



Much Ado About Nothing



a teacher guide for studying the play and attending Southwest Shakespeare Company's performance



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Dear Educator:

We are excited and honored that you have chosen to bring your students to see Southwest Shakespeare's production of *Much Ado About Nothing*. We know that your students will benefit from studying this play in your classroom and seeing it performed on our stage.

Many students and teachers often feel anxiety when it comes to Shakespeare: seeing it, reading it, and especially teaching it. One of the goals of Southwest Shakespeare is to demystify Shakespeare, take him "off the shelf," and re-energize his work for students as well as teachers. Keeping this in mind, this study guide was created to provide educators with a variety of tools to both allay their own concerns and to expand their students' experience with *Much Ado About Nothing* both before and after seeing the stage performance.

We hope you find the enclosed information, activities, and resources helpful in your endeavor to bring Shakespeare to life for your students. If you have any suggestions for activities or topics not already found in this study guide, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at lewandowski.angee@chandler.k12.az.us or phone at (480) 510-3808. We are always interested in hearing new ways to excite young people (and teachers!) about Shakespeare and live theatre.

Happy teaching!

Angee Lewandowski
SSC Education Committee Chair

Comments from the Director

These comments can be used to help you prepare your students to see Southwest Shakespeare Company's performance of *Much Ado About Nothing* and may also answer any questions about changes or modifications made to the stage performance as compared to the written play.

Name of Production:	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>
Name of Director:	Jared Sakren
In what time period is this production set?	1840s
Why?	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> is one of the most suitable of Shakespeare's plays for transposition of time period; it is almost universally done with this play. We have chosen this particular time frame because it suits all of the Spanish names in the text, is appropriate for the romantic comedy of the plot, enhances the light and breezy style of the writing, allows for more variety in locales during our five-play season, and offers many opportunities for physical choices in the blocking.
Have any characters been cut?	No.
Have any characters been added?	No.
Have any characters been combined into one?	No.
Is there any cross-gender casting?	No.
Have any scenes been cut?	No.
Have any scenes been added?	No.
Are there fight scenes?	No.
Stage blood?	No.
Weapons?	No.
Are there love scenes?	Yes.
Sexual innuendo?	Not really.
Final Comments:	This is a romantic comedy suitable for the entire family.

Helpful Tips for Seeing and Exploring Shakespeare

To Read or to See the Play?

"The printed word can't convey the undertone and nuances of speech. For that, you need to hear a gifted actor. Inflection reveals at once whether a speaker is ironic, genuine, sad, or funny. Irony, for instance, is mainly conveyed through inflection and facial expression.

"On the other hand, reading a play alone allows you to proceed at your own pace, giving you time to dwell on poetry and the complex images that might fly right by you if they were only heard."

Norrie Epstein

"Just plunge right in

(to Shakespeare). See a play, read it aloud, rent a video, listen to a tape.

It's up to you.

When you look at Shakespeare close up, he's not as intimidating as when he's seen from afar."

Norrie Epstein, author
The Friendly Shakespeare



"If a play is performed right by those who are properly trained, after about twenty minutes

you won't be aware of the language because the human story is so strong."

David Suchet, actor

"Reading Shakespeare is

sometimes like looking through a window into a dark room.

You don't see in.

You see nothing but

a reflection of yourself,

unable to get in.

An unflattering image of yourself blind."

Antony Sher, actor

"Since women were forbidden to act on the public stage, female roles were played by prepubescent boys—one reason why there's so little actual sex in the plays. Shakespeare turned this restriction into an advantage, evoking desirability through language and dramatic action. Unable to rely on authentic female beauty, Shakespeare made his heroines interesting, witty, and intelligent."

Norrie Epstein, author
The Friendly Shakespeare

Discussion Questions

- Did the production look like what you imagined as you read the play? How was it similar? Different?
- Which actor best portrayed his/her character? Why?
- How was the production different from the written play? What decisions did the director make about staging? Were these effective decisions? Why or why not?
- What did you think of the production values (sets, costumes, lighting)? Did they help you to better understand the plot of the play?

Much Ado – An Introduction

*I have a story, with an all-star cast,
Set in Sicily, in times long past.
Beatrice and Benedick, the heroes of my play,
Battle with words and wit everyday.
But I have a plan to unite the two,
That is intended to entertain you ...*

-- *Much Ado About Nothing: For Kids* by Lois Burdett

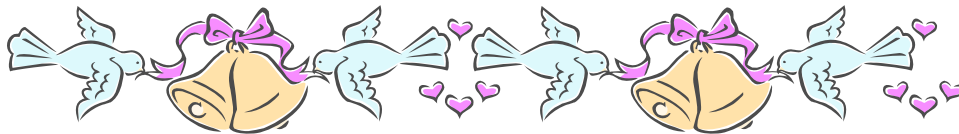
Love, villainy, friendship, parent-child relationships, society and customs – *Much Ado About Nothing* touches on all of these. It presents a rich, ambiguous blend of life's relationships, folly, and catastrophe. Shakespeare introduces us to a group of people who have a past with each other that is immediately apparent as soon as Beatrice asks the messenger if the soldiers are returned from war. This is not a casual inquiry; Beatrice's question marks feelings that she does not yet comprehend. She and Benedick are attracted to each other but do not know how to deal with these feelings.



The relationship of Beatrice and Benedick is counterpoised to the more traditional relationship of Hero and Claudio. Claudio, having returned from the war, now has the leisure and desire to marry Hero. He is concerned about her social (and economic) position and how others perceive her. He asks Benedick what he thinks. He also allows the Duke to intervene on his behalf, to approach the lady and her father with his suit. He is a proper if somewhat distant lover. Meanwhile, Hero is cautioned by her father to obey his will when it comes to the choice of a husband. This is just the beginning of complications involving two sets of lovers, giving the audience and the readers a hint of the rich variety of human motives and relationships.

Much Ado About Nothing is a play that will entertain and challenge your students. They will enjoy the wonderful comic elements in the play—the “battle of the sexes” played by Beatrice and Benedick, the trick played on these two to turn them into lovers, and the farcical speeches of Dogberry and Verges. They may find mirrored in the play many of their own dilemmas about love, familial responsibility, and relationships. And they will have much to think about in weighing the actions of Claudio and Don Pedro and in analyzing the elements of tragedy, melodrama, comedy, and farce united in the play. *Much Ado About Nothing* is a Shakespearean work that is accessible to modern students because of its universal themes.

Source: A Teacher's Guide to the Signet Classic Edition of William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*



“Over the centuries the Beatrice-Benedick plot has most captivated audiences and readers. King Charles I, in his copy of Shakespeare's plays, crossed out the play's title and renamed it 'Beatrice and Benedick' ... it is generally agreed that Beatrice and Benedick are the model for the witty lovers in comic drama of later centuries; and it can be argued that they led as well to Jane Austen's Elizabeth and Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* and to Scarlet and Rhett in *Gone With the Wind*.”

Introduction to the Folger Shakespeare Library edition
of *Much Ado About Nothing*

Much Ado - Sources & History

Much Ado About Nothing belongs to a group of Shakespeare's most mature romantic comedies, linked by similar titles, that also includes *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. All date from the period 1598 (the year of Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia*, which mentions none of them) to 1600 (when *Much Ado* and *As You Like It* were entered in the Stationers' Register but briefly stayed from publication). These plays are the culmination of Shakespeare's exuberant, philosophical, and "festive" vein in comedy, with only an occasional anticipation of the darker "problem" comedies of the early 1600's.

As in some of his other comic double plots, Shakespeare has linked together two stories of diverse origins and contrasting tones in order to set off one against the other. The Hero-Claudio plot is Italianate in flavor and origin, sensational, melodramatic, potentially tragic. It is likely that Shakespeare's main source was John Harrington's translation of Ludovico Ariosto's poem *Orlando Furioso* (1591). Shakespeare's other plot, of Beatrice and Benedick, is much more English and his own. The battle of the sexes is a staple of English medieval humor and of Shakespeare's own early comedy: Berowne and Rosaline in *Love's Labor's Lost*, Petruchio and Katharine in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The tone of the merry war between Beatrice and Benedick is lighthearted, bantering, and reassuring, in contrast with the Italianate mood of vengeance and duplicity. No less English are the clownish antics of Dogberry and his crew. Like Constable Dull in *Love's Labor's Lost* or the tradesmen in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the buffoons of *Much Ado* function in a nominally Mediterranean setting but are nonetheless recognizable London types.

Their preposterous antics not only puncture the ominous mood threatening our enjoyment of the main plot, but absurdly enough even help to thwart a potential crime. When Dogberry comes along, laughter cannot be far behind.

In 1600, *Much Ado About Nothing* was printed in the only early Quarto version, and the play was printed again in the First Folio in 1623. Though it was not reprinted before 1623, the play was evidently popular. The Quarto's title-page proclaims it as "sundrie times publikely acted by the right honourable, the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants," and it is still a favorite with modern audiences.

Sources: *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, edited by David Bevington
and *The Arden Shakespeare: Much Ado About Nothing*, edited by A. R. Humphreys

Critic's Corner

"How then does one answer the question: What is the definition of love in *Much Ado About Nothing*? The prime answer is there in the title: Love is much ado about nothing. What binds and will hold Beatrice and Benedick together is their mutual knowledge and acceptance of this benign nihilism ... perhaps there is just a hint that like most Shakespeare marriages, the union of Beatrice and Benedick may not be a bower of bliss. In this comedy, more than ever, that does not matter. Two of the most intelligent and energetic of Shakespeare's nihilists, neither of them likely to be outraged or defeated, will take their chances together."

Harold Bloom
Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human



Act-By-Act Writing Topics

Act I

- What is Beatrice's opinion of Benedick? What is Benedick's opinion of Beatrice? What conclusions can you draw about their relationship?
- You are Beatrice or Benedick. Write an entry in your journal describing your encounter with each other. What do you think of the other person? Why do you love to argue with each other? Do you have deeper feelings for the other person or is it all just for fun?
- Beatrice and Benedick say that lovers are fools, and they want nothing to do with love. Why do you think they say this?
- How does Don John see himself? Why does he want to cause trouble?

Act II

- Does Beatrice see through Don John? Explain your answer.
- According to the stage directions for the dance, Don John is not masked during the revels. Why?
- Do you think Beatrice and Benedick know each other when they speak behind their masks? Why or why not?
- You are Don John. Write a letter to a friend describing your feelings about your brother, your family, and Claudio.
- Why do you think Don Pedro insisted on "wooing" Hero for Claudio? How does this tie into his determination to get Beatrice and Benedick to fall in love with each other?
- How are the plans of Don Pedro and Don John completely opposite? What does this reveal about their characters?
- How does Benedick rationalize himself into loving Beatrice?

Act III

- What is Beatrice's reaction to Hero and Ursula's conversation?
- Why do the men make fun of Benedick?
- What stereotype are Dogberry and Verges?
- When Dogberry and Verges come to see Leonato about the capture of Conrade and Borachio, what does Leonato tell them to do? How does his decision affect what will happen next?

Act IV

- How does Claudio judge Hero's behavior when he sees her?
- How do the other characters react? Explain (in relationship to their earlier behavior in the play) Leonato's denunciation, Benedick's confusion, and Beatrice's conviction that Hero has been slandered.
- How does the confusion in the speech of Dogberry fit the theme of appearance versus reality?
- Write an entry in Dogberry's journal that describes how you are feeling after the action of Scene 2.
- Scene 1 and Scene 2 of Act IV are completely opposite: Scene 1 is highly tragic and Scene 2 is highly comic. Imagine you are going to direct *Much Ado About Nothing* for students at your school. How would you present Act IV to make it as dramatic and comic as possible?

Act V

- What does Antonio say that gets Leonato to think again about his passionate denunciation of Hero?
- Does Leonato think Hero is guilty of being unfaithful? Why? Why not?
- Write a letter from Leonato to Hero apologizing for not believing her when she was accused by Claudio for being unfaithful.
- What is Claudio's attitude in Scene 1? What does this show about his character? Does it fit with your view of his character?
- In Scene 4 of this act, Hero removes her physical mask and reveals that she is still alive. What emotional masks are also removed in this scene?
- Why do Beatrice and Benedick talk about loving each other only according to "reason"? How do you think they really feel about each other?
- Write the sonnet from Benedick or Beatrice that Hero and Claudio discover that reveals Benedick or Beatrice's true feelings for the other.
- Overall, how do gossip, conversation, and eavesdropping function in the play?

Literary Analysis Topics

1. Now that you have read and seen the play, how do you judge it as a comedy? Mood is the feeling of a piece of literature. Is the mood of this play light and humorous or serious and weighty? Refer to the play to find quotes and scenes used to establish the dominant mood.
2. Who would you rather be: Beatrice or Hero; Claudio or Benedick? Compare and contrast the two female or male characters. Why do you think Shakespeare created the pairs of characters?
3. Choose a passage in the play which best represents one of the following themes: deception as a means to an end; the importance of honor; the nature of attraction between men and women; the role of marriage in society; gender roles in society. Explain what the passage means and what it reveals about the theme.
4. Critics make a distinction between low comedy and high comedy. Low comedy is the boisterous, rowdy play of characters who often come from lower classes; the language of these social classes often includes dialect, lots of bawdy language, innuendo, and word play. High comedy is more sophisticated and involves the characters of the upper class. High comedy is more intellectual and arises from the pleasure of seeing complications arise. Choose one scene of high comedy and one scene of low comedy from the play. Analyze the differences between the scenes and discuss how each type of comedy affects the audience and how we derive pleasure from viewing comedy.
5. Accusations of unchaste and untrustworthy behavior can be just as damaging to a woman's honor as such behavior itself. Is the same true for the male characters in the play? How is a man's honor affected by accusations of untrustworthiness or unfaithfulness? Do sexual faithfulness and innocence fit into the picture in the same way for men as it does for women? Examine the question of honor and faithfulness as it relates to four male characters in the play: Benedick, Leonato, Claudio, and Don Pedro. What could Shakespeare be saying about the difference between male and female honor?
6. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, what is Shakespeare telling us about ourselves – about what we want or need to be happy, about how men and women need to interact? What is Shakespeare's understanding of human nature?

Journal Writing

At the beginning of each class, give students a list of quotes from which to choose one quote and write their personal response for five to seven minutes. After writing, students can share their responses in pairs, small groups, or with the class. Or, one day each week can be set aside for students to choose their best response and share it in small groups or with the class. Their responses can take many forms.

- Write a three-part response: 1) indicate the meaning of the quote, 2) connect the quote with other parts of the play, other literature, or personal experiences, and 3) discuss your personal feelings about the quote, the character, or the action.
- Write a purely personal expression. Take off from the quote and free write wherever your thoughts make take you: into fantasy; reflections on your day; problems you are or have experienced; or people you care about.
- Write a poetic response. Write your own feelings to the quote or continue the dialogue using Shakespeare's style. Or, write a poem reflecting a theme or idea suggested by the quote.
- Copy the quote and illustrate it. In lieu of writing, draw the characters or illustration the action in whatever detail you like from symbolic representation to realistic characterization.
- Reply to the character. Write a letter to the character, either from your point of view or from the point of view of another character in the play.

The following are quotes from each act of the play for student response:

Act I

1. "There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signor Benedick and her. They never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them." (Leonato, Scene 1)
2. "Because I will not do them the wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself the right to trust none. And the fine is, for the which I may go the finer, I will live a bachelor." (Benedick, Scene 1)
3. "It must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain." (Don John, Scene 3)

Act II

1. "I have a good eye, uncle; I can see a church by daylight." (Beatrice, Scene 1)
2. "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." (Claudio, Scene 1)
3. "I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife; and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe." (Benedick, Scene 3)

Act III

1. "I'll devise some honest slanders
To stain my cousin with. One doth not know
How much an ill word may empoison liking." (Hero, Scene 1)
2. Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps." (Hero, Scene 1)
3. "If I see anything tonight why I should not marry her tomorrow, in the congregation where I should
wed, there will I shame her." (Claudio, Scene 2)
4. "Yet Benedick was such another, and now is he become a man. He swore he would never marry; and
yet now in despite of his heart he eats his meat without grudging. And how you may be converted I
know not; but methinks you look with your eyes as other women do." (Margaret, Scene 4)

Act IV

1. "You seem to me as Dian in her orb,
As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown.
But you are more intemperate in your blood
Than Venus, or those pampered animals
That rage in savage sensuality." (Claudio, Scene 1)
2. "I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to protest." (Beatrice, Scene 1)
3. "I cannot be a man with wishing; therefore I will die a woman with grieving." (Beatrice, Scene 1)

Act V

1. "Men can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel; but, tasting it,
Their counsel turns to passion ..." (Leonato, Scene 1)
2. "No, I was not born under a rhyming planet, nor I cannot woo in festival terms." (Benedick, Scene 2)
3. "One Hero died defiled; but I do live,
And surely as I live, I am a maid." (Hero, Scene 4)
4. "Since I do purpose to marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it; and
therefore never flout at me for what I have said against it. For man is a giddy thing, and this is my
conclusion." (Benedick, Scene 4)

Source: A Teacher's Guide to the Signet Classic Edition of William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*

Anticipation & Reaction Guide

Directions: Before seeing or reading the play *Much Ado About Nothing*, rate the following statements. Compare your answers with a partner and discuss your reasons for how you rated each statement. After you have seen or finished reading the play, revisit the statements and see if your ratings have changed. Discuss with your partner why you did or did not change your ratings for each statement.

1
Disagree Strongly

2
Disagree

3
Agree

4
Agree Strongly

Rating (BEFORE seeing/reading <i>Much Ado</i>)	Statement	Rating (AFTER seeing/reading <i>Much Ado</i>)
	You should date people who are similar to you; the relationship will be stronger because you share similar interests.	
	You can choose the person you fall in love with.	
	Jealousy in a romantic relationship is usually a sign that the relationship has problems.	
	Most people can be trusted to be faithful in a romantic relationship.	
	Staying single is the best choice because falling in love can cause so many problems.	
	Men are attracted to women who are intelligent and funny.	
	Parents usually know what is best for you, so you should listen to them when it comes to whom you date.	
	There is no such thing as pure evil; everyone has a conscience.	
	Men and women will never understand what the opposite sex really thinks.	
	Reading Shakespeare isn't fun because it is too difficult to understand.	
	I can relate to the characters and events in Shakespeare's plays.	

After seeing/reading the play:

1. Did most of your ratings change or stay the same? Why?

2. What did you learn by completing the anticipation and reaction guide?

Shakespeare's Language - Not So Ancient!

Shakespeare is known as a brilliant poet and playwright, but many people don't know how much of a contribution he gave to our everyday vocabulary. The following are just a *few* of the words and phrases that Shakespeare either "invented" or made popular:

anchovy
to bet
candle holder
employment
fortune-teller
green-eyed
invitation
obscene
priceless
tardiness

assassination
birthplace
dewdrop
day's work
foul-mouthed
hot-blooded
leapfrog
outbreak
puppy-dog
unpolluted

bedroom
bloodsucking
dawn
eyeball
full-grown
to hurry
love letter
to puke
savage
watchdog

Was Shakespeare a genius? Are you? Below are several SNIGLETS, which are words that ARE NOT in the dictionary but should be! Notice how these words are created ... they are combinations of two or three commonly used words:

Sniglet	Part of Speech	Definition
Bicoma	noun	The nonfunctioning pen you return to the bottom of your desk drawer, thinking somehow it will come back to life someday.
Doork	noun	A person who always pushes on doors marked "Pull."
Flopcorn	noun	The un-popped kernels at the bottom of the popcorn bag.
Vicdumb	noun	The character in a scary movie who, while running from the killer/creature/monster, predictably trips, thus enabling the killer/creature/monster to catch him or her.
Plakquak	noun	The one mysterious dentist out of five "who doesn't recommend sugarless gum for his patients who chew gum."
Kodaxxed	verb	Any photo taken in which the frame has cut off people's heads.
Pupspicious	adjective	The fear dogs have when placed in the backseat of a car (because they just <i>know</i> they are going to the vet).

Now create your own "sniglet"! Remember, you want to combine existing words to create a new word with its own special meaning!

Sniglet	Part of Speech	Definition

Comedy or Tragedy?

In Shakespeare's plays, the difference between comedy and tragedy can be a thin line. Comedies usually end with weddings and celebrations, while tragedies end with death.

If you have ever seen the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, you know that the action of the play is basically comic until the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt. On the other hand, the comedy in *Much Ado About Nothing* is challenged by the seriousness of Act IV. The play could easily have turned into a tragedy with a few plot changes.

In a tragedy ...	Your Answer
1. At what point would the action in <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> become tragic?	
2. What would probably happen to Hero when Claudio rejects her and humiliates her in public?	
3. What would Benedick most likely do after he challenges Claudio to a duel?	
4. What would happen to Don John?	
5. When would Dogberry and Verges bring Borachio to Leonato's house to confess?	
6. What would Claudio do when he discovers the truth?	
7. Who would still be alive at the end of the play?	

Extension:

Rewrite *Much Ado About Nothing* as a tragedy. Begin with Act 4. Videotape or perform your version for your class.

Beatrice vs. Benedick

Throughout the course of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Beatrice and Benedick seem to love bickering with each other ... and Shakespeare knew that his audience appreciated a quick wit and a clever insult! He used his talent for words to create some vivid and memorable insults, and there is no doubt that his audiences loved the word play between Beatrice and Benedick.

Directions: Read the scene from Act I, Scene 1 where Beatrice and Benedick first encounter each other in the play. In the first column, read the dialogue and then in the second column write a modern "translation" for each line. Then answer the question below.

Act I, Scene 1	Your Translation
Beatrice: I wonder that you will still be talking, Signor Benedick. Nobody marks you.	
Benedick: What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living?	
Beatrice: Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signor Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain if you come in her presence.	
Benedick: Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted. And I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart, for truly I love none.	
Beatrice: A dear happiness to women. They would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood I am of your humor for that. I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.	
Benedick: God keep your Ladyship still in that mind, so some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face.	
Beatrice: Scratching could not make it worse an 'twere such a face as yours were.	
Benedick: Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.	
Beatrice: A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.	
Benedick: I would my horse had the speed of your tongue and so good a continuer. But keep your way, i' God's name. I have done.	
Beatrice: You always end with a jade's trick. I know you of old.	

In your opinion, which character has the sharper wit: Beatrice or Benedick? Why?

Dogberries

Have you ever known anyone who tries to use big words but ends up not making any sense? That is what Dogberry does. In almost every sentence he utters, he manages to mess up at least one word. Sometimes he says the opposite of what he intends to say or uses a word that makes no sense at all. Dogberry issues a constant stream of words we would call *malapropisms* – words that are misused in a humorous way.

Directions: Read Dogberry's malapropisms in the first column and write what you think Dogberry intended to say in the second column.

Dogberries	What Dogberry Meant
"You are thought to be the most senseless and fit man."	
"You shall make no noise in the streets; for, for the watch to babble and to talk is most tolerable and not to be endured."	
"Comparisons are odorous."	
"But truly for mine own part, if I were as tedious as a king, I could find it in my heart to bestow it all of your worship."	
"Why, this is flat perjury, to call a prince's brother villain."	
"O villain! Thou shalt be condemned into everlasting redemption for this."	
"Dost thou not suspect my place? Dost thou not suspect my years?"	

Extension: In groups of three or four, write a short story using malapropisms. You will probably find it easiest to write the story first, then substitute the malapropisms. Remember to substitute words that sound very much like the original word. Share your story with the rest of the class.

Additional Activities

- Write a diary from the perspective of one of the main characters from the play. The diary may be from the time frame before, during, or after the play's events. You will need several entries, and you may want to include personal keepsakes. Remember that thoughts and feelings are very important in a diary.
- Make several drawings of some of the scenes from the play and write a caption for each drawing. Put all the drawings and captions in chronological order on a poster board to create a storyboard of the play.
- Create a newspaper that reports the various events of the play. You could include a front-page story that reports the play's main conflict and its resolution, a feature article about one "noble" from the play (like an article about a celebrity), sports and entertainment relevant to the setting of the play or the interests of the characters, a weather report, etc.
- Construct a model of the Globe Theatre. You may construct it out of any materials that you wish. Be sure to consult reliable sources to help you design your model.
- Create a sculpture of a character from the play. You may use any combinations of materials – soap, wood, clay, sticks, wire, stones, old toy pieces, or any other object – to create your sculpture.
- Interview a character from the play. Write at least 10 questions that will give the character the opportunity to discuss his/her thoughts and feelings about his/her role in the story. You and a partner should play the character and the interviewer. Videotape the interview for presentation.
- Create a comic strip that depicts a few scenes from the play. You may draw, use computer graphics, use photos from magazines, or any other way you wish to graphically create your comic strip.
- Create a movie poster for the play using two or more of the following media: paint, crayons, chalk, oil pastel, colored pencils, ink, markers, etc. You may want to choose modern-day actors to star in the movie and include their names on the poster. Look at current movie posters to help you determine what information to include on your poster.

Performing a Scene

Presentation skills are becoming more and more important in today's society. The ability to speak well, whether it is with one person or in front of a large group, is a skill that people use everyday. By encouraging your students to memorize and perform a scene written by William Shakespeare, you will be immersing them in great thoughts and language.

Although your students may be initially nervous about performing in front of their classmates, you can make the experience non-threatening by participating in it yourself ... you will show your students that even you can do it, and probably provide them with some good laughs!

1. Ask students to choose a scene from the play to memorize. Students can choose one of the suggested scenes or choose another scene from the play after checking with the teacher.
2. The teacher can model both effective and ineffective scenes (you can have fun with this, especially when modeling the "ineffective" scene!). Ask a student to read the lines of one character as you perform the role of the other character. Then ask students to point out which elements of the performance were successful and which were not. On the board, write down a list of bad habits that can distract the audience or take away from the performance, such as fidgeting, monotone voice, inaudible volume, mispronunciations, and speaking too quickly. Then write down a list of elements that a successful performance should contain: eye contact with the audience, voice inflection, sufficient volume, evidence of understanding, pronunciation, and appropriate speed with the proper pauses.
3. Allow some time in class for students to practice their scenes. Pair student groups together (rotating with different groups at each practice session). Have students practice with their partner groups; the groups should offer constructive criticism, using the included checklist to help them make constructive suggestions.

Scene Performances

Name: _____ Character: _____

Name: _____ Character: _____

Name: _____ Character: _____

Name: _____ Character: _____

Name: _____ Character: _____

Name: _____ Character: _____

Name: _____ Character: _____

The following requirements are graded on a scale of **1 to 5** (1 being lowest and 5 being highest):

_____ **knowledge of lines** (did not miss any lines; very few awkward pauses)

_____ **stage presence** (commands the audience's attention; use of eye contact; not constantly looking at the floor or shifting feet; did not stand in one spot without moving)

_____ **body movement** (movements seem natural; no forced or unmotivated movements; movements fit the character)

_____ **use of voice** (use of pauses; easy to hear and understand words)

_____ **use of space** (did not stand in one spot)

_____ **rehearsal is obvious** (actually took time to rehearse; everything flows)

Scene Suggestions

The following scenes are suggestions for student performances (all line numbers are from the Folger Shakespeare Library edition of *Much Ado About Nothing*):

- Act I, Scene 1, Lines 114-143 (2 characters) Beatrice and Benedick exchange verbal barbs.
- Act I, Scene 3, Lines 1-72 (3 characters) Don John plots with Conrade and Borachio.
- Act II, Scene 3, Lines 95-222 (4 characters) Benedick is tricked by Don Pedro, Leonato, and Claudio.
- Act III, Scene 1, Lines 35-122 (3 characters) Beatrice is tricked by Hero and Ursula.
- Act IV, Scene 1, Lines 269-350 (2 characters) Beatrice convinces Benedick to challenge Claudio to a duel.
- Act IV, Scene 2, Lines 1-89 (7 characters) Dogberry, Verges, and the 2 Watchmen manage to expose Conrade and Borachio's plan to the Sexton.
- Act V, Scene 4, Lines 54-126 (7 characters) Claudio and Hero, Benedick and Beatrice agree to marry.



Recommended Reading

***Much Ado About Nothing* Resources**

Much Ado About Nothing: For Kids by Lois Burdett; Firefly Books Ltd., Buffalo, NY: 2002. Written in rhyming couplets and illustrated by children, this is a great book for students of all ages. Perfect for students performing readers' theatre.

No Fear Shakespeare: Much Ado About Nothing; Spark Publishing, New York, NY: 2004. Presents the original text of Shakespeare's play side by side with a modern version, with marginal notes and explanations and full descriptions of each character. This is an especially useful tool for struggling readers.

Much Ado About Nothing Folger Shakespeare Library edition edited by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine; Washington Square Press, New York, NY: 1995. The original text is presented with extensive footnotes. Includes background information on the play and Shakespeare's life as well as an essay entitled "*Much Ado About Nothing: A Modern Perspective*" by Gail Kern Paster that explores gender roles in Elizabethan England to gender roles in modern society.

Reference Books

Brush Up Your Shakespeare! by Michael Macrone

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Shakespeare by Laurie Rozakis

Freeing Shakespeare's Voice by Kristin Linklater

The Friendly Shakespeare by Norrie Epstein

Shakespeare A to Z by Charles Boyce

Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human by Harold Bloom

Shakespeare Well-Versed: A Rhyming Guide to All His Plays by James Muirden

Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-First Century edited by Ronald E. Salomone and James E. Davis

Picture Books

A Child's Portrait of Shakespeare by Lois Burdett

All the World's A Stage by Rebecca Piatt Davidson

The Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare by Diane Stanley and Peter Vennema

Tales from Shakespeare by Charles and Mary Lamb

Tales from Shakespeare (comic book) by Marcia Williams

William Shakespeare and the Globe by Alike

Young Adult Novels

King of Shadows by Sandra Cooper

The Shakespeare Stealer by Gary Blackwood

Shakespeare's Scribe by Gary Blackwood

Shakespeare's Spy by Gary Blackwood

Websites

www.swshakespeare.org – see what's new at Southwest Shakespeare Company

www.allshakespeare.com – access to scripts, study guides, lesson plans, and other resources

www-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html – the complete works of Shakespeare on-line

www.folger.edu – access to primary documents and lesson plans for teaching Shakespeare

shakespeare.palomar.edu/educational.htm – includes links to sites designed for teaching Shakespeare over the Internet; great for finding secondary resources to support the primary play being taught

www.teachersfirst.com/shakespr.shtml – has on-line quizzes and surveys related to particular plays; also has related sites with information about Elizabethan England

www.stratford.co.uk - the official Stratford resource center on William Shakespeare

Meeting AZ State Standards

By viewing Southwest Shakespeare's production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, students can meet several of Arizona State Arts Standards. In addition, the activities included in this teacher's guide, when implemented in the classroom along with other teacher-assigned reading and writing activities, will allow students to meet various Arizona State Standards in Writing, Reading, and Listening and Speaking.

Writing Standards – Strand 3: Writing Applications

Concept 1: Expressive

Expressive writing includes personal narratives, stories, poetry, songs, and dramatic pieces. Writing may be based on real or imagined events (**Act-By-Act Writing Topics-journal entry assignments, pages 7-8**).

Concept 3: Functional

Functional writing provides specific directions or information related to real-world tasks. This includes letters, memos, schedules, directories, signs, manuals, forms, recipes, and technical pieces for specific content areas (**Act-By-Act Writing Topics-letter writing assignments, pages 7-8**).

Concept 5: Literary Response

Literary response is the writer's reaction to a literary selection. The response includes the writer's interpretation, analysis, opinion, and/or feelings about the piece of literature and selected elements within it (**Act-By-Act Writing Topics, pages 7-8; Literary Analysis Topics, page 8; Journal Writing pages 9-10**).

Reading Standards – Strand 1: Reading Process

Concept 6: Comprehension Strategies

Employ strategies to comprehend text (**Anticipation and Reaction Guide, page 11**).

Reading Standards – Strand 2: Comprehending Literary Text

Concept 1: Elements of Literature

Identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure and elements of literature (**Comedy or Tragedy?, page 13; Beatrice vs. Benedick, page 14; Dogberries, page 15; Additional Activities, page 16**).

Concept 2: Historical and Cultural Aspects of Literature

Recognize and apply knowledge of the historical and cultural aspects of American, British, and world literature (**Act-By-Act Writing Topics, pages 7-8; Journal Writing, pages 9-10**).

Listening and Speaking Standards

Standard 3: Students effectively listen and speak in situations that serve different purposes and involve a variety of audiences (**Performing a Scene, pages 17-19**).

Arts Standards – Theatre

Standard 2: Art in Context

Students demonstrate how interrelated conditions influence and give meaning to the development and reception of thoughts, ideas, and concepts in the arts (**attending and discussing Southwest Shakespeare's performance of *Much Ado About Nothing***).

Standard 3: Art as Inquiry

Students demonstrate how the arts reveal universal concepts and themes. Students reflect upon and assess the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others (**attending and discussing Southwest Shakespeare's performance of *Much Ado About Nothing***).

Educator Comments

Please help us to improve. We invite you to share your thoughts about this production. Please **return this form** to any Southwest Shakespeare Company volunteer as you leave, **OR mail** it to us at P.O. Box 30595, Mesa, AZ 85275, **OR fax** it to 480.924.4310. Thank you for completing and returning this form, for coming to our performance, and for introducing your students to the wonders of Shakespeare and live theatre!

Please feel free to use the back of this form to include any additional comments.

Name of Play: _____ Performance Date: _____

Did the confirmation packet provide you with the information you needed? Why/why not? _____

Did you find the Teacher Guide helpful? What did you particularly like/dislike? _____

Did you enjoy the performance? Why/why not? _____

Could you understand it? _____

Could you hear it? _____

What did you think of it visually? _____

Would you recommend Southwest Shakespeare to other educators? Why/why not? _____

Your name and school (optional) _____

E-mail address (optional) _____