

Twelfth Night: Act 2 Scene 3

WS 3: Proportionate Reactions

1a) Read the two info boxes on what was expected of a steward and a guest in the 16th century.

The steward

The steward got appointed by the nobility they serve. They are the head of household but also represented their lord/lady. They were typically commoners who had earned their master's trust and were fit to hold this position.

The guests

House-guests were to be treated with respect and kindness. Otherwise, this could reflect badly on their host. They were expected to be polite in return and pleasant company². If they caused trouble, they overstayed their welcome and were expected to leave.

1b) Read lines 63 -149 and focus on Malvolio: What does the play tell us about the character and his job? Take notes and put the lines you are referring to in brackets. The following questions might help you to gain a deeper insight into the characters: Is Malvolio overreacting? What duties (if any) do Sir Toby and Sir Andrew have? Do they behave accordingly? Are there other circumstances that influence their behaviour?

2) In Shakespeare's time, there was a very strict, religious group which was called the "Puritans". They believed in a pure life dedicated to God and did not like festivities. The guests in *Twelfth Night* want to celebrate after the holidays and be merry. Now discuss in class if the reactions of the people involved are appropriate. Make use of the notes you took earlier.

Additionally: Can you think of similar discussions between different people today?

1 **commoner**

a person not born into nobility

2 **pleasant company**

people you like to spend time with and want to have around as guests

