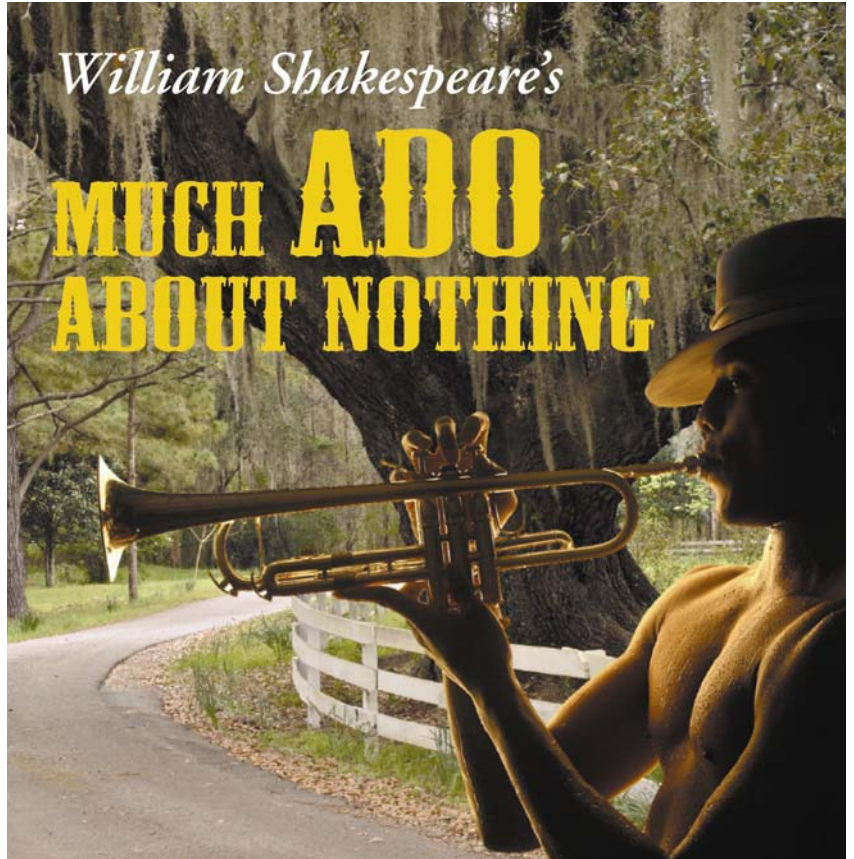


Study Guide: Much Ado About Nothing

Getting the most out of the Study Guide for *Much Ado About Nothing*

Our study guides are designed with you and your classroom in mind, with information and activities that can be implemented in your curriculum. The National Players has a strong belief in the relationship between the actor and the audience. Without either one, there is no theatre. We hope this study guide will help bring a better understanding of the plot, themes and characters in the play so that you can more fully enjoy the theatrical experience.

Feel free to copy the study guide for other teachers and for students. Some content would be applicable before your workshops and the performance; some content is more appropriate for discussion afterwards. Of course, some activities and questions will be more useful for your class, and some less. Feel free to implement any article, activity, or post-show discussion question as you see fit.



Before the Performance

Using the articles in the study guide, students will be more engaged in the performance. The guide will help you spot useful information in the show. In addition, the guide contains articles on the various play adaptations and movies inspired by Shakespeare work. This combined with our in-classroom workshops, will keep the students attentive and make the performance an active learning experience.



After the Performance

With the play as a reference point, our questions, and activities can be incorporated into your classroom discussions and can enable students to develop their higher level thinking skills. Our materials address Maryland Core Learning Goals, which are listed on the next page.

Your feedback is important to us!

In order to improve our programming, we appreciate any feedback you and your students can provide. Please use the evaluations found at the end of this study guide.

These forms can be mailed to the address at the bottom of the page or emailed to nationalplayers@olneytheatre.org. Please call 301.924.4485 x116 if you have any questions.

Curriculum Connections

The study guide, pre- and post-show discussion questions, and extended activities address specific Maryland Core Learning Goals in English and Essential Learning Outcomes in Theatre, including:

Maryland High School Core Learning Goals: English

Goal 1 Reading, Reviewing and Responding to Texts

1.1.4 The student will apply reading strategies when comparing, making connections, and drawing conclusions about non-print text.

1.2.1 The student will consider the contributions of plot, character, setting, conflict, and point of view when constructing the meaning of a text.

1.2.2 The student will determine how the speaker, organization, sentence structure, word choice, tone, rhythm, and imagery reveal an author's purpose.

1.2.3 The student will explain the effectiveness of stylistic elements in a text that communicate an author's purpose.

1.2.5 The student will extend or further develop meaning by explaining the implications of the text for the reader or contemporary society.

1.3.4 The student will explain how devices such as staging, lighting, blocking, special effects, graphics, language, and other techniques unique to a non-print medium are used to create meaning and evoke response.

1.3.5 The student will explain how common and universal experiences serve as the source of literary themes that cross time and cultures.

Goal 2 Composing in a Variety of Modes

2.1.2 The student will compose to describe, using prose and/or poetic forms.

2.1.3 The student will compose to express personal ideas, using prose and/or poetic forms.

Goal 4 Evaluating the Content, Organization, and Language Use of Texts

4.1.1 The student will state and explain a personal response to a given text.

4.2.2 The student will explain how the specific language and expression used by the writer or speaker affects reader or listener response.

4.3.1 The student will alter the tone of a text by revising its diction.

4.3.3 The student will alter a text to present the same content to a different audience via the same or different media.

Shakespeare's

MUCH ADO about NOTHING



Much Ado poster
from Summer
Shakespeare
2006

*Some Cupid kills
with arrows,*

*Some with
TRAPS!*

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Maryland Essential Learning Outcomes for Fine Arts: Theatre Developed by the Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance



Much Ado About Nothing, Tour 1

Outcome 1: Perceiving, Performing and Responding—Aesthetic Education I.A.1. Identify a wide variety of characters presented in dramatic literature and describe ways they reflect a range of human feelings and experiences

Outcome II: Historical, Cultural, and Social Context

II.A.2. Demonstrate knowledge of appropriate audience behavior in relationship to cultural traditions

II.A.4. Select and discuss the work of a variety of playwrights, critics, theatre commentators, and theorists that represent various cultures and historical periods

II.C.1. Demonstrate familiarity with a variety of dramatic texts and genres

II.C.2. Compare the treatment of similar themes in drama from various cultures and historical periods

Outcome III: Creative Expression and Production

III.A.2. Construct imaginative scripts and collaborate with actors to refine scripts so the stories and their meaning are conveyed to an audience.

III.A.3. Develop multiple interpretations for scripts and visual and oral production ideas for presentations

III.A.6. Create and project subtleties of character motivation and behavior using speech, sound, and movement

III.B.6. Study dramatic texts and, using improvisational skills, create extensions appropriate for identified characters and situations

Outcome IV: Aesthetic Criticism

IV.A.1. Use prescribed and self-constructed criteria to evaluate and describe verbally the characteristics of successful ensemble performances and productions.

IV.B.1. Analyze dramatic texts and other literature of theatre to identify and describe the presence of theatrical conventions that influence performance

IV.C.1. Identify and describe verbally the primary scenic, auditory, and other physical characteristics of selected theatrical performances

IV.C.2. Write critical reviews of selected theatre performances using established criteria and appropriate language for the art form.



Much Ado About Nothing, Tour 1

Your Role as the Audience

The audience plays an integral role in every live performance, and especially in National Players shows. The audience is, in fact, a key element in making live theatre such a special medium and so different from television and film. During a live performance, please keep in mind that the actors onstage can both see and hear the audience. While actors enjoy listening to the audience react, talking and making loud comments only serve to distract not only the actors, but fellow audience members as well.

So watch the show, let the story move you in whatever way is true to you. Laugh if you want to laugh, be afraid, intrigued, shocked, confused or horrified. The actors want you to be involved in the story they are telling. But please be respectful of the actors working hard to bring you a live performance and to the audience around you trying to enjoy the play. And remember, you will have the opportunity to ask any question about the play or the actors after the show during our Question-and-Answer session.



*Shakespeare's Globe Theatre
mixed media drawing by Tony Heaton*

How to hear Shakespeare

When watching a Shakespearean play, there are many things to keep in mind. Sometimes the language in which Shakespeare writes can be difficult to understand (but once you do, it's really very fun).

First and foremost, you don't have to understand every word that's being said in order to understand the play. Don't get too hung up on deciphering each word; instead, just try to grasp the gist of what each character is saying. After a while, you won't even have to think about it—it will seem as if you've been listening to Shakespeare all your life!

Watch body language, gestures, and facial expressions. Good Shakespearean actors communicate what they are saying through their body. In theory, you should be able to understand much of the play without hearing a word.

There is a rhythm to each line, almost like a piece of music. Shakespeare wrote in a form called iambic pentameter. Each line is made up of five feet (each foot is two syllables) with the emphasis on the second syllable. You can hear the pattern of unstressed/stressed syllables in the line, "What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue" Listen for this in the play as it adds a very lyrical quality to the words.

Read a synopsis or play summary ahead of time. Shakespeare's plays, especially his comedies, involve many characters in complex, intertwining plots. It always helps to have a basic idea of what's going on beforehand so you can enjoy the play without trying to figure out every relationship and plot twist.

Enjoy it! Shakespeare's comedies are actually funny. Find the humor, laugh, and have a good time!

Much Ado About Nothing: Plot Synopsis

Leonato lives in the idyllic Italian town of Messina with his lovely young daughter, Hero, and his playful, clever niece, Beatrice. As the play begins, Leonato prepares to welcome some friends home from a war. The friends include Don Pedro, a prince who is a close friend of Leonato, Claudio, a well-respected young nobleman, and Benedick, a clever man

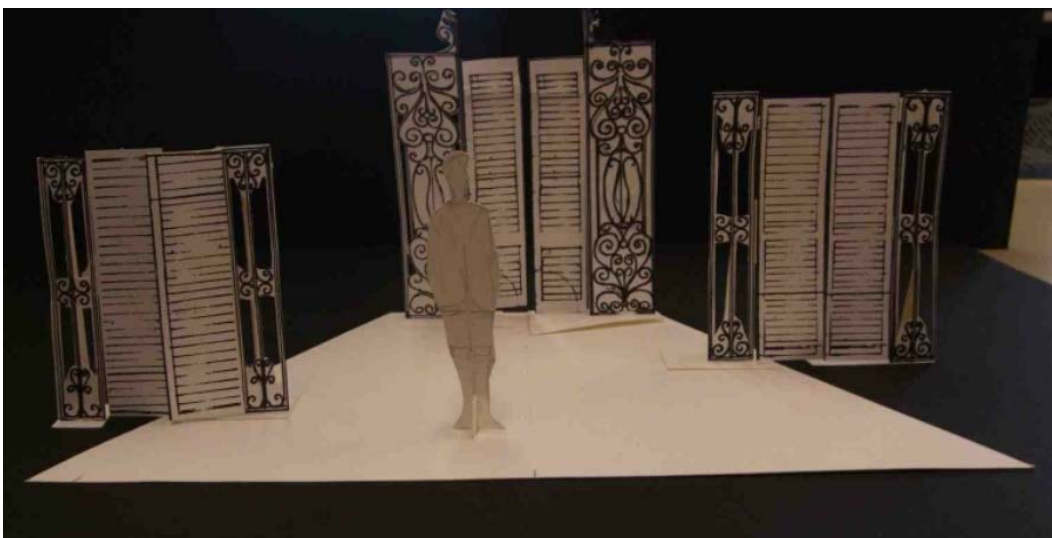


Much Ado About Nothing, Tour 1

who constantly makes witty jokes, often at the expense of his friends. Don John, Don Pedro's illegitimate brother, is part of the crowd as well. Don John is sullen and bitter, and makes trouble for the others.

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. Claudio and Hero pledge their love to one another and decide to be married. To pass the time in the week before the wedding, the lovers and their friends decide to play a game. They want to get Beatrice and Benedick, who are clearly meant for each other, to stop arguing and fall in love.

Don John has decided to disrupt everyone's happiness by making Claudio believe that Hero has been unfaithful to him. The enraged Claudio humiliates Hero by suddenly accusing her of lechery on the day of their wedding and abandoning her at the altar. Hero's stricken family members decide to pretend that she died suddenly of shock and grief and to hide her away while they wait for the truth about her innocence to come to light. In the aftermath of the rejection, Benedick and Beatrice finally confess their love to one another. More confusion, discoveries, and confessions follow in this romantic comedy.



Much Ado About Nothing set model, designed by Christina Todesco

A Note from the Director

The word “Nothing” in the title of Shakespeare’s play *Much Ado About Nothing* is a play on words, a sort of pun, on the Elizabethan term “noting,” which means eavesdropping. Without a doubt, overhearing conversations drives the plot in this play almost exclusively, but along with this device, a very definite motif of deception emerges. Although Shakespeare, ever the Romantic, does not say that deception is necessarily bad, he does seem to state that it depends entirely on the use to which it is put.

Deception is used in *Much Ado* to tell the truth with impunity, to delight in the chase that is courtship, and indeed to cross and vex happiness; but it is also used to help others, to bring them closer in line with their own desires. The sub-plot at the heart of the play in which Beatrice and Benedick are brought together shows us how a little deception can go a long way in helping us remove those obstacles we create that prevent us from growing as people.

Shakespeare almost certainly believed that our goal is to change, grow, and develop. And his compassionate depiction of these two people, who use their expansive wit to deceive *themselves* into living in a world where love is impossible, allows us an opportunity to see in ourselves the capacity for change. And to be secure in the knowledge that no matter how completely we hide from ourselves, we can always find our way back. And that’s something that should be noted.

--Clay Hopper



*Much Ado About
Nothing* set model,
designed by
Christina Todesco

Who's Who

Messina, Italy

Leonato is the governor of Messina, father to Hero, and uncle to Beatrice. He is a respected, elderly noble who comes in second in social power only to Don Pedro.

Beatrice is Leonato's niece and Hero's cousin. She is rather free-spirited, and is not afraid to put a man in his place. Though she is kind and caring, she finds great pleasure in exchanging sharp, witty remarks with Benedick.

Hero is the beautiful, young daughter of Leonato, and cousin of Beatrice. She is innocent and sweet, and falls in love with Claudio nearly instantly. Her pristine reputation, however, suffers when Don John slanders her name.



Margaret is Hero's lower-class servant. She means well, but has a rather abrasive personality. She is Borachio's lover. Unbeknownst to her, she helps Borachio and Don John deceive Claudio into thinking that Hero has been unfaithful to him.

Dogberry is the constable in charge of the Watch (chief of policemen) of Messina. He takes his job quite seriously, but has the unfortunate habit of using exactly the wrong word to convey his meaning.

Verges is the deputy to Dogberry.

Balthasar is a waiting man in Leonato's household, as well as the resident musician. While at the masked party, he aids Claudio, Don Pedro, and Leonato in tricking Benedick into falling in love with Beatrice.

Who's Who (con't)



The Soldiers

Benedick is an aristocratic soldier who has recently been fighting under Don Pedro. Like Beatrice, he has a sharp wit, and engages in several tiffs with her. He is also good friend to Don Pedro and Claudio.

Claudio is a young soldier who has won great acclaim fighting under Don Pedro. He falls in love with Hero, but is quick to believe the rumors spread by Don John.

Don Pedro is often referred to as “Prince” of Aragon. He is a longtime friend of Leonato, and is also friendly with his soldiers who have been fighting under him. Don Pedro is the epitome of class and kindness, but, like Claudio, is quick to believe rumors.



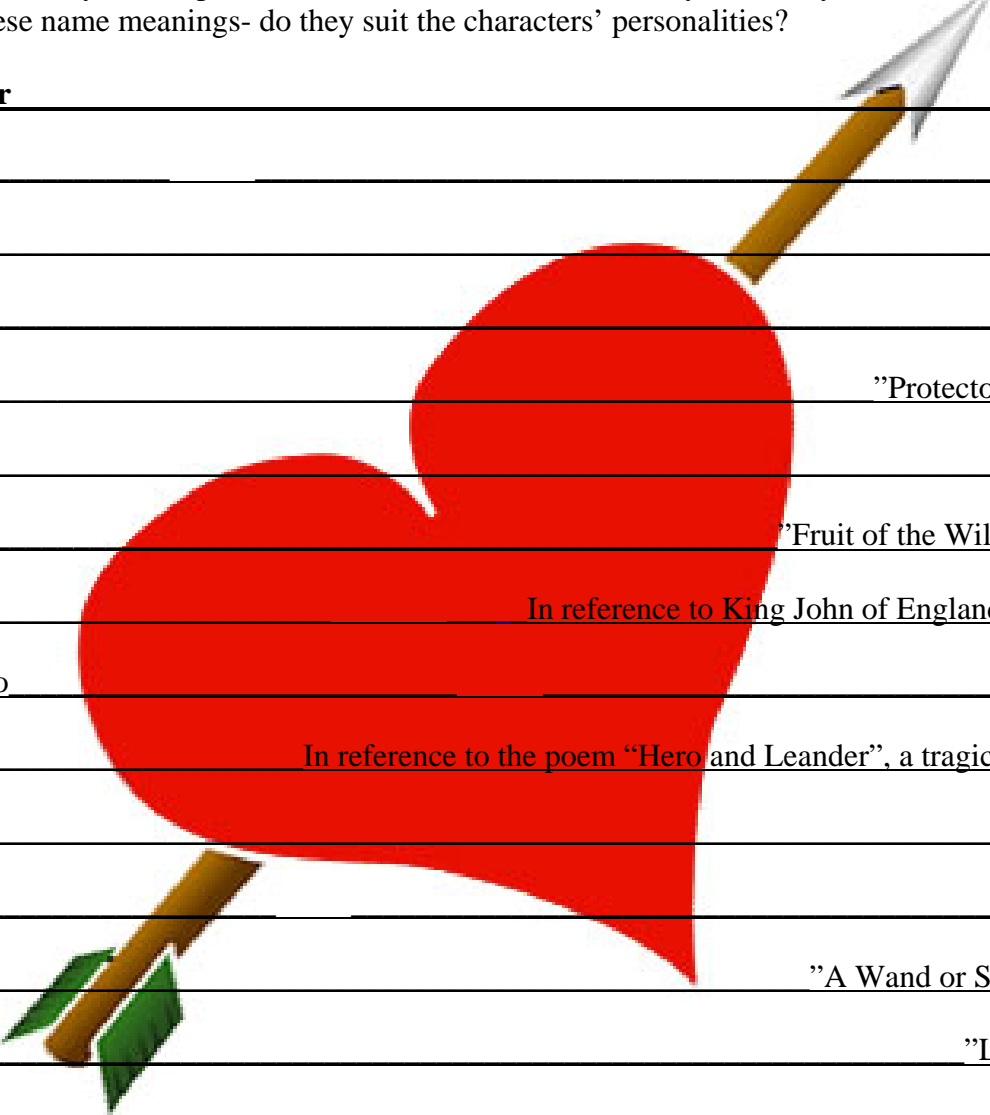
The Schemers

Don John is the illegitimate “bastard” brother of Don Pedro. He is naturally sullen and melancholy, and decides to inflict those feelings upon Hero and Claudio’s newfound love. He is the villain of the play, with his actions driven by his envy of his brother’s high social status.

Borachio is an associate of Don John. He is also Margaret’s lover. He schemes with Don John to trick Claudio and Don Pedro into thinking that Hero is unfaithful to Claudio.

“What’s in a name?”

Ever wonder why Shakespeare’s characters are named what they are? They weren’t chosen randomly. Take a look at these name meanings- do they suit the characters’ personalities?



Character	Meaning/Origin
Beatrice	”Blessed” (British)
Benedick	”Blessed” (Latin)
Borachio	”Drunkard” (Spanish)
Balthazar	”Protector of the King” (Greek)
Claudio	”Lame” (Italian)
Dogberry	”Fruit of the Wild Dogwood” (English)
Don John	In reference to King John of England- known for treachery.
Don Pedro	”Stone” (Spanish)
Hero	In reference to the poem “Hero and Leander”, a tragic love story by Marlowe.
Leonato	”Lion” (Greek)
Margaret	”A Pearl” (Latin)
Verges	”A Wand or Staff or Office” (English)
Ursula	”Little she-Bear” (English)

FUN FACT

“In Elizabethan times many of Shakespeare’s plays were performed at The Globe Theatre in London. To get in, you put one penny in a box by the door. Then you could stand on the ground in front of the stage. To sit on the first balcony, you put another penny in the box held by a man in front of the stairs. To sit on the second balcony, you put another penny in the box held by the man by the second flight of stairs. Then when the show started, the men went and put the boxes in a room backstage - the box office.”

--BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/coventry/features/shakespeare/shakespeare-fun-facts.shtml>

William Shakespeare: The Man Behind the Words

Throughout the decades, William Shakespeare has come to be revered as one of the greatest playwrights in the history of theatre. Not only are his works continually performed all over the world, but numerous theatres exist solely to produce his plays.

Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England on April 23, 1564. He came from a family described as “honest, hard-working, middle-class stock.” He received minimal education and by the time he was 18 he was married to a girl by the name of Anne Hathaway. His first daughter, Susanna, was born the next year, followed by his twins, Hamlet and Judith, in 1585.

In the late 1580s, Shakespeare moved to London (96 miles away — about a four-day walk — from Stratford) in an attempt to financially support his family through the theatre. He began as an actor, but soon started writing plays and poetry as well. By 1592, he was known throughout the London theatre scene as an up-and-coming young artist.

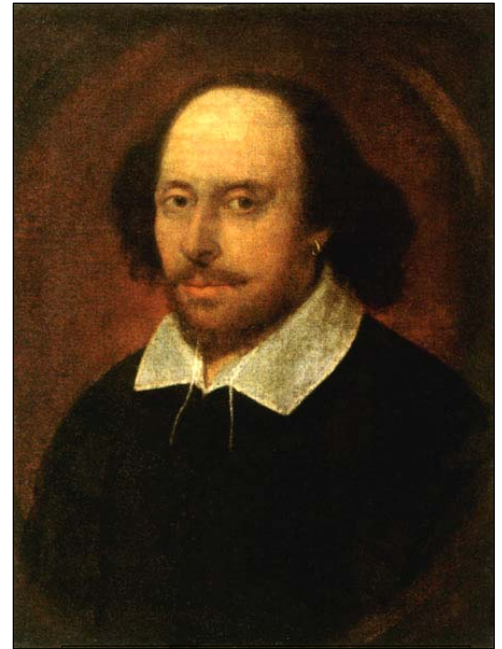
In the spring of 1594, Shakespeare joined a company of actors known as the Lord Chamberlain’s Company, called such because they were under the patronage of the Chamberlain to Queen Elizabeth I. The troupe began performing at the Theatre, but when their lease on the land expired, they took matters into their own hands. Illegally dismantling the Theatre and carrying its timbers across the Thames River, the company built what would become one of the most famous theatres in England: the Globe.

Soon after the move, Shakespeare became the principal playwright for the company, providing actors with approximately two plays a year. He was also highly involved in the management of the troupe and received a share of all profits. During this period, Shakespeare gained recognition as one of England’s premiere playwrights, while each of his plays received tremendous popular acclaim.

In 1603, when King James I was crowned after Queen Elizabeth’s death, Shakespeare’s troupe became known as the King’s Men and often performed in the King’s court. They were now recognized as Grooms of the Chamber, or minor court officials. At this time, Shakespeare gave up acting completely and served the company exclusively as a playwright and manager.

In 1611, Shakespeare retired to his home in Stratford, where his wife and children had remained all these years, supposedly to spend time in “ease, retirement, and the conversation of friends.” By this point, he had come to be quite a wealthy man and was able to live comfortably.

Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616. Those who knew him remembered him as “a handsome well shaped man, very good company, and of a ready and pleasant wit.” Today he is remembered for his literary genius and timeless stories.



*Portrait of William Shakespeare
by Unknown Artist*

FUN FACT

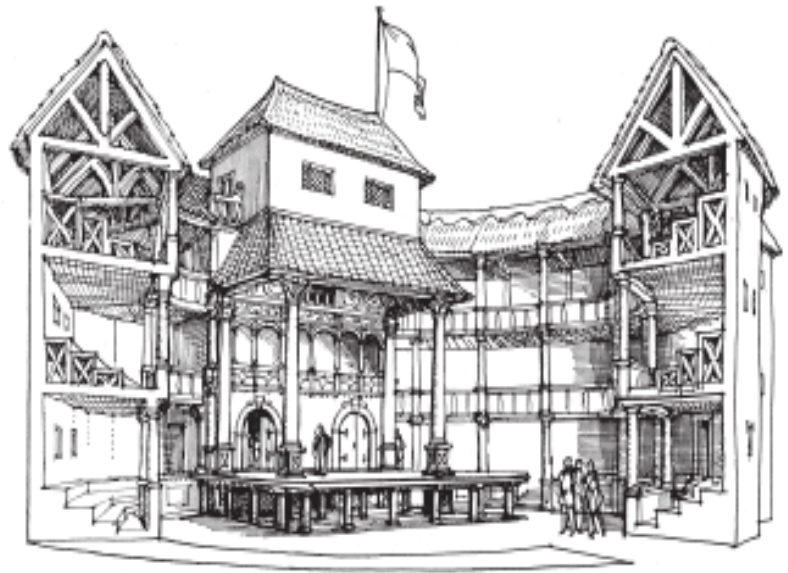
No one really knows when Shakespeare was born. Tradition holds that his birthday is April 23, 1564. However, all we know for sure is that he was baptized three days later at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon. April 23 became popularly established as his birthday after he died on the same day in 1616.

Shakespeare's Theatre

The theatre scene that Shakespeare found in London in the late 1580s was very different from anything existing today. Because he was directly affected by and wrote specifically for this world, it is very important to understand how it worked.

The Performance Space

The Globe Theatre was a circular wooden structure constructed of three stories of galleries (seats) surrounding an open courtyard. It was an open-air building (no roof), and a rectangular platform projected into the middle of the courtyard to serve as a stage. The performance space had no front curtain, but was backed by a large wall with three doors out of which actors entered and exited. In front of the wall stood a roofed house-like structure supported by two large pillars, designed to provide a place for actors to “hide” when not in a scene. The roof of this structure was referred to as the “Heavens.” The theatre itself housed up to 3,000 spectators, mainly because not all were seated. The seats in the galleries were reserved for people from the upper classes who came to the theatre primarily to “be seen.” These wealthy patrons were also sometimes allowed to sit on or above the stage itself as a sign of their prominence. These seats, known as the “Lord’s Rooms,” were considered the best in the house despite the poor view of the back of the actors. The lower-class spectators, however, stood in the open courtyard and watched the play on their feet. These audience members became known as “groundlings” and gained admission to the playhouse for as low as one penny. The groundlings were often very loud and rambunctious during the performances and would eat (usually hazelnuts), drink, socialize as the play was going on, and shout directly to the actors on stage. Playwrights at this time were therefore forced to incorporate lots of action and bawdy humor in their plays in order to keep the attention of their audience.



*The Globe Theatre
Drawing by C. Walter Hodges.*



The Performance

During Shakespeare's day, new plays were being written and performed continuously. A company of actors might receive a new play, prepare it, and perform it every week. Because of this, each actor in the company had a specific type of role that he normally played and could perform with little rehearsal. One possible role for a male company member, for example, would be the female ingénue. Because women were not allowed to perform on the stage at the time, young boys whose voices had yet to change generally played the female characters in the shows. Each company (composed of 10 – 20

members) would have one or two young men to play the female roles, one man who specialized in playing a fool or clown, one or two men who played the romantic male characters, and one or two who played the mature, tragic characters.

Along with the “stock” characters of an acting company, there was also a set of stock scenery. Specific backdrops, such as forest scenes or palace scenes, were re-used in every play. Other than that, however, very minimal set pieces were present on the stage. There was no artificial lighting to convey time and place, so it was very much up to audience to imagine what the full scene would look like. Because of this, the playwright was forced to describe the setting in greater detail than would normally be heard today. For example, in order to establish time in one scene in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare has Orlando say, “*Hang there, my verse, in witness of my love; / And thou, thrice-crowned Queen of Night, survey / With thy chaste eye, from thy pale sphere above, Thy huntress’ name and that my full life doth sway.*” The costumes of this period, however, were far from minimalist. These were generally rich and luxurious, as they were a source of great pride for the performers who personally provided them. However, these were rarely historically accurate and again forced the audience to use their imaginations to envision the play’s time and place.

Themes

Noting/ Deceit

During Shakespeare’s time, the “Nothing” portion of the play’s title would have been pronounced “Noting.” So, the title would instead read: “Much Ado About Noting.” Most of the characters participate in the actions of observing, listening, and writing, or noting. In order for such a plot dependant on deceit to work, the characters must note one another throughout the play. For example, when Hero and Margaret manipulate Beatrice into believing that Benedick admires her, they hide themselves in an orchard so that Beatrice can better overhear, or “note”, their conversation. Because the two women know that Beatrice is inclined to eavesdrop, they have no doubts that their scheme will succeed: “look where Beatrice like a lapwing runs / Close by the ground to hear our conference,” notes Hero (III.i.24–25). Each line the women speak is a carefully placed note for Beatrice to overhear; the same is true of the scheme to convince Benedick of Beatrice’s admiration towards him.



Much Ado About Nothing, Tour 53

Don John’s plot to take down Claudio also depends heavily on noting, though in a much more mischievous manner: in order for Claudio to believe that Hero has been unchaste and unfaithful, Don John knows he must bring Claudio to Hero’s window to witness, or note, Margaret (whom he mistakes for Hero) bidding goodnight to Borachio. Dogberry and Verges discover and arrest Don John because they overhear talk of his plan. The two manage to capture Don John and deliver him to Leonato. In the end, noting, in the sense of writing, unites Beatrice and Benedick, Hero and Claudio reveal love sonnets written by Beatrice and Benedick, textual evidence that notes and proves their love for one another.

Themes (con't)

Sibling Rivalry

You might think from reading Shakespeare's plays that he had major trouble with his brother or sister. Sibling relationships are key sources of conflict and subjects of investigation across the genres of comedy, tragedy, and history – Edgar and Edmund in *King Lear*, Hal and Hotspur in *Henry IV*, and Kate and Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew*, to name a few. In *As You Like It*, two sets of brothers have problematic relationships: Oliver and Orlando and Duke Senior and Duke Frederick. The dilemma of birth order is often the root of these examples of brotherly conflict. In Elizabethan society, the oldest son inherited everything when his father died, no matter the merits or abilities of the younger sons (not to mention any of the daughters). Consequently, the younger sons were left with nothing. This could create a great deal of hostile competition, jealousy, and mistrust.

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, the two siblings in question are Don John and Don Pedro. At first glance, one brother appears to be noble, while the other appears to be mischievous. But the audience quickly learns that, as with any multi-faceted play, the characters are never solely good or evil. It would seem that Don John is envious of his brother's attention and admiration. In comedies such as this one, brothers can learn that they are not so different after all and resolve their differences. In the tragedies, though, they are often not so lucky.

While younger brothers feared older brothers' tyranny, older brothers were always afraid of being usurped by their younger brothers. The final verdict for Don John's actions is for him to be banished from Messina, and, unlike most Shakespeare comedies, not all of the characters reconcile. Restoring the correct order of things solves problems and the Elizabethan social structure, however flawed, is necessarily upheld.

Public Shaming

*Much Ado
About Nothing,
Tour 53*



Even though Hero is eventually vindicated, her public shaming at the wedding ceremony is too terrible to be ignored. This kind of humiliation results in more damage to her honor and family name than would an act of unchaste behavior. The language that Claudio and Leonato use to shame Hero is quite strong. To Claudio she is a "rotten orange" and to Leonato "a rotting carcass that cannot be preserved."

Shame is also what Don John hopes will cause Claudio to lose his place as Don Pedro's favorite. Once Claudio is discovered to be engaged to an unchaste woman, Don John believes that his brother will reject Claudio just as he rejected Don John long ago. Shame is a form of social punishment closely connected to loss of honor. A product of an illegitimate sexual coupling himself, Don John has grown up constantly reminded of his own social shame, and he will do anything to right the balance. Ironically, in the end Don John is shamed and threatened with torture to punish him for deceiving the company. Clearly, he will never gain a good place in society.

Pre-Show Discussion Questions

- 1) Discuss your previous experiences with Shakespeare and his works. Were they at all difficult to understand, or tedious to read or view? Do you find the language in Shakespeare beautiful and poetic, or does the archaic language just bring about frustration and hinder understanding? What has helped make the plays more accessible and relevant to your own life? Having read the synopsis of *Much Ado About Nothing*, what scene and/or relationship are you most excited to watch?
- 2) Some of the play's action takes place during a masquerade party. Why do you think Shakespeare chose to set the action in a during this particular event? Does changing the setting also change what events can take place? Does this apply in real life as well?
- 3) If you are able to read the play before the performance, write a short description about or discuss relationships between the following character pairs: Beatrice and Benedick; Hero and Claudio; and Don John and Don Pedro. Keep these descriptions for use after you see the performance.



Post-Show Discussion Questions



- 1) *Much Ado About Nothing* is a popular Shakespearean comedy. Did you think it was funny? What elements of the play make it so entertaining? Think about characters, relationships, plot devices, language, etc. What about the people in *Much Ado About Nothing* makes them so funny? Why do we, as theatergoers, love to watch people in sticky situations and find it entertaining? How does Shakespeare get an audience to laugh out loud?
- 2) How does knowing about the configuration of the Globe Theater and the way in which Shakespeare's plays were performed there change your understanding of his plays? Do you find any explanations in this information for why he wrote his plays the way he did? Think about the actual experience of attending a theatre in Shakespeare's day. Are there any similarities to a theatre you would attend today? What are the major differences? Which style appeals more to you?
- 3) *Much Ado About Nothing* is a romantic comedy, and as such, love is the primary focus. Why do you believe each of the characters falls in love? Was it because of the situation itself, because of the personality of the other person, or because of his or her outward appearance? Support your argument with evidence from the play.

Post-Show Discussion Questions (con't)

4) Although the play offers a happy ending, several of the characters grieve or suffer pain because of their love. Make a list of the characters who suffer due to love in the play, and discuss or write a brief description of why. Which characters truly suffer for love, and which ones only pretend to suffer? Does anyone fall in love in this play who doesn't suffer? Do some of the characters even enjoy their own suffering? Given that this is a romantic comedy, what was Shakespeare's purpose in showing the pain love can cause?



6) Shakespeare's Fools are often the most complex characters in his plays, and *Much Ado About Nothing's* Dogberry is no exception. Is Dogberry a wise Fool, a foolish Fool, or a bit of both? How does his role help to develop the other characters in the play, such as Beatrice, Benedick, and Leonato? How is he different than the other characters? What are his overall purposes in the production? Are there any other characters that function like a fool in *Much Ado About Nothing*?

8) Refer to the descriptions of the character relationships that you made before the performance (between Beatrice and Benedick; Hero and Claudio; and Don John and Don Pedro). Now that you have seen the play performed, have your perceptions of these relationships changed? What different or new aspects did you notice in each of the relationships?

9) A person's perception of events is often shaded by their own point of view. Have the class split into pairs or groups. Each group member will pick a different character from the play and assume that character's identity (and that character's point of view). Have each group then debate the events of the play, with each student maintaining the point of view of the character they have chosen. Does each character see the events of the play in a different light? If so, how was their point of view different? What are the reasons for the differences?

10) Characterize the love relationships in the play: Beatrice/Benedick, Hero/Claudio. Both tell us something different about love and about how relationships should or should not work. What is Shakespeare saying about love and relationships with each of these pairs of lovers?

11) *Much Ado About Nothing* is a romantic comedy from 1599. Does it have any similarities to romantic comedies today? What aspects of the play continue in modern movies? Which characters or relationships in *Much Ado About Nothing* are the most modern?

FUN FACT

Shakespeare invented words and phrases that we use all the time without even knowing where they came from. Shakespeare was the first to use words like *critic*, *majestic*, *hurry*, *lonely*, *reliance*, and *exposure*. He also created hundreds of common phrases: *break the ice*, *hot-blooded*, *elbow room*, *love letter*, *puppy dog*, and *wild goose chase*.

--BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/coventry/features/shakespeare/shakespeare-fun-facts.shtml>

Adaptations

The proof of the resilience and continued power of William Shakespeare's work is in the many adaptations that his plays have inspired. From movies that use the original dialogue to those that take Shakespeare's situation as a springboard for contemporary characters, the number of Shakespeare adaptations is still growing. Here is a short list of some of the movies that have been created from the words of William Shakespeare...



True to the text, time and setting

Early 20th Century actor Sir Laurence Olivier starred in many film productions of Shakespeare, including the film production of *Hamlet* (1948). In Olivier's productions, all of the aspects of Shakespeare's work are kept the same. Olivier is probably the most famous actor and interpreter of Shakespeare.

Film director Roman Polanski did an adaptation of *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (1971) in which he didn't change the setting, the time period, or the language. This adaptation is probably one of the darkest, because Polanski directed the film exactly one year after the Manson Family murdered his pregnant wife, Sharon Tate.

Theatre and film director Julie Taymor has directed Shakespeare plays on the stage as well as films, such as *The Tempest* (1986), and *The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus* (1999), an imaginatively staged

piece that cut the script but retained Shakespeare's words, setting, and the time period.

Twelfth Night (1996). This is a film adaptation of the play, directed by Trevor Nunn and starring Helena Carter, Nigel Hawthorne, and Ben Kingsley as the multidimensional Feste.

Irish actor Kenneth Branagh is also famous for directing different film versions of Shakespeare's work, including *Much Ado About Nothing* (1983), *Hamlet* (1996), *Twelfth Night* (1988), and *As You Like It* (2007). He also starred in *Hamlet*. Actor/producer Mel Gibson starred in the 1990 version of *Hamlet* directed by Franco Zeffirelli and also stars Helena Bonham Carter as Ophelia.

Adaptations that change the time period

Kenneth Branagh's latest Shakespearian movie is an adaptation of *As You Like It*, released in 2006. The film is set in pre-20th century Japan and stars Kevin Kline as Jacques and Alfred Molina as Touchstone.

Christine Edzard directed an adaptation of *As You Like It* that was released in 1992. It is set in modern London; the Court becomes an opulent office building and the "forest" is the banks of the Thames River, where the homeless try to lead a simple life.



Famous actors Rupert Everett, Calista Flockhart, Kevin Kline, and Michelle Pfeiffer star in an adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999). This lavish adaptation takes place in the 1930s. Some of the script is cut, but the actors still keep to the original text.

Probably the most popular film adaptation of recent years is *The Tragedy of Romeo + Juliet* starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes and directed by Baz Luhrmann (1996). This adaptation shifts the action to modern-day Verona and mixes modern

Adaptations that preserve the situation

Several stage and movie musicals have been based on Shakespeare. *West Side Story* (1961), directed by Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise, is a musical set in New York City. Based on *Romeo and Juliet*, the story depicts the conflict between two teenage gangs of different ethnicities and two young lovers who suffer the consequences of violence.

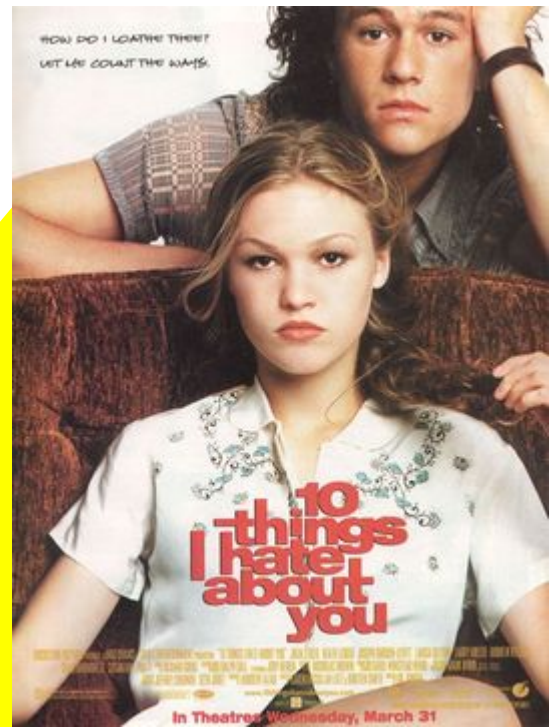
O, a modern-day version of Shakespeare's *Othello*, was directed by Tim Blake Nelson and starred Julia Stiles, Mekhi Phifer, and Josh Harnett, and translates Shakespeare's story of jealousy and murder to a private high school.

She's the Man, directed by Andy Fickman, is a modern-day *Twelfth Night* in which Viola poses as her twin brother at his boarding school, getting very close to his roommate Duke.

The popular film *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999), starring Julia Stiles, is an adaptation of Shakespeare's play *The Taming of the Shrew*. The play takes place in sixteenth-century Padua, Italy while the movie is set in a modern-day California and follows the dating troubles of its characters in contemporary language.

music with Shakespeare's original language, and used guns instead of swords for the battles.

Another popular film adaptation of Shakespeare is *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (2000) with Ethan Hawke as Hamlet, as well as Julia Stiles and Bill Murray, set in present-day Manhattan. Though the script is cut, Shakespeare's language is preserved.



Movie Poster: 10 Things I Hate About You. Directed by Gil Junger, 1999.

FUN FACT

In the Middle East, there is a popular myth that Shakespeare was actually an Arab. He is still sometimes referred to as Sheikh al-Subair, which translates from Arabic as "Prickly Pear."

-Alan Riding
From <http://guardian.co.uk>

Further Reading and Resources

Much Ado About Nothing Reading Companions

Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary: A Complete Dictionary of All the English Words, Phrases, and Constructions in the Works of the Poet, Vol. 1
By Alexander Schmidt, Gregor Sarrazin

Outlines of Shakespeare's Plays by Karl J. Holzknecht, Raymond Ross, and Homer A. Watt

Synopses of Shakespeare's Complete Plays by Nelson A. Ault and Lewis M. Magill

William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion by Stanley W. Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery

Critical Essays

Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing: With New and Updated Critical Essays and a Revised Bibliography
By William Shakespeare, David L. Stevenson

Shakespeare: An Oxford Guide
By Stanley Wells, Lena Cowen Orlin

Much Ado About Nothing: A Workbook by Students and Teachers by Rick Hamilton

The Fools of Shakespeare by Frederick Warde

As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women by Penny Gay

Shakespeare

Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare by Stephen Greenblatt

Shakespeare our Contemporary by Jan Kott

Shakespeare After All by Marjorie Garber

Shakespeare: A Life in Drama by Stanley Wells

The Riverside Shakespeare by William Shakespeare et al. Houghton Mifflin; 2nd edition; 1997. If you love Shakespeare, then this is the book to own. It is a respected collection of all Shakespeare's work.

All Things Shakespeare: A Concise Encyclopedia of Shakespeare's World by Kirstin Olsen

Shakespeare's Theatre

Playgoing in Shakespeare's London by Andrew Gurr

Shakespeare's Theatre by Peter Thomson

The Shakespearean Stage, 1574 – 1642 by Andrew Gurr

The Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre by Janette Dillon

Websites

www.shakespeare-literature.com and www.absoluteshakespeare.com contain the complete texts of Shakespeare's plays (for free viewing) as well as many links to study resources.

www.shakespeare-online.com is an excellent repository of information on Shakespeare and it is updated frequently.

www.bardweb.net is another large repository of Shakespearean information. This site also contains excellent summary information on Elizabethan England, which is invaluable to any study of The Bard's works. www.shakespeareauthorship.com is a website dedicated to the proposition that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare.

www.folger.edu/Home_02B.html is the website of the Folger Shakespeare Library. It contains resources for teachers that include lesson plans and interactive activity guide.

<http://www.globelink.org/> is a website maintained by Shakespeare's Globe in London with links to resources, archives, and information about the Globe's current season.

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/Default.html> is an annotated list of scholarly resources available on the internet.

Extended Lesson Plans

Curriculum Plan #1

Shakespeare Scavenger Hunt: Listening Closely

Objectives

Some students have trouble focusing during a play. This exercise is intended to keep them involved in the characters, who is speaking, and what is being said. It adds an extra level of excitement to watching the production. In addition to following the story, they are now challenged to locate individual lines, identify what is going on in the scene that causes those lines to be said, and to find greater connection with the text as it comes to life. The exercise will challenge higher level students to connect with the characters on a personal level. This should help them to find meaning for themselves within the monologues. It should inspire them to view the play as a living thing they can connect to personally and introduce them to the fun of exploring the text.

Materials Needed

Their assigned line from the choices on the following pages (or any others you might choose), a copy of the play, a notebook/piece of paper, and a pencil.

This lesson will take one or two class periods.

Lesson Plan

1) Assign each student a quote from the play. A list of suggested quotes has been provided on the following page(s).

2) Feel free to give students a general idea of the quote's placement within the play and its general meaning, but do not paraphrase it for them or pinpoint the quote's location.

3) Their challenge will be to listen to the play and find their quote used during the performance.

4) Once they have located their quote, their assignment is to write down who said it and to whom they said it to. Students should then write down why the character said that specific line and what they think it means.

5) Back in the classroom have each student say their quote out loud and remind their fellow students of the character, the scene, and the situation in the play from which their quote was taken.

6) If a student had difficulty locating their quote, perhaps a fellow student with a quote from the same monologue or scene can help them out. Use the master list on the following pages to find nearby quotes to jog their memories.



For higher level students or if you have more time

1) As before, the students should be assigned a line or quote from the play. They must locate their line, take note of the character speaking the line, to whom they are saying it to, and what is going on in the play at that point.

2) After the performance (either as homework or back in the classroom) students should find their quote in the play itself. They should learn the monologue or scene from which the line was taken (10-14 lines suggested).

3) Have your student paraphrase the monologue, putting it into their own words- the more slang the better).

4) Students should then bring in their monologue or scene, complete with paraphrase on a separate sheet. Have students remind their fellow students of the point in the play from which their piece is taken. Then they should perform their piece of the play.

Assessment

Your students should find a greater connection with the text and the characters. They should be able to identify their lines as they are spoken on stage and identify the characters who speak them. If they can go even further and identify what the character meant and what the situation was you and they have

done an excellent job! For higher levels, students should be able to use the paraphrase to perform their own interpretation of the monologue or scene. If they have connected with the work, their meaning and intentions should be clear in the performance.

QUOTATION	QUOTATION KEY
O Lord, he will hang upon him like a disease! He is sooner caught than the pestilence, and the taker runs presently mad. God help the noble Claudio! If he have caught the Benedick, it will cost him a thousand pound ere 'a be cured.	BEATRICE 1.1.90.2
Come, come, let us thither; this may prove food to my displeasure. That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow If I can cross him any way, I bless myself in every way.	DON JOHN 11.3.55
Alas, poor hurt fowl, now will he creep into sedges. But that my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me! The prince's fool- hah! It may be I go under that title because I am merry. Yea, but so I am apt to do myself wrong.	BENEDICK 2.1.181
Silence is the perfectest herald of joy; I were but little happy if I could say how much. Lady, as you are mine, I am yours.	CLAUDIO 2.1.297
The poison of that lies in you to temper. Go you to the prince your brother; spare not to tell him that he hath wronged his honour in marrying the renowned Claudio- whose estimation do you mightily hold up- to a contaminated scale, such a one as Hero.	BORACHIO 2.2.8
Rich, she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel. Of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what colour it please God. Hah! The prince and Monsieur Love,	BENEDICK 2.3.20-2.3.36
This she says now, when she is beginning to write to him; for she'll be up twenty times a night, and there will she sit in her smock till she have writ a sheet of paper. My daughter tells us all.	LEONATO 2.3.139
No, rather I will go to Benedick And counsel him to fight against his passion. And truly, I'll devise some honest slanders To stain my cousin with: one doth not know How much an ill word may empoison liking.	HERO 3.1.89

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true? Stand I condemned for pride and scorn so much?	BEATRICE 3.2.2
Upon mine honour, Myself, my brother and this grieved count Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night Talk with a ruffian at her chamber window, Who hath indeed, most like a liberal villain, Confessed the vile encounters they have had A thousand times in secret.	DON PEDRO 4.1.79-4.1.105
Hath no man's dagger here a point for me?	LEONATO 4.1.106
You are a villain. I jest not. I will make it good how you dare, with what you dare and when you dare. Do me right, or I will protest your cowardice. You have killed a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you.	BENEDICK 5.1.151
If justice cannot tame you, she shall ne'er weigh more reasons in her balance. Nay, an you be a cursing hypocrite once, you must be looked to.	DOGBERRY 5.1.194
So are the prince and Claudio who accused her, Upon the error that you heard debated. But Margaret was in some fault for this, Although against her will, as it appears In the true course of all the question.	LEONATO 5.4.7
Good morrow, Benedick. Why, what's the matter That you have such a February face, So full of frost, of storm and cloudiness?	DON PEDRO 5.4.37

Nothing certainer. One Hero died defiled, but I do live, And surely as I live, I am a maid.	HERO 5.4.59
And I'll be sworn upon't that he loves her, For here's a paper written in his hand, A halting sonnet of his own brain Fashioned to Beatrice.	CLAUDIO 5.4.85
I will not deny you, but by this good day I yield upon great persuasion- and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption.	BEATRICE 5.4.85

Curriculum Plan #2

Lose the Lute

Adapted from Whit Morgan of Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia.

Objectives

This lesson allows students to choose modern songs and match them with the mood established by the scripted songs in *Much Ado About Nothing* or other plays. To substitute well, students will need a full understanding of the original songs' tone and intent.

Plays/Scenes Covered

Much Ado About Nothing

This lesson may be adapted for use with any play that features multiple scripted songs: try *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, or Act 4 of *The Winter's Tale*.

What You Need

A tape, cd, or mp3 player

Lesson Plan

1) As an introduction, discuss with the class the impact of music on our emotional involvement with visual media. You might want to highlight the point by bringing in an example: show a scene from a movie with a particularly effective soundtrack. (The opening scene of *Chariots of Fire* works well.) Then play the same scene again with the sound turned all the way down. What is the effect of the music on the scene?

2) Announce to students that, as part of their work with *Much Ado About Nothing*, the class will be "dusting off" Shakespeare by updating the music he has written into the play. Have the students paraphrase its content and look up any unfamiliar words. Finally, ask that they summarize the song's main point in two or three sentences. Collect these sheets for later use.



3) After reading the entire play, redistribute the sheets to the original groups. Pass out the attached handout on tone and ask the students to assign one or more adjectives from the handout to describe the tone of the song. If the tone shifts during the song, they should pick a word to describe each segment. Remind students to examine the context in which the song appears for clues to the tone.

4) Next, have the students brainstorm titles of popular songs that capture Shakespeare's original emotional intent. They are looking for parallels in tone, not in content. After generating a list, have the group members vote on one song to replace

Shakespeare's original. You might want to establish some content restrictions, such as no profanity.

5) After students have chosen, ask them to fill out the bottom of their handout with specific textual reasons for choosing the song they did. Have one member of each group present the decision to the entire class, justifying the choice with specific references to the texts.

6) Ask all groups to bring a playable version of their chosen song the next day. On that day, have the students in each group divide up the speaking parts of the scenes in which their song appears. Have students spend a bit of time blocking the scene, indicating in particular what the actors should be doing during the song. Students in the longer scenes might want to pick a shorter section to rehearse and perform.

7) Have one student from each group remind classmates what has just happened prior to the song. Then have the groups act out their scenes, playing their new song choices in place of the originals. Have them continue reading briefly after the song to establish a fuller context.

8) Ask the class to discuss each choice in terms of appropriateness of tone, effectiveness in establishing the proper mood, and general appeal. Were some song choices more effective than others? Why?

Curriculum Plan #3: Handout

1.) Below is a list of terms often used to describe the tone of a song, or any expressive work. Read over your assigned song again and decide which terms best apply. Feel free to come up with your own descriptive terms if none of these seem to fit.

BITTER	CELEBRATORY	CONFRONTATIONAL	TONGUE-IN-CHEEK
LOVING	OBJECTIVE	PITYING	INTIMATE
ELEGIAC	PLAYFUL	FANCIFUL	WRY
FRIENDLY	SOLEMN	FRIGHTENING	IRONIC

2.) Then, in the space below, justify your decision. Write down specific evidence (words and phrases) from the text of the song that leads you to your conclusion.

Curriculum Plan #5

Lights, Camera, Action

Adapted from Leigh Lemons of Marblehead High School in Marblehead, Massachusetts.

Objectives

In this lesson students will interpret *Much Ado About Nothing* or another play by creating a silent movie, requiring them to think creatively and enhance their storytelling skills in verbal, nonverbal and written form.

Plays/Scenes Covered

Much Ado About Nothing, or any of Shakespeare's plays.

What You Need

A copy of the play, video camera or still camera and scanner, computer lab access, technician or support teacher if necessary

This lesson will take approximately three class periods.

Lesson Plan

1) Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one scene of the play.

2) Tell students it is their task to create a silent movie of different tableaux to represent the most important developments in their scene of the play. The movie must have 5-10 "slides," frozen images that represent individual moments in the text. Each group member must participate.

3) Have students begin by brainstorming ideas for the most important moments in the text, then choose a selective group of those moments for their movie.

4) Before getting on their feet, have students create a storyboard for their important moments on paper. They can draw some quick sketches with stick figures. It helps if they give a title to each picture.

5) Now it's time for students to get on their feet. Have students represent their storyboard slides with real people in real space. Students should explore ways to represent each moment. Encourage them to experiment with different ideas before settling on one. Emphasize the importance of heightened nonverbal communication. Discuss facial expressions, gestures, stance, interaction and pose.

6) Allow students time to rehearse their tableaux.

7) At this point, the students may perform their tableaux with a live narrator as described in #9, or if you're school has access to camera, video & computer equipment, you may want to proceed to #8.

8) Showtime: if your school has a video camera, record the performances. If you have access to a scanner, you could photograph the slides and scan them as well.

9) Using PowerPoint or other presentation software, have students add narration to the slides they have created. Finally, have students complete their movies with slides that introduce their work and its cast.

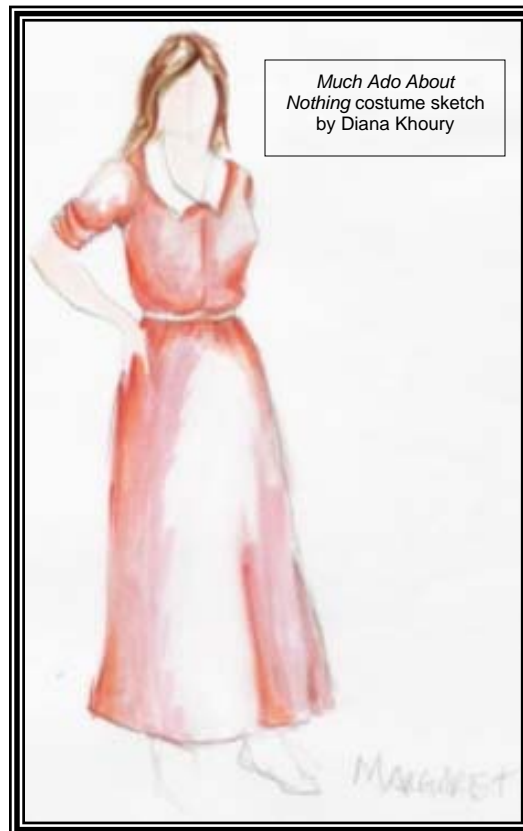
10) Present the completed movie to the class and print a hard copy for

public display.

Conclude by discussing the differences in the choices made by the different groups, and the lessons students learned in the creation process.

Assessment

Did your students come to understand the most critical components of each act? Did they read the text closely and discuss it thoroughly? Did they learn any new technology? Did they learn kinesthetically? Did they work collaboratively? Did they respond positively?



Teacher Evaluation

Name of show: _____ Show location: _____ Date: _____

Your Name: _____

School: _____ County: _____

School Address: _____

School Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Grade (s): _____ Type of class: _____ Number of students: _____

Have you ever been to a National Players student matinee before? Yes No

If yes, which shows did you attend? _____

THE PERFORMANCE

The artistic merit of the production was: Excellent Good Fair Disappointing

The performance was suited to the students' age and grade. Yes No

This performance was chosen because:

It enhanced curricular topics. Very much Somewhat A little Not at all

The description of the show sounded interesting and enjoyable.

Very much Somewhat A little Not at all

Other: _____

How did the majority of the students respond to the performance? _____

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING:

Did you participate in any additional programming? (please check all that apply)

___ Workshop (Title of Workshop: _____) ___ Back-stage Tour ___ Q & A with the cast

The workshop enhanced the performance and learning experience for my students.

Very much Somewhat A little Not at all

The workshop provided depth to classroom preparation and/or follow-up.

Very much Somewhat A little Not at all

The workshop would be more useful if:

How did the majority of your students respond to the workshop? _____

Do you have any suggestions for additional programming around our student matinees? _____

CURRICULUM

Did this experience apply to your curriculum?

Yes

No

If yes, how? _____

Was classroom time spent discussing the performance after your students attended the play? Yes No

The program was a valuable addition to classroom teaching. Very much Somewhat A little Not at all

The program enhanced aesthetic appreciation. Very much Somewhat A little Not at all

The program enhanced higher thinking skills. Very much Somewhat A little Not at all

Comments: _____

STUDY GUIDE

The study guide was useful in general. Very much Somewhat A little Not at all

It provided what was necessary to prepare the students. Very much Somewhat A little Not at all

How appropriate was the volume of information provided in the Study Guide?

Very Somewhat A little Not at all

Which sections of the Study Guide did you find most useful? _____

In which sections did the students show the greatest interest? _____

The study guide could be improved by: _____

SERVICE

The registration forms and brochures were clear and easy to use.

Very much Somewhat A little Not at all

The scheduling and confirmation of reservations was: Excellent Good Adequate Poor

The seating arrangements were: Excellent Good Adequate Poor

Parking and bus unloading and reloading were: Excellent Good Adequate Poor

We welcome your comments! Please return this form, along with student evaluations, to: Madeleine Russell, General Manager, National Players, 2001 Olney-Sandy Spring Road, Olney, MD 20832 or email nationalplayers@olneytheatre.org

Student Evaluation

We want to know what you think! The best way to make our performances better for students like you is get your suggestions and feedback. Please answer these brief questions and return this form to your teacher. Circle the response that you find to be most accurate. Thank you!

(Please print clearly!)

Name of show and location: _____

Your school: _____ **Your Grade:** _____

I enjoyed the performance:

The most interesting part of the performance was:

Why?

The play makes me think about _____

This is the first live performance I have ever seen: Yes No

This performance makes me want to see more theater: Very much Somewhat A little Not at all

Does this performance connect to any topic you are learning about in school? Yes No

If yes, what?_____ In what ways has the play illuminated that topic for you?

Did you participate in any additional programming? (*please check all that apply*)

☐ Workshop ☐ Back-stage Tour ☐ Q & A with the cast

If you participated in a workshop:

Name of Workshop: _____

I enjoyed the workshop: Very Much Somewhat A little Not at all

The workshop helped me understand the play better: Very much Somewhat A little Not at All

The workshop taught me things about theater I didn't know before:

Very much Somewhat A little Not at All

The most interesting part of the workshop was: _____

Why? _____

Please add any additional suggestions on the back of this page. We welcome your comments!