Act One: Comprehension Questions

1. Who is Duke Orsino? Describe his character.
2. Who is Viola? What happened to her, and what are her plans?
3. Who is Olivia? Why is she in mourning?
4. Who are the characters in Olivia’s household?
5. What does Sir Andrew want with the Countess?
6. Who is Cesario, and what does Orsino want him to do?
7. Who are Feste and Malvolio? What are their roles in Olivia’s household?
8. How does Olivia react to Cesario?

Act One: Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions among your group, and then share your findings with the class. To help you generate ideas and provide examples, refer back to the text. Each answer should make some reference to the events or quotes from the text.

1. Consider Orsino’s speech at the beginning (I.i.1-15). How does Orsino characterize desire? What do his comparisons reveal about the nature of desire?
2. How does Viola’s disguise as Cesario affect the other characters? Specifically, how do Orsino and Olivia react to her?
3. Sir Andrew, Sir Toby, Feste, and Maria are all comic characters. How do they add humor to this first Act? Give an example of a joke or wordplay from one of them.