespeare was turning to more serious work – writing tragedies.

One thing must be born in mind, Shakespeare’s works are termed the Romantic (Comme) comedies in which laughter was but a subsidiary, not as an absolute objective. In all his romantic comedies a serious work seems to emerge in a very simple form. In ‘Twelfth Night”, though humour seems to be in the chaotic order of events and confusion of realities, a simple theme is evident – ‘love conquers all.’
Question 2

From the close reading of this play what do feel are Shakespeare's views of love and marriage?

'Love and marriage' of the two love has been dealt with greater depth than marriage. We see first of all the orders of love. Shakespeare seems to see many different types of love. Love of friendship like that of Andrew and Toby Belch is taken as the basest. The kind of love between Orsino and Cesario as the second order and as the highest order of love that between Sebastian and Antonio.

Shakespeare views love as something to be highly regarded. For love in his plays are often associated with great men and those of noble birth. He must have had deep sentiments toward the passion of love and believed in its redeeming powers as he has shown in Twelfth Night. He seems to portray love as though he is a master of that subject. Julius Caesar, Anthony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet and not to mention Twelfth Night are some of the solid testimonies of this fact. He, in Twelfth night has shown love between people, love between animate and inanimate like Orsino's love for music at the opening scene of the play. He has shown love's course so convincingly that it appears almost to seem natural and
true. What happened between Olivia and Cesario cannot be called infatuations either. It was love at first sight.

'Thy tongue, thy limbs, thy face, actions and spirit do give these five fold blazon' she says. And after Cesario has left she wonders herself, "How even so quickly can one catch the plague."

As to the question of the marriage he appears to believe in marriages between two people who are compatible. No objections seem to be raised when Toby Belch decides to take Maria. In fact it is even made to seem justifiable in view of Toby's mischief. A the play closes we cannot help but note that all the couples who are discussed are from noble birth. He has not given any credit to Feste to the question of marriage. A the last scene close Feste walks away as lonely as before somehow rejected by the world. Though it may be so, the question of marriage between a commoner and one of noble birth is not left out. This theme of marriage is brought as a suggestion to the audience when Olivia declares her love for Cesario and shown again through Malvolio who tries for the hand of Olivia too. The difference between the two however seem to decide which one was acceptable during his time. Malvolio from his low office and being a Puritan do not seem to qualify in this respect. The very thought is criminal.
“What do you think of me?” asks Olivia to Cesario. It would have been a challenging theme – a woman declaring her love – in a serious drama but Shakespeare seems to appear wise in giving it a light hearted treatment in this comedy.

Love and marriage call for a human aspect of discussion. Perhaps we can see what Chesterton had to say. In Elizabethan times women were viewed as something super. Something fabulous something so divine was believed to reside in them. To them man appeared natural but women was supernatural. This account only fits too well in Twelfth Night. Women’s love is portrayed as something supreme. Though the Duke has some mocking statements or views about them.

“There is no woman side…

Alas their love may be called appetite”

It is at this juncture that Shakespeare brings to contrast what women had to say about love.

“After him I love, more than I love these eyes” showing the depth of the passion. Viola further goes to say of a daughter, who in her love ‘sat like patience on a monument.’ Then she puts forward what men say is not always what they do.

“We men say more… than we dare do much in our vows but little in our love”
This is evident to show, that Shakespeare had high regard for a woman's love which follows marriage.

Question 3

Write on your opinion on this statement, by M.M Reeve: "The temperamental opposition of Feste and Malvolio, reaching an eerie climax in the 'Sir Topaz' scene, is the underlying motif of the play, and Malvolio's discomfiture, strangely unrelieved by pity, leaves the stage to Feste and the heartache of 'The Wind and the Rain'.

Feste and Malvolio represent two symbols. Malvolio represents Puritanism, a radical wing of the English Protestant movement headed by John Calvin. The Puritans represent the virtue of thrift, honesty and sobriety. Feste on the other hand represents these two symbols Shakespeare had to constrain himself within the limits of the Alphabet of language and in question the play: "It is not the sea at sunset represents sorrow but the sea at sunset is a great deal of truth missed by the word sorrow", says Chesterton. The under motif symbolised thus contains a lot more truth than what appear superficially.
M.M. Reeves seems to be convinced that Malvolio seems to
deserve no act of pity. Perhaps he assumes the audience too believes
so. There cannot be justice to this, for a reader would but wish to
share a part in the schemes of the forces of misrule. One might even
feel disturbed to see that the act has been carried thus far. We do feel
some hidden pity for Malvolio when we come to think of the
suggestion made earlier who wouldn't wish to be the modern day
equivalent of count Malvolio with the trappings of power and
wealth. We are moved to see Malvolio say of Phythogoras:

"I think nobly of the soul and in no way approve his
opinion." Some may even feel Shakespeare has not done enough
justice to Malvolio by revenging his enemies. Though many such
contrary opinions can be expressed, all agree that the 'Sir Topaz'
scene is undoubtedly the climax of the two temperamental
characters; one for pleasure and the other against it. One cannot
deny Malvolio was quite mercilessly subdued, having branded him
mad.

If one can feel pity for Feste having left all alone without any
success to get a wife then I feel one can also save some for Malvolio
who by the end of the play has lost all his hopes. His life, a tale of
misfortunes and ridicule. Somehow the heartache of the 'Wind and
the rain' does not have meaning only for Feste but for all of us
including Malvolio.
Very subtly the 'Sir Topaz' reminds us of the defeat of Puritans who were later came to be known as dissenters after the Act of Conformity passed by the Church of England in 1662. This motive of the play show that the way of life of the Puritans did not actually conform to the needs of society of that day. In practical reality Shakespeare was one among that society, who had to earn a living writing dramas which was very much abused by the minority Puritans.

From such a perspective we see that Shakespeare has indeed treated both with fairness. I cannot see any lopsidedness of treatment either. One feels therefore M.M. Reeves should have analysed this motive and its treatment a little bit deeply to discover the fairness and reasonableness embedded into the play.