

# Much A dO about N oThing



Scene by Scene Study Guide

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Teachers' notes

The emphasis in this publication is on active approaches, drawing on a range of learning styles to ensure that pupils both experience the play as a drama text and are supported in engaging with its themes and language.

Although designed for Year 9 pupils preparing for SATs, the strategies and tasks are suitable for a range of levels. If you are preparing students for the KS3 tests there are some SATs-style questions on pages 53, 79, 93 and 95.

The resource is divided into four sections:

- Before reading
- Ongoing activities
- Scene-by-scene activities on the play, including summaries for each Act
- After reading

It is not envisaged that any pupil will tackle *all* the activities on *all* the scenes. Even if reading and working on the whole play, it is likely you will be focusing with your pupils on particular scenes. Although written for a particular scene, many of the strategies (for example, annotating the text, director's notes, thought tracking etc.) could be adapted for the scenes you are focusing on.

Several activities use stills from the 1993 film adaptation (d. Kenneth Branagh). For those pupils who have not seen the film, there is a cast list identifying the actors playing the main parts on page 6.

Line references are to the New Penguin paperback edition, edited by R.A Foakes and text extracts are taken from this edition.

## Answers to 'What happened?' (page 19)

The order of the events should be: 3, 5, 2, 7, 4, 1 and 6.

## The brothers talk – a modern translation (pages 86-88)

The text extracts and translations need to be cut up and put into envelopes before the start of the lesson.

## Preparing for the puppet theatre (page 103)

The activity asks pupils to write or improvise an abridged version of the play to stage in a shoebox theatre. To do this activity, each group will need: an empty shoebox; lollypop sticks or thin pieces of stiff card (6-10cm); coloured card for creating backdrops; paints or felt tips; scissors; several photocopies of the puppet templates on page 104.

## An image collage (page 118)

An A4 version of an image collage is included on page 5. Pupils could discuss what it reveals and use it as a model for their own collages.

## Setting up the revision game (page 123)

To play the card game on page 123, each group (composed of two teams of players) will need a set of playing cards. To create these you need to photocopy pages 125-126 and 127-128 on card as double-sided sheets.

Before groups begin playing the game, they each need to make up a set of questions on their set scenes for another group to answer.

You could play the game to a time limit, with the team with the most points in each group winning. Alternatively, you could play the game so that the first team successfully to answer one of each type of question is the winner.

An image collage (for activity see page 118)



### Cast list

There are a number of activities throughout the publication which use stills from the Kenneth Branagh's version of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993). For pupils who have not seen the film, the characters are identified here.



Don Pedro



Claudio



Benedick



Don John



Leonato



Antonio



Hero



Beatrice



Ursula



Conrade and Borachio



Verges and Dogberry (at the rear)  
and two members of the Watch

# Before reading

## A front cover image

The image below is a still from the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of the play *Much Ado About Nothing* (1996). It was used as the front cover of the programme.

- In pairs, discuss the expectations this image raises about what kind of play it might be. You should think about:
  - the title
  - the two people (what they are wearing, their expressions and so on)
  - the masks they are holding.
- Feed back your ideas to the rest of the class.
- After reading the play, look again at this image and talk about whether or not it was a good choice for a programme cover.



## BEFORE READING

### The cast

Below is the cast list for *Much Ado About Nothing* from the New Penguin edition

- What can you tell about the play from:
  - the names of the characters
  - their relationship to each other
  - the way the list is organised (for example, who comes first, last and so on)
  - where the play might be set.

### The characters in the play

**DON PEDRO**, Prince of Arragon  
**BENEDICK**, of Padua  
**CLAUDIO**, of Florence } young lords and companions of Don Pedro  
**DON JOHN**, Don Pedro's bastard brother  
**BORACHIO**  
**CONRADE** } followers of Don John  
**LEONATO**, Governor of Messina  
**ANTONIO**, his brother, an old man  
**BALTHASAR**, a singer  
**FRIAR FRANCIS**, a priest  
**HERO**, Leonato's daughter  
**URSULA**  
**MARGARET** } attendants on Hero  
**BEATRICE**, an orphan, Leonato's niece  
**DOGERRY**, the Constable in charge of the Watch  
**VERGES**, the Headborough, Dogberry's partner in authority  
**A SEXTON**, and several **WATCHMEN**, under Dogberry's authority  
**A BOY**, servant to Benedick  
**ATTENDANTS** and **MUSICIANS** in Leonato's household  
**MESSENGERS**

### Making predictions

The play starts with the end of a war – the soldiers are returning home and will be among women again.

- From what you now know, write a 50-word scenario for what might happen in this play.
- Read your scenarios out loud to each other.

**What's the story?**

Here are some stills from a film version and on page 10 a few bits of dialogue taken from the play, spoken by different characters.

- Talk about what they tell you about the story, the themes of the play and whether you think it's likely to be comic, tragic or a mixture of the two.



## BEFORE READING

Dost thou not suspect  
my place? Dost thou not  
suspect my years? O that he were  
here to write me down an ass! But  
masters, remember that I am an ass,  
though it be not written down, yet  
forget not that I am an ass ...

I love you with  
so much of my  
heart that none is  
left to protest.

There is a  
kind of merry  
war betwixt Signor  
Benedick and her.

In brief, since I  
do purpose to marry,  
I will think nothing  
to any purpose that  
the world can say  
against it;

I shall see  
thee, ere I die,  
look pale with  
love.

I am a  
plain-dealing  
villain

I will live a  
bachelor.

why she, oh she is fallen  
Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea  
Hath drops too few to wash her  
clean again,

I cannot be a  
man with wishing,  
therefore I will die  
a woman with  
grieving.

### Glossary

Betwixt: between

Ere: before

Suspect: this character means to use the word 'respect' here, but gets it wrong.

## How Shakespeare's story begins

- You will be working in small groups. Your teacher will read you the beginning of the story of *Much Ado About Nothing* and will pause during the reading to let you create still pictures to illustrate that moment in the story.
- When your teacher shouts 'Freeze!' everyone should freeze in position. Your teacher will then choose one group at each point for the whole class to look at.

1

Once, long ago in Italy, in the palace of Messina, there lived the Governor Leonato, his daughter Hero and orphaned niece Beatrice. We join them at the start of the play, when a messenger arrives with a letter, telling Leonato that Don Pedro of Arragon and his army will be returning home, after a victorious war. They will be passing through Messina and intend to stay with Leonato and enjoy his hospitality. Leonato's household is excited by the prospect of seeing these friends again after their long absence.

2

Beatrice, who has a lively sense of humour, is most interested in asking the messenger about the return of one of the soldiers, Benedick. She finds plenty to laugh at and criticise about him. When he then arrives, she continues her teasing jokes to his face.

3

One of the young men, Claudio, confesses to Benedick that he is in love with Leonato's lovely daughter, Hero. When Don Pedro comes along, they talk about Claudio's feelings. Benedick is wittily scornful of love, swearing that he will never marry but remain a bachelor for the rest of his days. Don Pedro predicts that Benedick will get married one day. Benedick says, 'You can ridicule me in a hundred and one different ways if ever I fall for a woman.'

4

Don Pedro offers to help Claudio win Hero's heart and hand by wooing her on his behalf. A masked ball is planned for that night and Don Pedro plans to pretend to be Claudio and win Hero over for him.

5

Don Pedro's conversation with Claudio is overheard by Antonio's servant who believes *Don Pedro* intends to marry Hero. Antonio passes on the rumour to his brother Leonato. Don Pedro's own brother Don John also gets to hear about the plan to woo Hero for Claudio. Don John is a bitter, angry man, with a grudge against anyone who seems to be doing better than him. That includes both his brother and Claudio. He tells his friend Conrade that he intends to use his knowledge of Don Pedro's plan to get revenge on Claudio.

And so ends Act 1 ...

- On a large sheet of paper, brainstorm some of the themes that have been raised by the storyline that you have heard so far. Put this up on the wall and add to it as you read.

## BEFORE READING

### A romantic comedy

*Much Ado About Nothing* is often referred to as a 'romantic comedy'.

- Think about romantic comedies that you have seen on TV or film. Here are some possible examples:

<b>Ten Things I Hate About You</b>	<b>Bridget Jones's Diary</b>	<b>Notting Hill</b>	<b>Sliding Doors</b>
<b>Four Weddings and a Funeral</b>	<b>Friends</b>	<b>Coupling</b>	<b>When Harry Met Sally</b>
<b>Love Actually</b>	<b>A Life Less Ordinary</b>	<b>Pride and Prejudice</b>	<b>Sleepless in Seattle</b>

- Choose one and put a tick by any of these typical story patterns that you find in the one you have chosen:

Boy and girl like each other but don't really know it, or fight against it at first. It's only at the end that true love wins out.	
Boy and girl have a battle of wits.	
Someone else plays a part in bringing the lovers together.	
There's a rival who looks as if he or she might stand in the way of the true love of the main characters.	
There are lots of misunderstandings at the heart of the story.	
What ends up being a comedy, with a happy ever after conclusion, has moments where it could turn into a heart-breaking tragedy.	
The main characters aren't the most conventionally beautiful or handsome, rich or successful, confident or clever, but they're 'nicer' than any of their rivals and their true worth becomes clear in the end.	
One or both of the characters starts off doing something foolish, behaving badly or being nasty but is led to see the error of their ways and becomes a better person in the end.	
There couldn't be anything other than a happy ending.	
Unlikely people are brought together.	
There is a battle of the sexes.	

- Report back to the class on your findings. As a whole class, talk about what seem to be the typical features of a romantic comedy.