

Twinderella the Musical Study Guide

1) *Twinderella* almost begins with a wedding until the narrator points out that the audience doesn't have "the slightest idea what's going on." Most of the rest of the show is presented in a **flashback**. A flashback is a literary term used to describe action that takes place earlier than the beginning action. For example, if the wedding is on a Tuesday, we might say that the action then "flashes back" to the previous Thursday and then works its way forward again. Can you think of other stories or books that include flashbacks? Try writing or telling a story yourself using the technique of the flashback.

2) Early in the story we hear that classic fairy tale beginning, "Once upon a time." When do we know that this particular "Once upon a time" is not going to lead into an ordinary fairy tale? How do we find this out?

3) The playwright sometimes creates comedy by using the traditional conventions of the fairy tale for comic effect. An example of this is where the children tell the narrator to "skip to one day," because of the storytelling convention of setting up a scene and then introducing the first important plot development with the phrase "and then one day." What other fairy tale conventions does the author use in unusual or amusing ways?

4) The playwright creates some of the comedy in *Twinderella* by mixing traditional fairy tale structure and settings with modern characters and details. How does the playwright mix these two elements—traditional and modern? When do we get our first hint that the story will include modern elements?

5) Notice how the first scene with Bob starts as an exact parallel to the first scene with Cinderella. This establishes the fact that the stories of Bob and Cinderella will parallel each other throughout the play. How does Mortimer's line at the bottom of page 3 serve to make Bob's scene an exaggeration of Cinderella's scene?

6) What is funny about Bob's line at page 4.19?

7) Ethel, Esmerelda (and later Mortimer and Eggbert) misinterpret the meaning of the words "Regrets Only" on an invitation. What do those words really mean? How do the evil/cruel step-siblings interpret the words? Can you find another place where Ethel and Esmerelda misinterpret the meaning of a word to comic effect?

8) Certain words and phrases that we use to discuss literature are used by characters in *Twinderella*. Can you tell by how they are used in the play what the following mean?

- plot development (6.26)
- dramatic tension (7.6)

9) Parts of *Twinderella* might be described as meta-theatre—that is theatre that openly admits it is theatre. Find places in the script where a character refers to the play as a play, to elements of the theatre as a theatre or to the audience as an audience. How does this make for comedy? How does it make you think about what makes up a theatrical event? (11.34–35 is an example of this).

10) How does the Godfather differ from the Godmother? Which seems a more traditional fairy tale character? Why? Where do you think the idea of the Godfather came from?

11) Look at Bob's speech at 10.18. Here Bob asks the Godfather to do exactly what the Fairy Godmother does in the traditional Cinderella story, yet here it seems ridiculous. Consider how comedy is created by both the wording and the context of a speech. Can you think of a way you could use an ordinary speech in a different context to make it funny?

12) Cinderella has worn a glass slipper since at least 1697 when the French storyteller Perrault recorded her history. It is possible that Perrault misunderstood an oral version of the tale, mistaking the word *vair* (fur) for *verre* (glass), for in those days it would have been nearly impossible to fashion a shoe from glass. In *Twinderella* the playwright points out how ridiculous the idea of slippers made of glass is. How does he do this? Had you ever thought before how odd it was that Cinderella should be wearing glass shoes? Can you find a place in the script where the playwright refers to the possible original material of the slippers (fur)?

13) How do we learn that King Roger is not the smartest monarch in history? How does his level of intelligence become a comic part of his character?

14) Sometimes comedy is based on a contradiction of our expectations. For instance, when we hear a man talk about falling in love, we expect him to tell us all the wonderful qualities of their beloved. In what way is this expectation contradicted by Eggbert and Mortimer on p. 22. Can you write or tell a story in which expectations are contradicted in a similar way?

15) Another convention of fairy tales that the playwright makes fun of is the tradition of revealing a long-kept secret in the final scene. How does the playwright turn this tradition into comedy? Look up the word “archetype.” Would you say that Old Matilda is an archetype? If you've never seen a character like her before, you might want to look up the plot summary for a famous 19th-century operetta called *H.M.S. Pinafore*. What character in this play is like Old Matilda?

16) Throughout the play Cinderella's and Bob's families ask them to do more and more ridiculous tasks like putting a new roof on the garage and alphabetizing a slug collection. The playwright creates comedy by exaggerating the traditional housekeeping chores that are required of Cinderella in the original fairy tale. Imagine that you are writing your own comic version of Cinderella. What chores might you assign to her that would make the audience laugh?