

Edusites Much Ado About Nothing Activities

Activity One

Students should complete the card sort below putting the events into the correct order.

We meet the soldiers Don Pedro, Claudio and Benedick. They have just won a war against evil Don John, and have come to stay in Leonato's house with his daughter, Hero, and his niece, Beatrice.	We discover that Claudio likes Hero, and Don Pedro offers to woo her on his behalf. We also realise that there is a 'merry war' or banter between Beatrice and Benedick, who claim to hate each other.
Don John is angry at losing the war, and to make everyone else miserable he decides to ruin Claudio and Hero's relationship.	At the masked ball, Don Pedro does woo Hero for Claudio. However, Claudio is tricked into believing that Don Pedro has wooed for himself, and is angry. He then discovers the truth and is ok again. He is shown to jump to conclusions and be mistrusting.
At the masked ball, Beatrice and Benedick wind each other up. So... everyone agrees to trick them to fall in love with each other.	Don John and Borachio make a plan to look Hero look like she has been with other men and isn't a virgin, thus ruining her wedding.
Benedick is tricked into thinking Beatrice loves him by overhearing a conversation. He then decides that he loves her too.	Beatrice is tricked into believing that Benedick loves her by over hearing a conversation, and she decides she loves him.
Don John tells Claudio that Hero is not a maid. Claudio is angry.	Claudio humiliates Hero at the altar. Hero faints and the Friar hatches a plan to pretend that she is dead so that Claudio feels bad. Beatrice asks Benedick to kill Claudio to prove his love.
Dogberry discovers that truth about Hero being innocent.	Benedick challenges Claudio. The plot comes out and Claudio and Don Pedro feel bad. Claudio agrees to marry Leonato's niece, who is masked, to apologise.
The masked woman is, in fact, Hero and Claudio is overjoyed.	Beatrice and Benedick agree to marry.
They dance.	

Activity Two

Features of Comedy

Shakespeare's comedies are a little different from ours – they may not be as 'laugh out loud' as we are used to. However, they are more light hearted in tone than his tragedies (for example 'Romeo and Juliet') and often end in marriage.

Some people think that 'Much Ado About Nothing' is very close to a tragedy – there are fights, deaths etc. - and the only feature that keeps it from becoming one, is the wedding ceremony at the end.

Complete this chart, recognising where these key conventions of the comedy genre occur in 'Much Ado About Nothing.'

Convention of comedy genre	Where it occurs in 'Much Ado About Nothing'
Lovers overcoming an obstacle to be together	
Clever jokes/word play/banter	
A happy ending	
An idyllic, often rural, life (sometimes referred to as the pastoral)	
Slapstick/physical comedy	
Several intertwining plots	

Activity Three

PEE Paragraph

How does Shakespeare reveal the attitudes and values of society at the time?

We can tell that Messina values typically 'masculine' qualities because this messenger claims that Benedick is "a lord to a lord, a man to a man, stuffed with all honourable virtues."

This shows me that...

Alternatively, it could demonstrate...

The word/phrase "....." is especially effective because it has connotations of...

Shakespeare has shown these values early on in the play because....

Activity Four

Don John – Archetypal Villain

Don John is often considered the archetypal villain in the play. His narrative function is to cause upset and create an obstacle between the lovers. He is seeking revenge having lost a war. Analyse these key lines, particularly focusing on language.

What does this suggest if he is not of many words? How do you imagine this line delivered and what does it show us about how he acts in company?

I thank you. I am not of many words, but I thank you.

What does the use of repetition suggest about him?

This language seems stiff and elaborate – what does this suggest about him?

I cannot hide what I am – I must be sad when I have cause and smile at no man's jests, eat when I have stomach and wait for no man's leisure, sleep when I am drowsy and tend on no man's business, laugh when I am merry and claw no man in his humour.

What is the effect of the constant reference to 'I'?

What can we infer from this?

I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace...

What are the connotations of this word?

What are the connotations of this word?

I am trusted with a muzzle and enfranchised with a clog

What are the connotations of this word? How does he feel he is treated? Does this justify his actions?

Activity Five

Comic Relief – Act 3 Scene 3 How Comedy is Created

Complete this table, focusing on the effect on the audience and Shakespeare’s intentions.

NOTE: Dogberry would not have been paid for this job, it was a volunteering role and not very respected. This is why he doesn’t have very good answers to the watchmen’s questions.

His name refers to the fruit of the Dogwood tree, and they were considered cheap.

Technique	Evidence	Effect
Saying the wrong word in context (malapropism)	“Yea, or else it were pity but they should suffer salvation , body and soul.”	This is one of his first lines – why? What does it reveal about his character and how he perceives himself?
Mispronouncing a word	“Adieu: be vigitant , I beseech you.”	
Dogberry, a bumbling police man being full of self-importance and pompous.	The length of his speeches – what does this show? He directs the watch “ This is your charge. ”	What does the use of the declarative imply?
A long list of, seemingly irrelevant, questions	“How if the nurse be asleep and will not hear us?”	How does the long list of interrogatives create comedy? What does it do to the pace of the scene? Look at Dogberry’s answers – what could you say about them?
Reference to prior ineptitude	“Only, have a care that your bills be not stolen.”	

Activity Six

Card sort: match the rhetorical device with the quote

Emotive Language	“wronged”
Repetition	“O that I were a man!”
3 Part List	“slandered, scorned, dishonoured...”
Rhetorical question	“Is a’not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman?”
Emotive Language	“wronged” “undone”
Metaphor	“I would eat his heart in the market-place.”
Exclamations	“Sweet hero!”
Insults	“But manhood is melted into curtsies....”

Activity Seven

Don Pedro and Claudio Mourn

Despite this being a very tragic time during the play, Shakespeare has cleverly maintained a light yet dignified atmosphere. This is important to maintain the comedy genre.

Complete the chart to discover how Shakespeare created this atmosphere.

Technique	Evidence	Effect on audience
Length of scene	Just 33 lines long.	The length of the scene ensures there is not a focus on mourning and death. It is just long enough to show Don Pedro and Claudio keeping their word, and being humiliated, as we know that Hero is alive. This dramatic irony creates humour for the audience.
Extended metaphor	“The wolves have preyed, and look, the gentle day, Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.”	
Alliteration	“Done to death” “Dapples the drowsy”	
Blank verse	See Claudio’s initial speech <i>Interestingly, Beatrice and Benedick never speak in verse until just before they are married – why?</i>	
Rhythm	“Now, unto thy bones good night! Yearly will I do this rite.”	
Exclamation	“And Hymen now with luckier issue speed’s Than this for whom we rendered up this woe!”	

Activity Eight

Beatrice – Subverting Expectations

Expectations/ the conventional role for women

How does Beatrice subvert these? Ensure you include evidence

What was Shakespeare's intention in creating this character? What was he trying to show?

Benedick – Subverting Expectations

Expectations/the conventional role of men

How does Benedick subvert these? Ensure you use quotes

What was Shakespeare's intention in creating this character? What was he trying to show?

Activity Nine

2 or 3 details from the extract.
**How does SP create mood/
atmosphere for the audience?**

- “Which is the lady I must seize upon?”

Mystery and irony created here.
Dramatic impact of the unknown.

Shakespeare Plan

Two Part Question

2 or 3 details from the rest of the play:
**How does Shakespeare present
relationships between men and
women in Much Ado About Nothing**

- Conventional view of marriage (Claudio and Hero) vs. Benedick and Beatrice's views.

Conclusion/ bigger picture – what issues was Shakespeare exploring and why? One-two thought-provoking points to conclude and ‘wow the examiner.