

WS 5: Act 4 Scene 2: Madness or Mental Health?

1. Get together in pairs and **describe** to each other what the poster depicts.

Link to poster: https://www.freepik.com/free-psd/mental-health-matters-poster_20281536.htm#from_view=detail_serie



2. **Analyze** what the poster tells you about how today's societal views on "madness" are different compared to the depiction in Shakespeares' *Twelfth Night*.

Compare the message given by the posters to the depiction of "madness" in *Twelfth Night*. Focus on the following three aspects:

- the **medical treatment** of people that are mentally ill

- the **usage** of the word mental illness and mental health rather than madness

- the **social treatment** of people that are mentally ill

Today's society has a more positive, inclusive look which you can also see by the terms used: mental health, being mentally ill. The health awareness movement in particular tries to fight against discrimination against mentally ill people. You need to be diagnosed by a medical expert to be considered mad. It is considered a sickness, that can be treated. In general the definition of "madness" is more fixed.

other websites for research:

https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health#tab=tab_1

<https://academic.oup.com/brain/article/139/2/635/2568807?login=false>

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Modern audiences might have a problem with the way "madness" is depicted in a comedy like *Twelfth Night* that has been written over 400 years ago.

The question arises:

Should theatre productions change the way "madness" is depicted in this play in order to be more suitable to modern audiences?

For the following analysis, pay particular attention to the way Malvolio's "madness" is shown in the play and how this is reflected in his treatment by the other characters.

1. **Assess** possible arguments for and against the question and **organize** them in the table below

Pro	Contra
The perception of madness is outdated and should be changed to fit into modern society's standards.	An adaptation should stay as close to the original as possible to remain authentic.
The treatment of Malvolio makes it seem like it's okay to make fun of mentally ill people, which sends the wrong message.	Different reactions to Malvolio's treatment can encourage a healthy discussion and spread awareness.
<i>Twelfth Night</i> is considered to be a comedy, and not changing Malvolio's treatment makes the comedy more tragic than funny.	The audience should have enough knowledge about Shakespeare's time to understand that some things were different.
Being open to creating an own version of the play will result in an unique and personal adaptation rather than another copy.	No adaptation will be able to be as good as the original.

2. Get together in pairs and **compare** your results by creating a ranking according to the strength of your arguments.

3. **Imagine** that your class is supposed to stage *Twelfth Night*. How would you stage Malvolio's "madness" and the way the other characters react to them?

3.1. Get together in pairs and **discuss** different possibilities. Be able to present the ideas to the class.

3.2. **Compare** the different ideas within your class and decide how you would stage Malvolio's "madness" and the way the other characters react to them.