

Three fools

In 'Twelfth Night', Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Feste are three characters that entertain and make the audience smile.

In one scene Malvolio, the disapproving steward, interrupts them making merry in the middle of the night and singing songs, or "catches" (singing in rounds). Sir Toby and Feste share a noisy duet, singing over Malvolio as he attempts to hush them. Malvolio refuses to sing along with them and they begin to hatch a plan to trick Malvolio. The plan involves Feste, disguised as a priest, getting Malvolio to agree he is a fool by asking him a series of questions.



A ceramic tile by John Moyr Smith showing a scene from 'Twelfth Night' where Sir Toby Belch, Andrew Aguecheek and Feste carouse late into the night

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In the play, Feste often challenges others about who is being foolish and says, "Better a witty fool, than a foolish wit".

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'We Three Loggerheads'

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How now, my hearts! Did you never see the picture of 'we three'?
[Twelfth Night, Act 2, Scene 3]

This picture is held in the collections of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and dates back to the early 17th century when such 'trick pictures' were popular.

The word 'loggerhead' can be used to describe either a fool or a block of wood and the inscription is a play on words.

When we look at this painting we see two fools, one of whom is also holding a wooden staff carved with the head of another fool. Are they the three 'loggerheads' or by looking at the image, are you now included as the third?

Although the artist of this painting is unknown, historians have identified the fools in this painting as Tom Derry (left), who was employed by Queen Anne of Denmark, wife to King James I of England, and Muckle John (right), who is thought to have been associated with the court of King Charles I.

Tom Derry is shown with six fingers (although it is not known if he had six fingers in real life). He is turned toward Muckle John, as though he is about to share something he finds amusing. Could the joke be at the viewer's expense? Are we the third fool?

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The question game

This game can be played in pairs or as a group,

If played as a group, have one person seated separately in the middle of a circle, or in front of the others in the group.

The person sitting separately must answer 'no' to all the questions asked by the others. However, they are not allowed to simply use the word 'no'. They must use alternatives such as:

- *not exactly*
- *under no circumstances*
- *not at all*
- *absolutely not*
- *never*
- *nope*

(This can also be played by answering all the questions as 'yes' using alternatives such as: very well; of course; indeed; absolutely; by all means; sure; certainly; alright.)

The others in the pair or group must then ask trick/nonsense/silly questions to try and force the person answering into making a mistake by saying the word "no".

Example questions could be:

- *Would you eat a building?*
- *Can you jump over a lorry?*
- *Do you live in an igloo?*