



William Shakespeare's

Much Ado About Nothing

directed by Ethan McSweeney

S SHAKESPEARE THEATRE COMPANY

FIRST FOLIO:

TEACHER AND STUDENT RESOURCE GUIDE

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Consistent with the Shakespeare Theatre Company's central mission to be the leading force in producing and preserving the highest quality classic theatre, the Education Department challenges learners of all ages to explore the ideas, emotions and principles contained in classic texts and to discover the connection between classic theatre and our modern perceptions. We hope that this *First Folio: Teacher and Student Resource Guide* will prove useful to you while preparing to attend *Much Ado About Nothing*.

First Folio provides information and activities to help students form a personal connection to the play before attending the production. *First Folio* contains material about the playwrights, their world and their works. Also included are approaches to explore the plays and productions in the classroom before and after the performance.

First Folio is designed as a resource both for teachers and students. All *Folio* activities meet the "Vocabulary Acquisition and Use" and "Knowledge of Language" requirements for the grades 8-12 Common Core English Language Arts Standards. We encourage you to photocopy these articles and activities and use them as supplemental material to the text.

Enjoy the show!

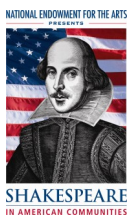
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"Shakespeare Theatre Company's production is part of *Shakespeare for a New Generation*, a national program of the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest."

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Much Ado About Nothing Synopsis

Leonato, Governor of Messina, is host to Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon, who has returned from a victorious campaign against his rebellious brother, Don John. Leonato shares his house with his lovely young daughter, Hero; his playful, witty niece, Beatrice; and his elderly brother, Antonio. Returning with Don Pedro from war are Don John, now "reconciled" to him; Claudio, a well-respected young Florentine nobleman of whom Don John is bitterly resentful; and Benedick, a Paduan lord said to be a confirmed bachelor and engaged in a "merry war" with Beatrice, apparently a confirmed spinster.

When the soldiers arrive at Leonato's home, Claudio quickly falls in love with Hero. Meanwhile, Benedick and Beatrice resume the war of witty insults that they have carried on with each other in the past.

At a masked ball, Don Pedro, Claudio and Hero plan to trick Beatrice and Benedick into falling in love. After the ball, the wedding of Claudio and Hero is planned.

Don Pedro, Claudio and Leonato ensure that Benedick (hidden in a garden arbor) hears them discuss Beatrice's presumably passionate love for him. Hero and Ursula, her gentlewoman, play a similar trick on the listening Beatrice. Meanwhile, Don John plots against Hero and Claudio. He has his companion, Borachio, make love to Margaret, Hero's gentlewoman, at Hero's window on the eve of the wedding and brings Don Pedro and Claudio to watch. The plot works, but Constable Dogberry's men hear a drunken Borachio boasting of his part in the plan and arrest him.

Believing he has seen her being unfaithful to him, the enraged Claudio humiliates Hero and denounces her at the altar, at which she faints and is left for dead. Friar Francis, disbelieving the charge, proposes that Hero should hide until the truth is revealed and enlists the aid of Leonato, who announces that his daughter has died of grief. In the aftermath of the abandoned ceremony, Benedick and Beatrice finally confess their love to one another. Beatrice demands that Benedick prove his love by killing Claudio.

Benedick challenges Claudio to a duel, but Dogberry brings in Borachio who reveals Don John's plot. With Borachio's confession, Hero is exonerated. Leonato demands a public apology from Claudio, and in penance for causing Hero's alleged death, Claudio agrees to marry Leonato's hitherto unseen niece—and only when he unveils his bride does he find out that she is Hero. Beatrice and Benedick resolve their "merry war" and agree to wed alongside them as news comes that Don John has been taken prisoner.

Classroom Activity

Common Core Standards: Performance, Stagecraft, and Persuasive Writing

Much Ado About Nothing Goes Hollywood

Divide into "Casting Agencies" with four or five students in each group. Each agency has to replace the main characters in *Much Ado* with celebrities. Choose celebrities that have similar personalities to the characters you are replacing.

Here are a few examples:

Benedick: Bachelor, successful and often referred to as "heartthrob"—Justin Timberlake or Derek Jeter.

Dogberry: A comedic entertainer with an eccentric persona who often plays characters that are larger than life—Russell Brand.

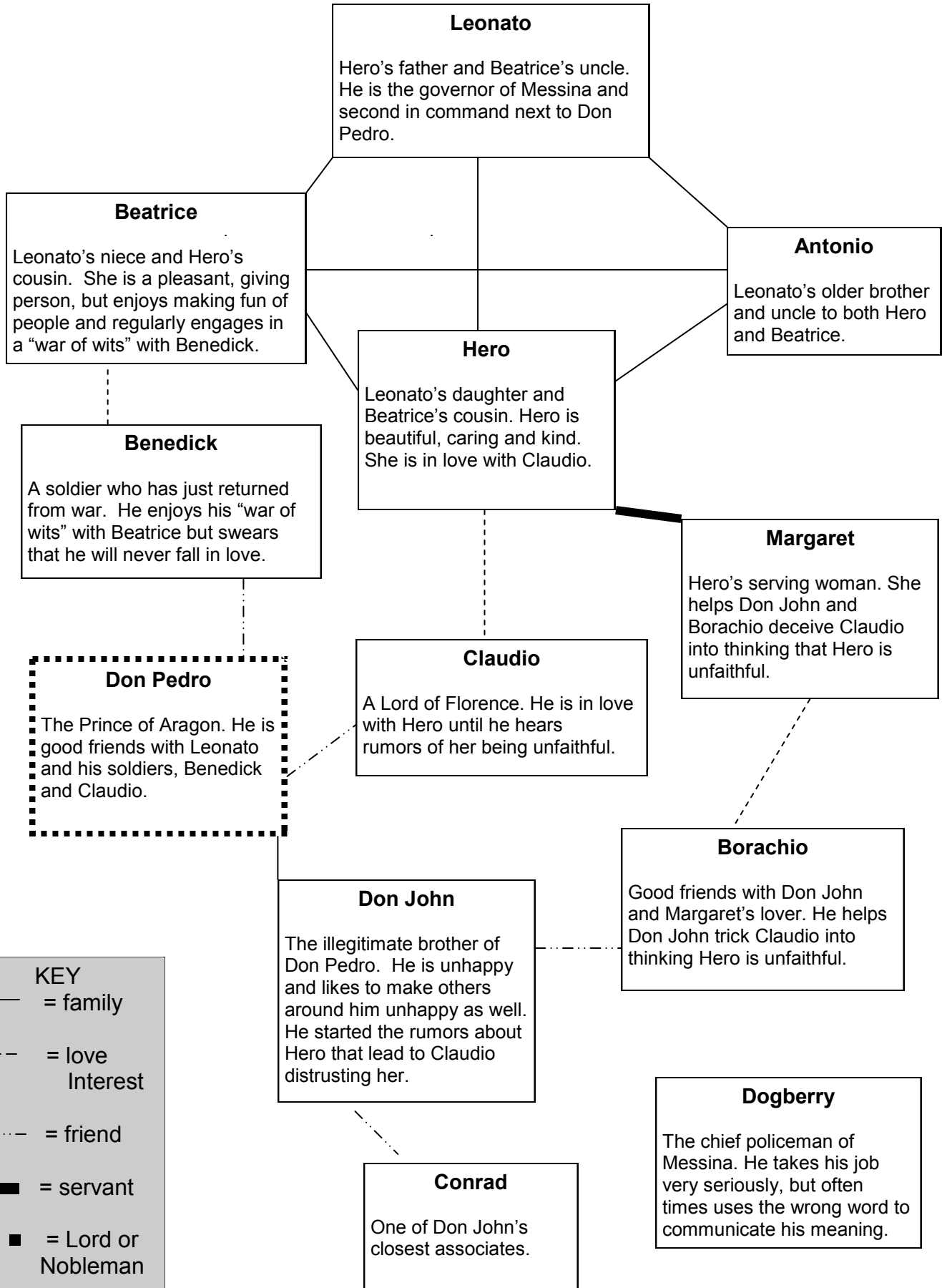
Hero: Young and wealthy and known for having a "wholesome" image—Taylor Swift.

Once you have the play cast, create a movie poster. The poster should include pictures and information about why you have made your choices. Also include quotes from the play that support your opinions about the characters.

Be sure to cast the following roles: Benedick, Beatrice, Claudio, Hero, Don John, Dogberry, Leonato.

Finally, come up with a tag line for your version of *Much Ado*. The tag line should illustrate your view of the overarching theme. Examples could be "There are a lot of blind turns on the long road to love" or "Making mountains out of mole hills has never been this fun."

WHO'S WHO in *Much Ado About Nothing*



Shakespeare's Verse & Prose



During the Elizabethan period, "English" was a relatively young language (only about 160 years old) combining Latin, French and Anglo-Saxon. There was no dictionary or standardized literacy education. People in Shakespeare's London spoke much more than

they read, causing the rules of grammar and spelling to be quite fluid. Writers created new words daily and poets expressed themselves in a new form of writing known as **blank verse**, first appearing in 1557 in *Certain Bokes of Virgiles Aenis* by the Earl of Surrey:

They whistled all, with fixed face attent
When Prince Aeneas from the royal seat
Thus gan to speak, O Queene, it is thy will,
I should renew a woe can not be told:
(Book II, 1-4)

That the verse was "blank" simply meant that the poetry did not rhyme, allowing rhyme-less poets such as Virgil and Ovid to be translated and Elizabethan playwrights to emulate the natural rhythms of English speech within **iambic pentameter**.

A typical line of verse from this time contains five units of meter or **feet**. Each foot contains two syllables. When the first syllable is unstressed and the second syllable is stressed (dee DUM), it is an **iamb** (iambic meaning push, persistency or determination). The prefix **penta** means five, as in the five-sided shape—a pentagon. Iambic pentameter is therefore one line of poetry consisting of five forward-moving feet.

It was this new tradition of blank verse in iambic pentameter that Shakespeare inherited as he embarked on his career as playwright and creator of the greatest poetry in the history of the English language. Similar to the human heartbeat, a horse gallop or the beat of a piece of music, iambic pentameter drives and supports Shakespeare's verse, moving the language along in a forward flow that emulates the natural speech and rhythms of life. Here is a standard line of verse in iambic pentameter from *Much Ado About Nothing*.

And I will fit thee with the remedy.
(act 1, scene 1)

If we were to say the rhythm and not the words, it would sound like this:

dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM

When we **scan** a piece of text (marking it with a "u" for the unstressed and "/" for stressed), we simply tap out the rhythm of the line, based on dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM, to see if the line is structured in iambic pentameter:

u / u / u / u / u /

And I will fit thee with the remedy.
(act 1, scene 1)

Prose in Shakespeare's work is not in iambic pentameter and relies more heavily on other literary devices for its speed and rhythm. These devices include: **antithesis** (setting opposite words against each other), **lists** (series of actions or descriptive words that build to a climax) and **puns** (the use or misuse of a word to mean another word). Shakespeare used prose to express conversation between the lower classes, like the Mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or familiar or intimate scenes, as with Henry and Katherine at the end of *Henry V*. He also utilized prose to express madness or vulgarity, as in the nunnery scene of *Hamlet*. The exact meaning of a shift from verse to prose is not constant, but it always signals a change in the situation, characters or tone of a scene. Only *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* rely almost entirely on prose.

In the following passage from *Much Ado About Nothing*, Don Pedro speaks in prose.

First, I ask thee what they have done; thirdly, I ask thee what's their offence; sixth and lastly, why they are committed; and to conclude, what you lay to their charge?
(act 5, scene 1)

As his writing skill level increased, Shakespeare gradually employed **alliteration** (the repetition of a vowel or consonant in two or more words in a phrase), **assonance** (resembling vowel sounds in a line) and **onomatopoeia** (words with sounds imitating their meaning) to create deeply poetic, vibrant images on stage for the characters and his audience.

Classroom Activities

Common Core Standards: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, Knowledge of Language, Understanding of Classical Literature, Questioning and Listening, Analysis and Evaluation

Tackling the Text

- Do a close reading of a four- or five-line passage from *Much Ado*. Read the lines aloud and paraphrase them, identifying any unknown words. Next, identify the operative words in the passage. Using the operative words as a starting point (hint: operatives are always stressed), scan the lines, using the symbol “U” for unstressed and “/” for stressed, and determine the meter.
- Don Pedro, a prince in *Much Ado About Nothing*, mostly speaks in prose. Why would royalty speak in prose?
- Shakespeare used a shift in language as clues to his audience and actors that something was happening. Do we adjust our language today based on who is in the room, how we are feeling or who we are talking to? Write down an example of why a person might shift from verse to prose and prose to verse in 2011.

Strategies for Close Reading

When exploring text, it is also helpful to understand paraphrasing and operative words.

- **Paraphrasing** is a good way of making the text more accessible by putting it in your own words.
- **Operative words** are the words that are essential to telling the story. They are the most important words in a line of Shakespeare’s text. Operative words are generally in this order of importance: verbs, nouns (including title and names the first time they are mentioned), adjectives and adverbs.

I Can Do That! Modernizing a Piece of Classical Text

David Ives’ new translation of Jean-François Regnard’s *The Heir Apparent* premiered at STC earlier this season. Ives updated the language to resonate with a modern audience. His use of 21st century language in the play serves as an effective tool for telling the story. See if you can modernize the language in this excerpt from *Much Ado About Nothing* without changing the main ideas that the characters are discussing. Examine the excerpt line by line and update each line of text on its own. Feel free to look up any words or phrases that you are not familiar with. This activity gives you the opportunity to closely examine a classical text and recognize how the ideas contained in it are timeless.

Claudio

Thus answer I in name of Benedick,
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
‘Tis certain so, the Prince woos for himself.
Friendship is constant in all other things
Save in the office and affairs of love.
Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues.
Let every eye negotiate for itself
And trust no agent, for beauty is a witch
Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.
This is an accident of hourly proof,
Which I mistrusted not. Farewell therefore, Hero.
(act 2, scene 1)

To take it one step further: write your updated version in verse.

A Look Inside *Much Ado*: Who Influences Who?

Much Ado About Nothing was first published in 1600, and probably written in 1598. For a clue about the play's theme, readers need look no further than the title; the word "Nothing" was pronounced in Elizabethan times as "Noting": the primary action of this play revolves around characters "noting" or observing one another. The lighthearted title also hints to the fact that despite the drama, in the end it will prove of little or no consequence.

In order to understand some of the nuances of the play, it is helpful to familiarize yourself with some of the books and conventions Shakespeare drew from in order to create his work. Like many of Shakespeare's tales, *Much Ado* borrowed some basic ideas from popular stories of the period. Many believe, for instance, that the Hero-Claudio tale, a story of a virtuous lady falsely accused, may have been borrowed from the pages of *Orlando Furioso*, which was written in 1516 and translated into English by Sir John Harington in 1591. Although Claudio's behavior towards Hero may seem shocking to a modern audience, during the time in which Shakespeare wrote, there was a strong cultural fear of husbands being betrayed by their wives. Listen for the number of lines about cuckolds, or references to horns throughout the work—jokes about wearing a cuckold's horns are commonplace throughout the literature of the period. The word *cuckold* comes from the name of the cuckoo, a bird that, rather than building its own nest, leaves its eggs for other birds to feed and raise. In a world of "noting", social emotions like honor and shame become extremely important. While drastic to us, Claudio's actions may have been a bit more excusable to an Elizabethan crowd.

Although the Hero-Claudio romance is important to the play, there is another couple who steals the show (so much, in fact that King Charles I scratched out the real title of the play and replaced it with these character's names). The "sharp tongued" and "shrewish" Beatrice and the equally quick-witted Benedick are cut from an entirely different cloth than the pleasant Hero and the love-struck Claudio. These lovers prefer to battle with the weapon of wit, rather than shower one another with words of love. But this, too, has its roots based in history: Beatrice and

Benedick's behaviors are thought to be modeled after Baldassare Castiglione's famous book, *The Book of the Courtier*. Published in English in 1561, Castiglione argues that sophisticated men and women must practice what he calls *sprezzatura*, or, "cultivated nonchalance." Beatrice and Benedick work hard to make their witty banter come across as jaunty and indifferent.

Beatrice and Benedick have your typical kindergarten romance—they tease because they love. It is generally agreed that Beatrice and Benedick are the model for the witty lovers in comedy and drama of later centuries; it can be argued that they led to Elizabeth and Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* and to Scarlett and Rhett in *Gone with the Wind*.

Another character worthy of discussion is Don John, the self-proclaimed "plain dealing villain." In the world of 16th century melodrama, the evil of the villain often remains unknown to his victims until he is overtly exposed. However, Don John appears as more of a plot device than a truly complex character. Similar to how the good guy always wins out at the end of a cartoon, Don John's meddling is thwarted by one particularly clownish constable. When the group is informed that Don John has taken flight, thoughts of him are quickly brushed aside, suggesting that there is simply no room for his melancholy in the midst of happy reconciliations.



Barrett Foa as Claudio and Kathleen Early as Hero in STC's 2002-2003 production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, directed by Mark Lamos. Photo by Carol Rosegg.

Next Steps

Common Core Standards: Inference, Argument and Persuasive Writing, Analysis and Evaluation

- Shakespeare may have based *Much Ado* on various popular stories; what stories have been based on *Much Ado*?
- Which relationship would you prefer to have, Claudio and Hero's or Beatrice and Benedick's? Why?
- If Hero *had* been unfaithful, would Claudio's actions have been justified? Why or why not?

Matchmaker, Matchmaker, Make Me a Match!

The practice of matchmaking has been around for centuries and professional matchmakers still exist in many cultures today. Professional matchmakers are tasked with finding the right candidates for marriage. Possible characteristics a matchmaker might look for include: similar religious beliefs, cultural traditions and social status. The *Shidduch* in Orthodox Judaism is a system where Jewish singles are introduced to one another with the intent that they will be married. In India, arranged marriages continue to be an important part of the society in which marriages are settled by people other than the bride and groom-to-be.

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Don Pedro and Hero decide to act as matchmakers for Beatrice and Benedick. Don Pedro explains to Hero:

I will teach you how to humour your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick; and I, with your two helps, will so practise on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer: his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love-gods.

(act 2, scene 1)

Don Pedro and Hero agree that they will convince Benedick that Beatrice loves him and convince Beatrice that Benedick loves her. As a result of their trickery and deception, Beatrice and Benedick do fall in love and marry.

Next Steps

Common Core Standards: Analysis and Evaluation, Questioning

- Why do you think the idea of matchmaking is popular in certain cultures?
- Why do you think Don Pedro and Hero wanted Benedick and Beatrice to get married? Do you agree with the actions of Don Pedro and Hero? Why or why not?
- Are Benedick and Beatrice really in love if they were tricked into it?
- Have you ever been in a situation where either you played matchmaker or someone tried to match you up with a partner? Was the match successful? What were the end results?
- Professional matchmakers still exist today, but there are also informal methods of matchmaking. What are examples of informal matchmaking that exist in 2011? What are some of the risks involved with informal matchmaking?
- What do you think makes a successful match? What makes a perfect match?

Spotlight on the Role of Women

Women hold an interesting place in the world of Shakespeare's plays. At times they are the most powerful characters on stage and at times they are passed over completely, treated as more of a prop than a person.

In *Much Ado* the role of the woman is completely bound by the perception of their male counterparts. The men in the play have the ability to transform, end or save the women's lives. Only Beatrice fights this domination, though in the end she also succumbs to the societal status quo.

Beatrice is one of the most treasured female roles in the Shakespearean canon. She proves herself to be a match of wits to Benedick, winning over the audience's hearts while bruising his ego. Though she would like to believe that she does not need Benedick, by the end of the play she admits her love.

Hero is a young heiress and that, along with her beauty, attracts Claudio. When Hero's honor is questioned it becomes clear that her life, literally and metaphorically, is bound by society's opinion.

Margaret is one of two waiting women for the household, the other is Ursula. Margaret is manipulated against her knowledge into deceiving Claudio and Don Pedro.

Next Steps

Common Core Standards: Analysis and Evaluation, Argument and Persuasive Writing

- What do you think their characters tell us about the role of women at the time the play was written?
- Think of some of the women in your lives. Which character are they similar to?
- What advice would you give Hero when Claudio humiliates her at the altar?

The Role of Deception in *Much Ado*

Classroom Activities

Common Core Standards: Questioning, Analysis and Evaluation, Stagecraft

Discussion Questions

Deception plays a major role in the plot of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Whether it's Don John convincing Claudio that Hero is being untrue, or Don Pedro creating an elaborate scheme to bring Benedick and Beatrice together, the characters' lives are constantly affected by deception. Deception moves the story forward and is the root cause of all the conflict in the play. But is deception always a bad thing?

- Think about the play and identify different moments when deception is used. What were the ultimate results of these deceptions? Were the outcomes negative?
- If the result of a deception was positive, such as the two characters falling in love, or someone finding forgiveness in their heart, does that make the deception just?
- Could these characters have arrived at a positive end without being deceived?
- Do you think all this deception will lead to long-term happiness for the characters?



Photo of the ensemble of the STC's 2002-2003 production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, directed by Mark Lamos. Photo by Carol Rosegg.

Mask Making Activity

There may be no better example of the role deception plays in the lives of the characters than in act 2, scene 1. In this scene all the characters are masked and speak to one another with complete anonymity. Secret feelings are revealed and lives are changed forever by the end of this scene. The importance of the characters' faces being hidden by masks throughout this pivotal scene cannot be underplayed.

Use this activity to examine why the characters feel a need to interact with each other in deceitful ways. This activity will help you to examine the plot of *Much Ado About Nothing* more closely and help you to develop your own opinion about the play.

Steps

- 1) Choose a character from act 2, scene 1. Identify the character's hidden emotions, thoughts and desires.

Example: Publicly, Claudio is an attractive man and a good soldier. Privately, he is insecure and depends on Don Pedro to woo Hero for him.

- 2) Create a mask for your chosen character. This mask should reveal the hidden emotions, thoughts and desires of the character. Use words, quotes from the play and pictures to show what the characters are not saying or revealing.

Example: Claudio's mask might have the word insecure written on it, be blushing, have a picture of him wooing Hero for himself, or include the following quote:

Thus answer I in name of Benedick, / But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
(act 2, scene 1)

- 3) Once completed, don your mask and interact with other students as the public face of your character. How do you feel about having your private character displayed? If the characters in *Much Ado* showed their true selves, rather than wearing a mask, how would the plot be affected?

Resource List

Shakespeare Dictionaries

- Schmidt, Alexander. *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*. Dover, 1971.
- Onion, C.T. *A Shakespeare Glossary*. Oxford University Press, 1986.

Books on Shakespeare

- Asimov, Isaac. *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare*. Doubleday, 1978.
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- Gibson, Janet and Rex Gibson. *Discovering Shakespeare's Language*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.
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- Pritchard, R. E. *Shakespeare's England*. Sutton Publishing Limited, 1999.
- Papp, Joseph and Elizabeth Kirkland. *Shakespeare Alive*. Bantam Books, 1988.

Books on Teaching Shakespeare

- Gibson, Rex. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Reynolds, P. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Rosenblum, Joseph. *A Reader's Guide to Shakespeare*. Salem Press, Inc., 1998.
- Toropov, Brandon. *Shakespeare for Beginners*. Writers and Readers Publishing Inc., 1997.

Websites

- **Shakespeare Theatre Company**—<http://www.shakespearetheatre.org/education>
ON SHAKESPEARE: Articles and information about Shakespeare's life and world
- **In Search of Shakespeare: Shakespeare in the Classroom**—<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/>
The companion website to Michael Wood's four-part PBS series *In Search of Shakespeare*, this site includes extensive research about Shakespeare's life and works, as well as interactive features.
- **Folger Shakespeare Library**—<http://www.folger.edu>
Includes excellent resources for further reading about Shakespeare, as well as fun games and information designed specifically for students and teachers.

Standards of Learning

The activities and question sequences found in the Folio supports grade 8-12 Common Core standards in English Language Arts. Primary content areas addressed include but are not limited to:

- Understanding of Classical Literature
- Vocabulary and Content Development
- Stagecraft
- Argument and Persuasive Writing
- Inference
- Performance
- Questioning and Listening
- Research
- Analysis and Evaluation

Theatre Etiquette

The phrase “**theatre etiquette**” refers to the special rules of behavior that are called for when attending a theatre performance.

Above all, it is important to remember that the actors on stage can see and hear you at the same time you can see and hear them. Be respectful of the actors and your fellow audience members by being attentive and observing the general guidelines below:



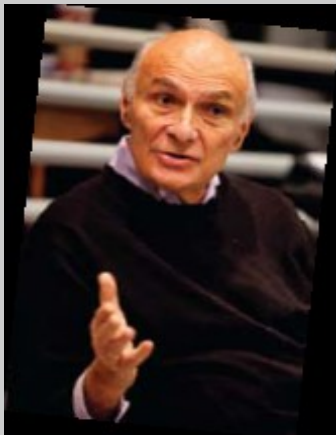
*Students at a SHAKESPEARIENCE production of Cymbeline.
Photo by Nicole Geldart.*

Before you go:

- *Much Ado* plays take place before cell phones and other fun technology existed. Please help us create the environment by turning off your cell phone and other electronic devices (iPods, games, etc.). Not only will it be historically inaccurate, but it can be very distracting, not to mention embarrassing, when a cell phone goes off during a performance. The lights from cell phones and other electronic devices are also a big distraction, so please no text messaging.
- We’re sure that you would never stick your gum underneath your chair or spill food and drinks, but because this theatre is so new and beautiful, we ask that you spit out your gum before entering the theatre and leave all food and drinks in the lobby or the coat check.
- We don’t want you to miss out on any of the action of the play, so please visit the restroom before the performance begins.

During the performance:

- Please feel free to have honest reactions to what is happening on stage. You can laugh, applaud and enjoy the performance. However, please don’t talk during the performance; it is extremely distracting to other audience members and the actors. Save discussions for intermission and after the performance.



Thoughts about the importance of being an audience member from Shakespeare Theatre Company Artistic Director Michael Kahn

“When you go to the theatre, you are engaging with other living, breathing human beings, having an immediate human response. In the theatre you sense that all of this may never happen again in this particular way.

As a member of the audience, you are actually part of how that’s developing—you have a hand in it ... You are part of a community where you are asked to be compassionate, perhaps to laugh with or grieve as well as to understand people, lives and cultures different from your own.”