

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Much Ado About Nothing

by William Shakespeare

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Much Ado About Nothing

Act I, Scene I

1. Leonato finds out that the prince is coming by receiving a letter and the latest information he has is three days old. As you know, this play was written by Shakespeare in England in 1598. Communications, as you can well imagine, was primitive at best. Think about the almost instantaneous communications systems we enjoy today such as cell phones, email, text messaging, satellite phones, etc. Complete the following conversation about this that you might have by cell phone with a friend whose family has moved to Mexico:

You: Yo, it's me. Como esta usted? Ha, bet you thought I didn't know any Spanish. Hey, have you ever read *Much Ado About Nothing*?

Friend: What's that about?

You:

2. Don Pedro has “[done] in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion”. Write a newspaper article about a young person who has accomplished much in his or her life, and whom you personally admire. Remember to tell the who, why, where, when, and how. You could title your article “Not Too Young for Fame and Fortune.”
3. Leonato says, “How much better is it to weep at joy than to joy at weeping!” Imagine you keep a journal where you write about your most secret thoughts. Write an entry about a time when you or someone you know seemed to enjoy the troubles of someone else. In your entry, be sure to write about why no one really should be pleased about feeling this way.
4. Beatrice and Benedick are always “fighting” when they meet. Leonato says it “is a kind of merry war”. As you know from your own experience, we all relate to different people in different ways. We can, depending on the people, be formal with them, ignore them, be very friendly, or even act mean toward them. We know how Beatrice and Benedick related to each other. Write your interpretation of what is going on in the relationship between these two young people. Be sure to explain how each really feels about the other and why you think they are behaving the way they are.

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5. Although Beatrice and Benedick “fight” they really like each other. Beatrice and Benedick are, of course, fictional characters who are having this “fighting” relationship. Many comedy films and television programs show this kind of relationship, too. Try your hand at writing a brief plot of a film or television show that would have two people in a “fighting” relationship. You could call your fictional creation “A Night at the Fights,” or make up your own title.
6. Benedick asks Claudio if he would rather him be honest or lie to be nice. The choice Benedick offers is one many people face even in modern times. Imagine you write an advice column for a teen magazine. Claudio has written to you for help about Hero. Write the answer you would give him in your column. Begin it with,

Dear Claudio,

You sound quite troubled about your situation with Hero. What might be a good way to deal with it is...

7. Benedick tells Don Pedro and Claudio that he never wants to get married. Shakespeare gives hints as to why Benedick feels the way he does about getting married. Leaf back through this scene and choose the quotations from Benedick’s dialogue which give those reasons. Begin your quotation with the page number on which you found it. Be sure that you copy the quotations exactly, being careful to put in all punctuation.

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Act I, Scene II

8. Leonato, Hero's father, learns from his brother Antonio that a servant has told him that Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon, loves Hero. It seems that a servant overheard the prince telling that to Claudio while they were walking in the woods. Big misunderstanding! It is actually Claudio who is in love with Hero. Misunderstandings happen to us all at one time or another. Relate a time when you experienced misunderstanding something or someone or they misunderstood you and how the situation eventually worked out. Do not use real names unless you are comfortable with doing that.

Act I, Scene III

9. The wicked Don John learns of Claudio's love for Hero and devises a plan to use it to his advantage. This scene, though brief, is important to the plot of the play. Don John, Don Pedro's illegitimate brother, reveals his wicked streak. Reread the scene with careful attention to Don John's dialogue. Write a brief character study of Don John from what you have read, using any lines from the scene that back up your conclusions. Be sure to include what actions he wants to take and how this reflects his character.

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Act II, Scene I

10. Claudio hears that the prince loves Hero and immediately believes it because it comes from the prince's brother. Even today we have a tendency to believe things to be true because we hear them from some "authority." An example of this is our belief (presently being tested often) that what we hear on television news, particularly cable news, is accurate, fair, balanced, and true. Often that is a mistaken belief. What is the state of your belief in the truth of what you hear on television news? Write a paragraph with your opinion about this. Give at least one example from something you have seen or heard which accounts for why you feel the way you do.
11. Don Pedro plays matchmaker for Claudio and Hero by telling Leonato all the great things about Claudio. In your school library, you will be able to find magazines or newspapers in which there is what are called "Personal" ads. In these "Personal" ads people sometimes describe themselves in complimentary terms and are requesting a personal relationship of some kind with a reader who might be interested in them. Try your hand at writing a "Personal" ad about yourself. Write as briefly and interestingly as you can about your personality, hobbies, and qualities you would like to find in a person you would want to be in a relationship with.

Act II, Scene II

12. Don John and his follower, Borachio, conspire in this scene to ruin the wedding of Claudio and Hero. Borachio is paid a thousand ducats for his part in this hurtful act. Don John is planning the wedding sabotage out of spite and hate. Borachio is involved for the money and out of a misplaced loyalty to Don John. Imagine that you are the father or mother of Borachio and he has told you, with glee, of what he and Don John are planning. Write the dialogue that his father or mother, who are good, caring people, might say to their son whom they feel is quite wrong to do what he is planning.

Mother or Father: My son! My son! How could you even THINK...

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Act II, Scene III

13. Benedick tells of his unrealistic expectations for a wife. All of Shakespeare's plays show the role of a wife in the times in which he wrote as being an important one. His women characters are fully thought out and varied, from a sweet protagonist like Hero to a murderer like Lady Macbeth. Imagine you are asked by *People Magazine* or some other magazine that deals with celebrities to submit your list of the top ten characteristics you would like ALL wives to have. Whether you are a male or female student, you should have an opinion about the best characteristics of wives. Please write each item on your list in a complete sentence.
14. Balthasar lacks the self-confidence to sing even though people tell him he is good. Think about the whole idea of what self-confidence means, and why some people seem to have more of it than others. Think about two people you know who have widely differing levels of self-confidence. Without using real names, write two brief paragraphs about them telling how each demonstrates their high or low level of self-confidence, giving at least one example of something they did that convinced you of their self-confidence.
15. Benedick overhears Claudio and Leonato talking about Beatrice's love for him. He immediately believes it because he says that Leonato wouldn't lie. Benedick has an interesting reaction to hearing that Beatrice really loves him. Reread his dialogue. Complete the following conversation you might have with a classmate who is also reading this play, about whether or not Benedick really loves Beatrice.

Classmate: I can't figure this guy out. He can't seem to believe what he's hearing about Beatrice, and yet...