TEACHER RESOURCE PACK

I, MALVOLIO

WRITTEN & PERFORMED BY TIM CROUCH

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Introduction by Tim Crouch

I played the part of Malvolio in a production of *Twelfth Night* many years ago. Even though the audience laughed, for me, it didn’t feel like a comedy. He is a desperately unhappy man – a fortune spent on therapy would only scratch the surface of his troubles. He can’t smile, he can’t express his feelings; he is angry and repressed and deluded and intolerant, driven by hate and a warped sense of self-importance. His psychiatric problems seem curiously modern. Freud would have had a field day with him. So this troubled man is placed in a comedy of love and mistaken identity. Of course, his role in *Twelfth Night* would have meant something very different to an Elizabethan audience, but this is now – and his meaning has become complicated by our modern understanding of mental illness and madness. On stage in *Twelfth Night*, I found the audience’s laughter difficult to take. Malvolio suffers the thing we most dread – to be ridiculed when he is at his most vulnerable. He has no resolution, no happy ending, no sense of justice. His last words are about revenge and then he is gone. This, then, felt like the perfect place to start with his story. My play begins where Shakespeare’s play ends. We see Malvolio how he is at the end of *Twelfth Night* and, in the course of *I, Malvolio*, he repairs himself to the state we might have seen him in at the beginning. I reverse his journey; I hand him back his dignity; I give him his chance to have his say. I also get the chance to analyse the laughter that I found so difficult all those years ago. We are predisposed to laugh at people’s misfortune. The French philosopher, Henri Bergson wrote a book called *Laughter* in 1900. In it he described how laughter comes from a sense of detachment – we cannot laugh at something that we feel emotionally connected to. In order to laugh, we must feel indifferent. The man slips on the banana skin and we laugh because it is not us. Laughter, then, is never very far from cruelty. And this is particularly true of Malvolio. His treatment at the hands of Toby Belch is sadistic and vicious. But still we laugh at it. In *I, Malvolio*, I play with your sense of detachment to the character – I want you to both love and hate him. To laugh at him but also to feel for him. The more you feel, maybe the more you will think about your laughter when it comes – if it comes....
History of I, Malvolio

I, Malvolio is the fourth in a series of plays I have written for young audiences which take as their focus a minor character from a Shakespeare play and tell their story. The first was about the character of Caliban from The Tempest. Then came the fairy Peaseblossom from A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Then Banquo from Macbeth. This year, I wrote about the character of Cinna the poet from Julius Caesar. I had wanted to write about Malvolio ever since I played him. The play was commissioned by Brighton Festival and Singapore Arts Festival. In 2009 I went to Singapore and spent a week working with a group of high school students – exploring the character in relation to practical jokes and cruelty. I came home and started to write. I also started conversations with my designer Graeme Gilmour. Graeme and I had worked together on Peaseblossom and Banquo – he is a good friend of mine and knows my work. Once the script was just about finished, Graeme started sending me designs for Malvolio’s costume. In the lead-up to the play opening, I had meetings and costume fittings with Graeme and with two amazing designers, Emma Wreyford and Lucy Bradridge. Most of the rehearsal was about how I get out of one costume and into another. That, and learning my lines.

In May 2010 I, Malvolio opened at Dorothy Stringer High School in Brighton – the school my own children have attended. He then went to Battersea Arts Centre in London and to the Singapore Arts Festival. Last year I took Malvolio to the Edinburgh Fringe. To get him ready for this, I invited the two long-term co-directors of my work, Karl James and Andy Smith, to come and work on him for a bit. Mostly, they told me to try and control myself – not to laugh at my own jokes, not to veer too far away from the script! I try my hardest to do these things. I don’t always succeed.

Since Edinburgh, Malvolio has been to Moscow and Athens and Florence and the Philippines – as well as to UK venues in Bristol, Sheffield, Oxford, Stratford upon Avon, Bath and a wet field at Latitude Festival.

You can follow Malvolio’s rants on Twitter here: @mrmalvolio
Below are some activities for Drama or English students. They look at *Twelfth Night* and the character of Malvolio.

**Activity One - Mini Scenes**

Here is the whole of *Twelfth Night* in six scenes and 670 words. Split into six groups and give each a scene to work on. Work to bring each mini-scene to life – using only the text, but plenty of visual and theatrical invention and character. Find ways to run these scenes together, so the whole story is delivered with freshness and brevity.

**Scene One**

VIOLA  What should I do in Illyria?  
My brother he is in Elysium.  
Perchance he is not drowned.  
Who governs here?

CAPTAIN  Orsino... ’twas fresh in murmur  
That he did seek the love of fair Olivia.

VIOLA  I’ll serve this Duke.  
Thou shalt present me as an eunuch to him.  
Lead me on.

**Scene Two**

MARIA  By my troth, Sir Toby, you must come in earlier o’ nights: your cousin, my lady, takes great exception to your ill hours.

SIR TOBY  *(belches)* A plague o’ these pickled herrings.

ANDREW  I saw your niece do more favours to the Count’s serving man than ever she bestowed upon me.

SIR TOBY  But shall we make the welkin dance?

MALVOLIO  My masters, are you mad? Or what are you?

MARIA  He is a kind of Puritan.

SIR TOBY  He shall think by the letters that thou wilt drop that they come from my niece, and that she’s in love with him.

ANDREW  O, ‘twill be admirable!
Scene Three

ANTONIO Let me yet know of you.

SEBASTIAN You must know of me then, Antonio, my name is Sebastian. My sister was said she much resembled me. But for some hour before you took me from the breach of the sea was my sister drowned.

(Sebastian and Antonio exit)

VIOLA My lord and master loves you.

OLIVIA You lord does know my mind, I cannot love him.

(Viola exits)

‘I am a gentleman.’ I’ll be sworn thou art. Not too fast: soft! soft! How now? Even so quickly may one catch the plague?

Scene Four

MALVIOIO To be Count Malvolio.

SIR TOBY I could marry this wench for this device.

MALVOLIO By my life, this is my lady’s hand.

“Jove knows I love thee: Remember who commended thy yellow stockings, and wished to see thee ever cross gartered. Thy smiles become thee well.”

I am happy.

(Malvolio exits)

SIR TOBY Come, we’ll have him in a dark room and bound. My niece is already in the belief that he’s mad.

Scene Five

SIR TOBY There’s no remedy, sir, he will fight with you for oath’s sake.

VIOLA A little thing would make me tell them how much I lack of a man.

SIR TOBY Why man, he’s a very devil.

ANDREW Let him let the matter slip, and I’ll give him my horse, Grey Capilet.

ANTONIO Put up your sword. I for him defy you.

OFFICER Antonio, I arrest thee at the suit of Count Orsino.

ANTONIO Will you deny me now?

VIOLA Nor know I you by voice or any feature.

(Antonio is taken away)
Activity One continued

VIOLA Prove true, imagination, O prove true, That I, dear brother, be now ta’en for you!

(Viola exits. Sebastian enters)

ANDREW Now sir, have I met you again? There’s for you!

( Strikes Sebastian)

SEBASTIAN Why, there’s for thee, and there and there!

( Beats Sir Andrew)

OLIVIA Now go with me and with this holy man Plight me the full assurance of your faith.

SEBASTIAN Are all the people mad?

Scene Six

MALVOLIO Good fool, help me to some light and some paper: I tell thee I am as well in my wits as any man in Illyria.

ORSINO Still so Cruel?

OLIVIA Still so constant, lord. Cesario, husband, stay.

ORSINO Husband?

VIOLA My lord, I do protest –

SEBASTIAN Pardon me, sweet one, even of the vows We made each other but so late ago.

ORSINO One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons!

VIOLA I am Viola

ORSINO Give me thy hand.

OLIVIA Most wonderful! Fetch Malvolio hither.

MALVOLIO Madam, you have done me wrong. I’ll be revenged on the whole pack of you!

OLIVIA He has been most notoriously abused.

ORSINO A solemn combination shall be made Of our dear souls.

CLOWN A great while ago the world begun, With a hey, ho, the wind and the rain, But that’s all one, our play is done, And we’ll strive to please you every day.
Have fun with a speech you’re working on. Feed it into one of those free online translation services. Translate the speech into another language – say Chinese, for example. Then translate the translated text back into English. See what happens. See what is lost and what is gained. Are there discoveries to be made? Can you do this with dialogue as well? Could you play a scene translated in this way? Here's an example from Twelfth Night.

Twelfth Night
Act One Scene One

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.

ENGLISH – TRADITIONAL CHINESE - ENGLISH

If music loves food, use; For me surplus it, perhaps that abundance, the appetite loathes, with, therefore dies. Again that tensity! It has the autumn which dies: O, it has come o’ My ear does not like the sweet sound, that breath in the violet bank, steals and gives the smell! Enough; Does not have: ‘ The Tis not that sweet snack now took it before was. Loves O spir-it! How quick and new art you, that still thy capacity Receiveth took the sea, does not exist inputs there, any valid and asphalt soe’ Not, but falls into the reduction and the low price, immediately: Then the full shape is fancy it is alone high unexpected.
Below is a list of things people in *Twelfth Night* say about Malvolio. Give the descriptions out and get participants to find an action to accompany each description – from ‘Poor fool’ to ‘affectioned ass’ to ‘overweening rogue’. Find Malvolio’s physicality – using these descriptions. The group moves around the space and, as they do so, descriptions are fed to them that affect how they move.

Sick of self-love

You taste with a distempered appetite.

Art any more than a steward?

Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?

Sometimes he is a kind of Puritan.

A time-pleaser.

An affectioned ass that cons state without book.

Crammed (as he thinks) with excellencies.

It is his grounds of faith that all that look on him love him...

The niggardly rascally sheep-biter.

To anger him we’ll have the bear again and we will fool him black and blue.

Here comes the little villain.
...the trout that must be caught with tickling.

He has been yonder i’ the sun practising behaviour to his shadow.

An overweening rogue.

Contemplation makes a rare turkey-cock of him.

Look how imagination blows him.

He is sad and civil, and suits well for a servant with my fortunes.

Like a pedant that keeps a school i’th’ church.

Yon Gull Malvolio is turned heathen, a very renegado.

He is sure possessed.

This is very midsummer madness.

Poor gentleman, he’s much distract.

Poor fool.
Here are some things that Malvolio says in Twelfth Night. Give these sections of text out and get to work on them. Find actions, movements, gestures for each key word or phrase. Explore the quality of Malvolio’s language – the rhetoric he uses, the images he employs. He is a big fan of consonants, for example. What does that say about him? Fill the room with Malvolios!

I protest I take these wise men, that crow so at these set kind of fools, no better than the fool’s zanies.

Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy: as a squash is before ‘tis a peascod, or a codling when ‘tis almost an apple.

My masters, are you mad? Or what are you? Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty, but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night?

Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you?

To be Count Malvolio!

Having been three months married to her, sitting in my state. Calling my officers about me, in my branched velvet gown, having come from a day bed, where I have left Olivia sleeping –

To ask for my kinsman Toby. Seven of my people, with an obedient start, make out for him... Toby approaches; curtsies there to me..., “You must amend your drunkeness”...

I will be proud, I will read politic authors, I will baffle Sir Toby, I will wash off gross acquaintance, I will be point device the very man.

I thank my stars, I am happy. I will be strange, stout, in yellow stockings, and cross gartered, even with the swiftness of putting on. Jove and my stars be praised.

‘Be not afraid of greatness’: ‘twas well writ.

Some are born great. Some achieve greatness. And some have greatness thrust upon them.”
And when she went away now, ‘Let this fellow be looked to’ – ‘fellow’ – not Malvolio, nor after my degree, but ‘fellow’.

Why everything adheres together, that no dram of a scruple, no scruple of a scruple, no obstacle, no incredulous or unsafe circumstance – what can be said? – nothing that can be can come between me and the full prospect of my hopes.

Go hang yourselves all: you are idle, shallow things, I am not of your element: you shall know more hereafter.

Sir Topas, never was man thus wronged. Good Sir Topas, do not think I am mad. They have laid me here in hideous darkness.

Fool! Fool! Fool, I say. Good Fool, as ever thou wilt deserve well at my hand, help me to a candle, and pen, ink and paper: as I am a gentleman, I will live to be thankful to thee for’t.

I tell thee I am as well in my wits as any man in Illyria.

Madam, you have done me wrong,
Notorious wrong.

... tell me, in the modesty of honour,
Why you have given me such clear lights of favour,
Bade me come smiling and cross-garter’d to you,
To put on yellow stockings, and to frown
Upon Sir Toby, and the lighter people;

Why have you suffer’d me to be imprison’d,
Kept in a dark house, visited by the priest,
And made the most notorious geck and gull
That e’er invention played on? Tell me, why?

I’ll be reveng’d on the whole pack of you.
Here is the text of the letter Malvolio writes when he is imprisoned. Paraphrase to find its modern meaning and find modern ways of communicating what he says. How else could Malvolio have got his message across?

By the Lord, madam, you wrong me, and the world shall know it. Though you have put me into darkness, and given your drunken cousin rule over me, yet have I the benefit of my senses as well as your ladyship. I have your own letter, that induced me to the semblance I put on; with the which I doubt not but to do myself much right, or you much shame. Think of me as you please. I leave my duty a little unthought of, and speak out of my injury.

Here are some transitive verbs that I think describe some of the things characters try to do to each other in Twelfth Night. Find sections of the play – speeches or dialogue – and apply these verbs to your performance of the text. See how the performance changes, the meaning changes.