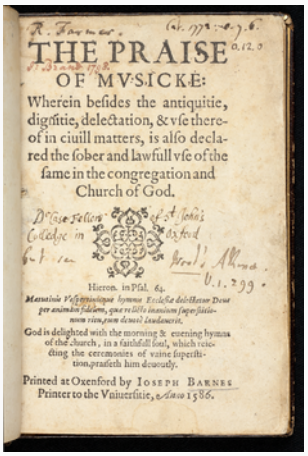
‘If music be the food of love, play on...’

‘Twelfth Night’ starts and ends with music. Music was very important to Shakespeare and he used it to identify love, sorrow and other emotions in his plays.

There is a book in the collection at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust called 'The Praise of Musicke'. The book is dedicated to Sir Walter Raleigh and was published in Oxford in 1586. It explores the belief that music was essential for the universe to work properly. It also helps to explain just how important music would have been to Shakespeare.


THE PRAISE
OF MVSICKE:
Wherein besides the antiquitie, dignitie, delectation, & vse thereof in ciuill matters, is also declared the sober and lawfull vse of the same in the congregation and Church of God.
Hieron. in Psal. 64.
God is delighted with the morning & euening hymns of the church, in a faithfull soul, which reiecting the ceremonies of vaine superstition, praiseth him deuoutly.
Printed at Oxenford by IOSEPH BARNES Printer to the Vniuersitie, Anno 1586.

'The Praise of Musicke, 1586 CC-BY-NC-ND Image Courtesy of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

In ‘Twelfth Night’ (Act 1, Scene 1), Orsino opens the play with the lines:

"If music be the food of love, play on;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.
That strain again! it had a dying fall:
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour! Enough; no more:
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love! how quick and fresh art thou,
That, notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
But falls into abatement and low price,
Even in a minute: so full of shapes is fancy
That it alone is high fantastical."



Here Orsino asks for lots of music so he will no longer be hopelessly in love. Orsino surrounds himself with sad music throughout the play. It is likely that a lute would have provided Orsino’s musical accompaniment.

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Twelfth Night
Music

The first line of 'Twelfth Night' is the one of the most famous music-related quotes from Shakespeare and today it is often used in shop signs and on posters. It is often referenced whenever Shakespeare and music are talked about together. The line, shows the connection between music and love in Shakespeare's time.

In the 1500 & 1600's, people believed that listening to music was a completely different experience to looking at a picture. It was thought that while the eyes looked at images from a distance, the person remained detached from the picture but they believed that music actually entered your head, and touched your soul directly.

Queen Elizabeth I was fond of music and during her reign it became even more popular leading to the creation of new and different musical instruments.

Musical instruments fell into different categories depending on how they were played:

- A stringed instrument (played with a bow or plucked) such as a lute, a harp or hurdy gurdy
- A wind instrument (blown into) such as bagpipes, a recorder or a trumpet
- A keyboard instrument such as an organ or harpsichord
- A percussion instrument such as a tabor (drum), a triangle or a tambourine.









Activity:

Design and draw your own musical instrument. Which of type of instrument will it be and what will you call it?

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