

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Much Ado About Nothing

by William Shakespeare

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Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to

1. to figure out the meaning of difficult passages.
2. identify the role of “the commoner” in this play and explain how his language is different from the language of the heroes and heroines in the play.
3. define comic relief and cite examples of it in this play.
4. demonstrate how the theme “Reality versus Appearance” is developed in this play.
5. write a paragraph which discusses the significance of the play’s title.
6. write a one paragraph character sketch for each of these characters:
 - Beatrice
 - Claudio
 - Don Pedro
 - Leonato
 - Benedick
 - Hero
 - Don John
 - the Friar
7. trace these motifs in the play:
 - A. taking note of someone or something, or purposely not taking note;
 - B. harmony and disruption;
 - C. deception by others and self-deception;
 - D. perceiving of things correctly, and perceiving incorrectly.
8. summarize each of these plot threads:
 - A. the Beatrice and Benedick romance;
 - B. the Claudio and Hero romance;
 - C. the Don Pedro / Don John plot line.
9. discuss Shakespeare’s view of women and his concept of the “battle of the sexes.”
10. discuss the following plot contrivances found in Shakespeare’s comedies:
 - A. multiple marriages;
 - B. boy gets girl, boy loses girl, boy is reunited with girl;
 - C. use of masks and disguises;
 - D. use of a comic figure.

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. In one of his sonnets, Shakespeare begins:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;

In what sense do Beatrice and Benedick represent “a marriage of true minds”?

2. Unlike farces, which rely on visual humor and physical action, much of the humor in Shakespeare’s comedies comes from the way the characters use language. Define the following language devices and give examples of their use in the play:
- A. Malapropisms
 - B. Exaggeration and raillery
 - C. Puns
 - D. Double entendres
 - E. Sarcasm
 - F. Pomposity (overblown rhetoric)
3. The following plot contrivances are staples of much comedy. State how and where each of the following are used in *Much Ado About Nothing*.
- A. multiple marriages
 - B. boy gets girl; boy loses girl; boy is reunited with girl
 - C. the use of masks and disguises
 - D. the use of a comic figure
4. Identify wit as a comic element in the play
5. Write a one paragraph description of these characters:
- Hero
 - Claudio
 - Leonato
 - Don Pedro
 - Beatrice
 - Benedick
 - Don John

ACT I, SCENE II

VOCABULARY

peradventure—perhaps
thick-pleached—thick with hedges
withal—with it

1. What misinformation does Antonio give to Leonato?

2. Where has he gotten his information?

ACT II, SCENE III

VOCABULARY

an—if
borne—carried out
career—course
censured—judged
conference—conversation
daffed—thrown off
daw—bird related to the crow
doublet—jacket
dumb show—pantomime that precedes a main play
gull—trick
humour—will
kid-fox—crafty young man
orthography—formal spelling
quips—jokes
sentences—wise sayings
stalk—hunt
tender—offer
witness—habit

1. What is the point of Benedick’s soliloquy?

2. What does Benedick do as Leonato, Claudio, and Don Pedro enter? Why does he do this?

ACT III, SCENE III

VOCABULARY

- baes—bleats
- bills—weapons
- codpiece—case on the front of a man’s pants
- coil—fuss
- ducats—coins
- lock—long strand of hair
- penthouse—a canopy of leaves
- pitch—tar
- reechy—grimy
- smirched—soiled
- statutes—laws
- steal—sneak
- unconfirmed—ignorant
- vagrom—vagrant
- weight—significance

Note the instances in this scene where Dogberry uses a word, frequently a long one, incorrectly. For example, at one point he says “senseless,” but he means to say “sensible.” Pay attention to the fact that while it is a comic scene, it also has much to do with noticing things correctly or incorrectly.

1. What is the job of the watch?

2. What does Dogberry tell them to do if they have trouble?

4. What does Don Pedro mean when he says, “What a pretty thing man is when he goes in his doublet and hose and leaves off his wit”?

5. How does Don Pedro mock Dogberry?

6. Why does Borachio so readily confess his villainy?

7. What is Don Pedro and Claudio’s first reaction to this news?

8. What personal insult by Borachio does Dogberry insist be noted?
