

'Much Ado About Nothing: A Shakespeare Story' by Andrew Matthews and Tony Ross

Published by Orchard Classics

Ages 7-9

What's it all about?

This popular comedy is set in the sixteenth century in Sicily. When prince Don Pedro and his companions, Claudio and Benedick, return from war they decide to stay at Leonato's house. Leonato is the governor of Messina and there is much excitement about the prince's arrival.

Soon, Claudio and Benedick fall in love with the beautiful Hero and the sharp-tongued Beatrice. Insults fly in this humorous re-telling as the course of love twists, turns and tricks everyone!

An amusing, accessible re-telling of confrontational courtship, double-crossing villains and the power of love!

Before reading...

Ask the children to look at the front cover. What do you think the book will be about? What things can you see on the front cover? What sort of story will it be? Who might enjoy it? Ask the children to create semantic maps for the following words:

- **Love**
- **Deceit**
- **Disguise**

Can they create a web of words noting down all the phrases and words linked to these concepts?

The following questions are designed as prompts only – allow the children to come up with their own questions and ideas. You may wish to focus on one of the VIPERS domains in each session or a wider variety of questions.

Before reading...

Look carefully at the cast list. Draw lines to match the name of the character to their role in the story.

Hero	Prince of Aragon
Beatrice	Leonato's daughter
Leonato	Don Pedro's companion
Don Pedro	Don Pedro's companion
Claudio	Messina's Governor
Benedick	Leonato's niece

*"Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in the sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never." (Balthazar; II.iii)*

Who is speaking? Who might they be speaking to? Who are they speaking about? Why might the ladies be sighing? What does it mean if you deceive someone? What might it mean if you have one foot in the sea and one on the shore? How is this similar to the famous saying 'to have one foot out the door'? Listen to the song 'Almost Doesn't Count' by Brandy. How does this song help you to understand what Balthazar is saying?

Pages 7 - 17

Vocabulary	<p>What does 'fuss and flutter' mean? (page 7)</p> <p>What does it mean if someone has a sharp tongue? What sorts of things might they say? (page 9)</p> <p>Which word means 'walked down'? (page 9)</p> <p>Why is 'thinks' written in italics? How should this be read?</p> <p>Find and copy a word which is similar in meaning to 'bitter' and 'sceptical' (page 11).</p> <p>Try reading out loud, 'You haven't fallen in love, have you?' How can you show Benedick's feelings through your expression?</p> <p>What does it mean if you've fallen 'head over heels' for someone? (page 15)</p>
Infer	<p>Read page 7. How has the prince's planned arrival impacted upon the household?</p> <p>Read page 7. Why might the prince be visiting?</p> <p>Why is Hero blushing on page 9? What might she be thinking and feeling?</p> <p>What does the verb 'growled' tell us about Beatrice? (page 10)</p> <p>Why doesn't Hero reply on page 12?</p> <p>What does the verb 'scoffed' tell us about Benedick's feelings about marriage? (page 15)</p>
Predict	<p>Read page 17. Predict what could go wrong at a masked ball. Later in the play, Claudio says:</p> <p><i>"Let every eye negotiate for itself And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch Against whose charms faith melteth into blood."</i> (II, i)</p> <p>What does he mean? Do you think he is happy? Unhappy?</p> <p>Predict what might happen to make him say this.</p>
Explain	<p>How are Beatrice and Hero similar? How are they different? Compare them using a Venn diagram.</p> <p>Explain what Beatrice means when she says, 'If he lived off his wit, he would die of starvation.' (page 10)</p> <p>Read page 11. How do you think the author wants us to feel about Claudio? Why?</p> <p>Explain how the illustration on page 15 helps us understand Claudio's feelings.</p>
Retrieve	<p>Why did the prince visit the house some months earlier? (page 7)</p> <p>Hero has taken a fancy to Lord Benedick. True or false? (page 9)</p> <p>Benedick is not normally a cynical person. True or false? (page 11)</p> <p>Why hasn't Claudio noticed Hero before? (page 16)</p> <p>How does Don Pedro say he will help Claudio? (page 17)</p>
Summarise	<p>Look at page 9. Describe Beatrice and Hero in one word each.</p> <p>Act out pages 12 and 13, taking it in turns to play Hero, Claudio, Beatrice and Benedick.</p> <p>Summarise in one word how Claudio is feeling on page 17.</p>

Pages 18 – 25

Vocabulary	<p>What does the verb 'swirled' tell us about the music and dancers? (page 18)</p> <p>Which word on page 20 means 'hide'?</p> <p>What is a jester? (page 20)</p> <p>Find and copy a word on page 21 which means 'boring'? Can this word have more than one meaning?</p> <p>Which word on page 23 means 'sad'?</p>
Infer	<p>Why is Claudio standing on his tiptoes? (page 18)</p> <p>Why does Beatrice tell Benedick he is a jester and dull fool? What is her purpose? Do you think she really dislikes him? (page 20)</p> <p>What might Beatrice be thinking and feeling as she slips away? (page 21)</p> <p>What might a fox's mask suggest about Borachio? (page 22)</p>
Predict	<p>Look at these words from the first few pages and use them to predict what might happen: <i>Beatrice, Benedick, masks, conceal, prince's jester, dull fool.</i></p> <p>What will Borachio tell his master? (page 23)</p> <p>Predict what Don Pedro's plan will involve.</p>
Explain	<p>Owls are often said to be associated with wisdom. Why might Beatrice be wearing an owl mask? Why might Benedick be wearing a hare mask?</p> <p>Explain how the illustration on page 23 helps us understand the character of Borachio.</p> <p>One of the characters says in the play, "She mocks all her wooers out of suit." What do they mean? Who might they be talking about? Why?</p>
Retrieve	<p>Complete this sentence: Don Pedro is dancing with Hero because...(page 18)</p> <p>Complete this sentence: Beatrice describes Benedick as a dull fool, so...(page 21)</p> <p>Why does Don Pedro think that Beatrice and Benedick will make a good couple? (page 24)</p>
Summarise	<p>In the play, Beatrice says to Benedick: <i>"Why, he is the Prince's jester, a very dull fool; only his gift is in devising impossible slanders. None but libertines delight in him, and the commendation is not in his wit but in his villainy, for he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him and beat him."</i> (II, i)</p> <p>Re-write this in modern day English, summarising her feelings about Benedick.</p> <p>Summarise in one word how Benedick is feeling on page 21.</p>

Pages 26 - 39

Vocabulary	<p>What is 'skulking'? Show a partner! (page 26)</p> <p>Which word on page 26 means 'flattering' or 'servile'?</p> <p>Think of synonyms and antonyms for the following words: <i>scowled, skulking, cruel, smirked.</i></p> <p>Which word on page 30 is similar in meaning to 'hates'?</p> <p>What does it mean if you make a laughing stock of someone? (page 37)</p>
Infer	<p>How does Don John feel about the prince? How do you know? (page 26)</p> <p>Why might the men have a twinkle in their eyes? (page 29)</p> <p>What might Benedick be thinking and feeling on page 29?</p> <p>Why has the prince sent Beatrice to ask Benedick to come for dinner? (page 32)</p> <p>Why does Benedick feel so delighted on page 34? How might he really feel about Beatrice?</p> <p>What might Beatrice be thinking and feeling when she hears Hero call her cold and proud? (page 36)</p>
Predict	<p>Predict what Boracho has said that has led to Don John's cruel smile (page 27).</p> <p>Read to the end of page 29 and predict what Benedick will do.</p> <p>What might Don John be up to? (page 39)</p>
Explain	<p>How does the author make you want to read on at the end of page 27? Is it successful?</p> <p>How does Benedick's reaction to Beatrice's scorn change on page 33? Why?</p> <p>What motivates Beatrice to love Benedick? (page 38)</p> <p>In the play, Benedick says of Beatrice, "I will be horribly in love with her." How can you be horribly in love with someone? What does this tell us about their relationship?</p>
Retrieve	<p>What is the name of Hero's chambermaid? (page 27)</p> <p>What does Benedick overhear on page 29?</p> <p>Complete this sentence: Beatrice overhears Hero and Ursula talking because...(page 36)</p> <p>Who wakes up Don Pedro? Why? (page 39)</p>
Summarise	<p>Summarise in one sentence Leonato's explanation of why Beatrice is so cruel to Benedick (page 30).</p> <p>In the play, Beatrice says this about marriage and men: <i>"What should I do with him—dress him in my apparel and make him my waiting gentlewoman? He that hath a beard is more than a youth, and he that hath no beard is less than a man; and he that is more than a youth is not for me, and he that is less than a man, I am not for him."</i> (II, i)</p> <p>Why does Beatrice believe she must remain unmarried? What are our feelings about men? (Note: Beatrice is wittily saying that no man is good enough for her! They're too young, too old etc!)</p>

Pages 40 – 47

Vocabulary	<p>Which word on page 40 means 'glowing and beautiful'?</p> <p>Find and copy a word on page 43 which means 'hurried or rushed'.</p> <p>Why is a dash used on page 42? How should this be read?</p> <p>Define 'clamour' (page 44).</p> <p>Try reading, 'Then go to Claudio...' How can you show Beatrice's feelings through your expression? (page 47)</p>
Infer	<p>Why might Claudio and Don Pedro seem uneasy in their uniforms? (page 40)</p> <p>Why does Hero faint on page 43?</p> <p>Do you think Hero was really kissing Borachio? Why? Why not? (page 43)</p> <p>What does the verb 'marched' tell us about Claudio's feelings? (page 44)</p> <p>Why is Leonato dazed on page 44? What might he be thinking and feeling?</p> <p>What does the verb 'snarled' tell us about how Beatrice is feeling? (page 45)</p>
Predict	<p>Read to the end of page 42. Predict who the other man is. How will Hero react to this accusation?</p> <p>Read to the end of page 47. Predict the outcome of the duel. Carry on the story now by completing the next sentence, which begins begins: <i>Don Pedro and Claudio were collecting their horses from the stables when...</i> (page 48)</p>
Explain	<p>In the play, Leonato says about Hero:</p> <p><i>"O she is fall'n Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea Hath drops too few to wash her clean again And salt too little which may season give To her foul tainted flesh!"</i> (IV, i)</p> <p>Explain how Hero has 'fallen into a pit of ink'. What does he think she's done to make her tainted and unclean? Try performing this speech as if you were Leonato.</p>
Retrieve	<p>Who is Friar Francis? (page 41)</p> <p>Claudio says he has seen Hero kidding Don Pedro. True or false? (page 43)</p> <p>Hero screams at Claudio when he accuses her of kissing another man. True or false? (page 43)</p> <p>What advice does Friar Francis give to Leonato? (page 45)</p>
Summarise	<p>Re-tell pages 40-43 from Hero's perspective, up to the point where she faints.</p> <p>Summarise in one sentence Friar Francis's plan on page 45.</p> <p>Summarise in one sentence what Beatrice asks Benedick to do on page 47.</p>

Pages 48 - 63

Vocabulary	<p>Replace the words in bold with synonyms: Benedick seized Claudio's throat and slammed him against the door.</p> <p>Which word on page 49 means 'confusion'?</p> <p>Why does the author use a dash on page 49? What does it tell us about Claudio's feelings?</p> <p>Which word on page 52 means 'promise'?</p>
Infer	<p>What does the verb 'hissed' tell us about how Benedick is feeling? (page 48)</p> <p>Why would Margret be wearing her mistress's old clothes? (page 51)</p> <p>Why do you think Claudio agrees to marry the unknown daughter? (page 54)</p> <p>What might Claudio be thinking and feeling when Hero emerges? (page 56)</p>
Predict	<p>Predict who the voices belong to on page 49.</p> <p>Read to the end of page 51. Predict what will happen to Don John.</p> <p>Predict who the daughter on page 53 might be.</p>
Explain	<p>Do you agree with the author that this play is a 'lively game, full of twists'? Why? Why not? (page 61)</p> <p>Read page 52. Does Claudio deserve to feel like this? Why? Why not?</p> <p>Explain why Hero's innocence was in doubt (page 56).</p> <p>What do you think Claudio has learnt over the course of this story?</p> <p>What does Benedick mean when he says the arrows that struck him were fired by Cupid? (page 58)</p> <p>Benedick has changed and developed the most as a character. Do you agree with this statement? Why? Why not?</p> <p>How can a story or play cast a spell over someone? (page 63)</p>
Retrieve	<p>Who has been arrested and why? (page 50)</p> <p>Who was Borachio kissing? (page 51)</p> <p>When did Don John leave? (page 52)</p> <p>Between 1598 and 1601, Shakespeare wrote three plays. True or false? (page 60)</p> <p>Who did Shakespeare borrow this plot from? (page 60)</p> <p>Which subject fascinated Shakespeare? (page 60)</p> <p>When was the Globe Theatre built? (page 62)</p>
Summarise	<p>Describe in one word how Claudio is feeling on page 52.</p> <p>Write a sentence about how each of these themes applies to the story: love, lies, foolishness, resentment.</p> <p>Summarise on three sentences how going to the Globe Theatre was different to the theatre today (page 62).</p> <p>What else can you find out about the Globe Theatre? Summarise your research in a paragraph.</p>