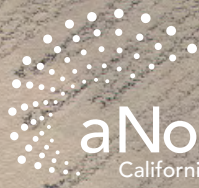


A Noise  
Within  
Study  
Guide

# Much Ado About Nothing

Costume Design by Soojin Lee.



aNoiseWithin  
California's Home for the Classics

On the Wings of Fate! 09/10 SEASON

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Costume Design by Soojin Lee.

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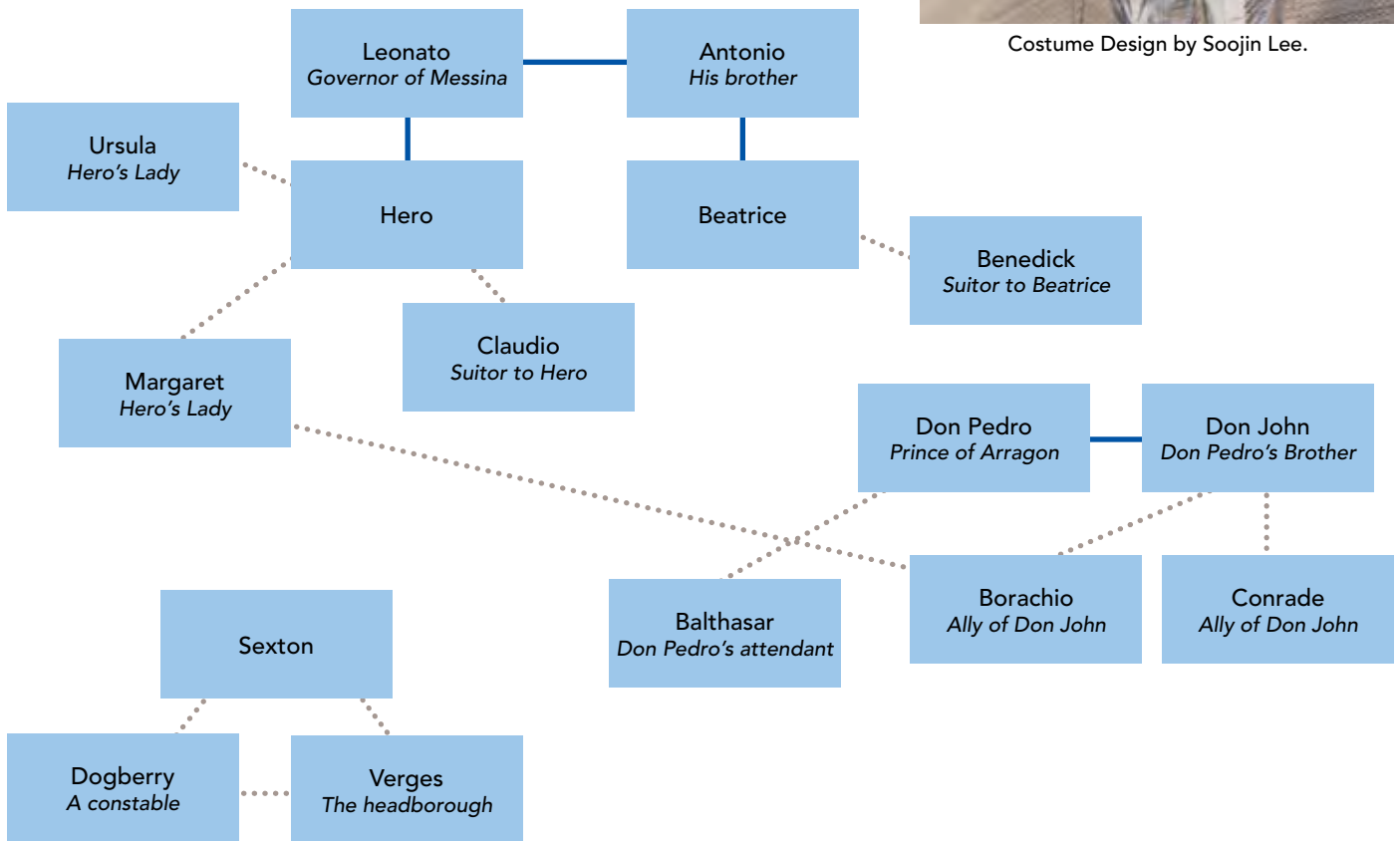
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# Who's Who in the Play



Costume Design by Soojin Lee.



- Characters are family
- ..... Characters are closely connected by work, friendship, or another association

## About the Play: Synopsis

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Costume Design by Soojin Lee.

### **ACT I, Scene one**

In the Sicilian town of Messina, off the coast of Italy, the governor Leonato, along with his daughter Hero and niece Beatrice, receive word the the war heroes Don Pedro and Claurio are returning home from battle. Beatrice inquires as to the health of Benedick, another lord away at war, and upon hearing of his wellbeing, she quips, "four of his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man governed with one." Leonato explains that Benedick and Beatrice often engage in a "merry war" of words.

Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick, and Don John the Bastard (Don Pedro's illegitimate brother) arrive. Leonato promptly invites the soldiers to stay for a month, and they

accept. After the rest depart, Claudio reveals to Benedick that he has fallen in love with Hero. Benedick later reveals this secret to Don Pedro, who clearly approves of the pair. As Claudio is too shy to take action himself, Don Pedro and Benedick devise a plan to assist him: Don Pedro will disguise himself as Claudio that evening at the masquerade ball, proclaim his love to Hero, and ask for Leonato's blessing.

### **ACT I, Scene two**

Leonato's brother Antonio overhears (but misunderstands) the previous conversation between Don Pedro and Claudio, and informs Leonato that Don Pedro loves Hero and plans to woo her this evening. Leonato vows not to act on this rumor until Don Pedro acts but says he will warn Hero.

## Fun Fact

In 1890 Eugene Schieffelin released eighty starlings in New York's Central Park because they were mentioned in Shakespeare's plays. In *Henry IV, Part One* Hotspur says "I shall have a starling shall be taught to speak" Act IV part I, scene 3. There are now over 200 million starlings in America. Quite a return for a single line.

### ACT I, Scene three

In another part of the estate, the servant Conrade advises his master Don John that since his relationship with his brother is still fragile, he would do well to look less morose. Don John expresses his distaste for having to rely so heavily on his more successful and better-liked brother for money and status. Borachio, another of Don John's men, enters having *correctly* overheard Claudio's plan to win Hero's love. Don John detests Claudio for being so well loved by all and the three men swear to foil this plan.

### ACT II, Scene one

All await the commencement of the masquerade ball. Good friends Hero and Beatrice discuss their unwedded states. They imagine that the perfect man would be a compromise between Benedick who speaks just to hear his own voice and Don John who barely opens his mouth at all.

As the dancing begins, the fully masked Don Pedro begins to flirt heavily with Hero. Beatrice heartily insults Benedick to her masked dance partner, who is, in fact, Benedick himself. Don John, wishing to cause ill will, addresses the masked Claudio pretending to mistake Claudio for Benedick. He falsely relays that Don Pedro has double crossed Claudio and intends to keep Hero for himself. Claudio believes him and storms out. The real Benedick, however, encounters Don Pedro, Hero, and Leonato and discovers that Don Pedro has upheld his promise to Claudio, forswearing the pursuit of Hero as his wife.

When Claudio returns, he is stunned to discover that Hero has agreed to marry him. At a loss for words, Claudio remarks that, "Silence is the perfectest herald of joy. I were but little happy if I could say how much." Only half-joking, Beatrice declares that she shall never marry. Don Pedro proposes to her on the spot. Beatrice turns

him down, saying that she wishes she could marry him, but he is too fancy and proper for her—like lavish clothing.

After Beatrice and Benedick exit, Don Pedro informs Claudio that his wedding to Hero will take place in a week. Claudio laments what a long time that is to wait, but Don Pedro offers a plan to pass the time: they all plot to help Beatrice and Benedick stop squabbling and fall in love with each other.

### ACT II, Scene two

Borachio, on Don John's behalf, plots to stop Claudio and Hero's wedding by casting doubt upon Hero's chastity. Borachio is currently sleeping with one of Hero's attendants, Margaret, and he says he will convince Margaret to disguise herself as Hero while he makes love to her on Hero's balcony. Don John will then bring Don Pedro and Claudio outside the balcony to prove that Hero is unchaste, unfaithful, and unfit to marry.

### ACT II, Scene three

Benedick — pacing the garden, wonders aloud how intelligent men can ever fall in love. He suddenly overhears Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato entering the garden. Hidden, Benedick intends to eavesdrop on their conversation. However, Don Pedro and Claudio see him dart into the bushes and decide that the time is right to begin their plan. They enact a very loud conversation about how they've just heard that Beatrice has fallen in love with Benedick. They feign fear that her infatuation will drive her mad. They go on to say Benedick will never find a woman as fine as Beatrice, and that they "...wish he would modestly examine himself, to see how much he is unworthy so good a lady."

Benedick falls for the trick. Taking umbrage at the idea that he is not worthy of Beatrice, and that Beatrice is lovesick,

Benedick resolves to take pity and return her affections. Beatrice enters, having been sent to bring Benedick to the house for dinner. Although she is as curt and rude as usual, Benedick suddenly dotes on her—a change of which she is highly suspicious. Benedick, however, interprets her insulting words as discreet promises of love.

#### **ACT III, Scene one**

Later, in the same garden, Margaret coaxes Beatrice into a secluded part of the trees. As Hero and Ursula walk by, they stage a loud conversation for Beatrice to overhear. Hero claims that Benedick's friends have told her of his love for Beatrice. Ursula urges Hero tell Beatrice this news, but Hero insists that Beatrice will not believe her and she will break Benedick's heart. As they leave the garden, Ursula insists that Beatrice could not be so foolish as to turn down as worthy a man as Benedick. Prompted by this conversation, Beatrice is convinced that she should return Benedick's love. She leaves declaring, "Contempt, farewell; and maiden pride, adieu."

#### **ACT III, Scene two**

Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato prod at Benedick for being so quiet that evening, saying he must be in love. Benedick does not even respond to their teasing, instead, just asking to speak with Leonato in private. As they leave, Don John approaches Claudio and Don Pedro. Feigning concern for Claudio's reputation, Don John spins a false tale about Hero's infidelity, and bids them accompany him that evening under the balcony. Claudio and Don Pedro swear to publically humiliate Hero at the wedding ceremony should the rumor prove true.

#### **ACT III, Scene three**

The Watch (the Messina policemen) gather around Constable Dogberry and Headborough Verges to receive their orders for the evening. It becomes quickly apparent that they are a band of fools.

Their final order for the night is to keep special watch on Leonato's house, as there is much pre-wedding excitement there. Dogberry and Verges leave some watchmen behind while the rest depart. The watchmen then overhear Borachio explain to Conrade the entire plot to falsely "reveal" Hero to be unfaithful, which has just taken place at the balcony. The watchmen arrest the two men for "lechery," although they mean treachery.

#### **ACT III, Scene four**

Hero awakes excited for her wedding but also slightly uneasy. Sensing disaster, she cannot pinpoint the source of her doubt. Beatrice enters and Margaret teases her about her changed feelings on marriage. Soon the wedding party arrives to bring Hero to the church.

#### **ACT III, Scene five**

Dogberry and Verges stop Leonato just as he is about to enter the church, saying that they want to question two prisoners in front of him. However, the buffoonish pair takes so long to explain themselves, and so greatly confuse their message, that Leonato brushes them aside.

#### **ACT IV, Scene one**

Inside the church, the wedding ceremony begins. When Friar Francis reaches the part in the rites when he asks if Claudio wishes to marry Hero, Claudio breaks into a rage, decrying Hero's infidelity to the entire crowd. Hero faints in shock, Leonato threatens suicide, and Claudio, Don Pedro, and Don John storm out of the church. Beatrice speaks, swearing to all that remain that Hero is innocent. The friar comes to her defense as well, saying Hero's facial expression during Claudio's speech was that of pure shock. Hero is revived, and she too swears her virginity. Benedick becomes convinced Don John is to blame for this slander.

## Fun Fact

### SOLILOQUY VS. MONOLOGUE

A soliloquy is a speech that a character delivers when alone on the stage—whereas a monologue is a long speech given to another character. The term “soliloquy” didn’t come into popular use until some 40 years after Shakespeare’s time, so it’s likely he did not use the term himself. Modern examples of a soliloquy would include the “confessionals” often featured in reality shows, when one contestant speaks privately to the camera.

Friar Francis instructs Leonato to inform everyone that Hero succumbed to her shock and died. Believing that when the guilty accusers hear that an innocent girl has died, the Friar theorizes that they will repent, at which point Hero will come out of hiding. Benedick and Beatrice are left alone, and as he tries to comfort her, they end up mutually confessing their love. In his passion, Benedick claims he will do anything Beatrice asks of him. Beatrice responds by asking him to murder Claudio. He initially refuses, but when she announces that she would do the deed herself if she were a man, he finally agrees to avenge Hero’s honor.

#### ACT IV, Scene two

Dogberry and Verges interrogate the prisoners Borachio and Conrade in a ridiculous exchange in front of the Sexton. Admonished by the Sexton to follow proper legal procedure, Dogberry and Verges conclude that disgracing a lady in front of the congregation at her wedding is “flat burglary”. However, all becomes clear to the shrewd Sexton that Don John was behind the plot to frame Hero for disloyalty.

#### ACT V, Scene one

Accompanied by Antonio, the grieving Leonato confronts Claudio, accuses him of murdering Hero with his lies, and challenges him to a duel. Claudio and Don Pedro pretend they don’t hear Leonato and eventually he and Antonio leave, swearing revenge. Benedick enters and informs them that Don John has fled. He also challenges Claudio to a duel. Finally, Dogberry and Verges enter with Conrad and Borachio. They force Borachio to reveal the scheme to Claudio and Don Pedro. When Leonato and Antonio return, Claudio and Don Pedro beg their forgiveness. In order to receive forgiveness, Leonato instructs Claudio to clear Hero’s name in front of the entire city,

and to write her an epitaph to be sung at her funeral. He then says he has a niece who is quite similar in appearance and mannerisms to Hero, and asks Claudio to marry her in Hero’s place. Believing Hero to be dead, Claudio agrees to all.

#### ACT V, Scene two

Benedick and Beatrice engage in playful banter as Ursula arrives with the news of Borachio’s confession. All three rush to speak with Leonato.

#### ACT V, Scene three

Claudio performs the epitaph at Hero’s (empty) tomb, saying, “Done to death by slanderous tongues / Was the Hero that here lies.” He then prepares to marry Antonio’s daughter.

#### ACT V, Scene four

As preparations for the second wedding are underway, Benedick takes Leonato aside and asks for Beatrice’s hand in marriage. All the women—including Hero—enter wearing masks. Claudio insists he will marry the masked woman he believes to be Antonio’s daughter. Claudio’s bride is unmasked and revealed to be Hero—very much alive. Hero may now marry him with a pure reputation.

As the wedding party heads to the chapel, Benedick halts the crowd and publically asks Beatrice if she loves him. She denies her love, and then he responds in denial as well. Hero and Claudio, however, produce incomplete love-poems they have found in their respective friends’ rooms. As still-sparring pair agrees to marry, a messenger arrives to announce that Don John has been apprehended and arrested. Leonato says he will deal with Don John tomorrow, for today there is only to be rejoicing. All ends happily, and the merry crowd rejoices in celebration of two marriages. ❖

## Setting: Messina, Italy Then vs. Now

**WHY DID SHAKESPEARE** set *Much Ado About Nothing* in Messina, Sicily? To the Elizabethan audience, cities in Italy were associated with certain attributes, or characteristics: Florence was thought to be a center of old-fashioned courts and manners; Rome was a false paradise; Messina was known for its many mysteries and intrigues. Many scholars believe that Shakespeare infused his depiction of Messina with culturally-

accepted views of Venice at the time. Venice was thought to be a place where outsiders could be easily swindled out of their valuables and cash—a city where attendance (and disguise,) at lavish masked balls was compulsory for all Lords and Ladies. Elizabethans closely associated setting with plot, and indeed in *Much Ado* the newcomers Claudio and Don Pedro are easily led to believe that Hero is unfaithful—a plot twist which made perfect sense in Venice’s cultural “twin” Messina.

Under Leonato, Messina would have been seen by the Elizabethan audience as a weak region. Due largely to the selection of imbeciles for lawmen (Dogberry and his cadre of clowns,) and Don Pedro’s embrace of his recently-exiled illegitimate brother Don John, Messina would have been the perfect location for a plot rife with deception.

Messina is located at the northernmost tip of Sicily, which is a small island south of Italy. The third largest city in Sicily, Messina serves as its capital today and boasts approximately 500,000 inhabitants. During Shakespeare’s time, it would have been the center of business and commerce for the island, and its proximity to the rest of Italy would have provided for much trade with the mainland. Access to the island would have been by boat during the time of the play. Messina’s military port accounts for the presence of Don John, who has recently returned from war at the beginning of *Much Ado*.

For the A Noise Within production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Director Michael Murray has set the play at the turn of the 20th century. This period was marked by the family dynasties and their traditions that ruled most regions of Italy, including Sicily. The precursor to the Italian mafia would have had total control and influence over business and politics in the area. Sicily was blighted by poverty, and many Italian families struggled to survive. Emigration to other countries, including the United States, began in the late 1800’s in earnest, as many Sicilians left in

search of better prospects for wages, and larger cities booming with industry. Immigrants flocked to Ellis Island, New York. By 1907, records show that 1.25 million immigrants were processed in that single year. During the peak period of immigration from 1880 to 1930, Italians represented the largest group of immigrants to the US—as an estimated 4,600,000 immigrants were welcomed to the “new world” during this period. ❖



View of modern Messina.

Photograph by Alexander Hoernigk.

# Biography of William Shakespeare

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**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE** (1564-1616), poet, playwright and actor, was born to Mary Arden and John Shakespeare in Stratford-Upon-Avon, England on April 23, 1564.

Although much is written about him, very little documentation of his life survives beyond the public records of his birth, death, marriage and financial transactions. Shakespeare probably attended the Edward VI Grammar School, where his studies would have been almost exclusively in Latin.

At age 18, he married Anne Hathaway (age 26), who gave birth to daughter Susanna, just six months after the wedding. In 1585, Anne gave birth to twins Hamnet (who lived only 11 years) and Judith. The years 1585-91 are considered the "lost years," for which there are no extant records relating to Shakespeare. Sometime in this period, however, he settled in London.

In 1592 he was listed as an actor with the Lord Strange's Players, for whom he wrote his first play, the highly successful *Henry VI, Part 1*, followed immediately by the sequels *Henry VI, Parts 2 & 3* in the same year. Over the course of 20 years, he wrote 148 sonnets, 3 long poems, and the 37 plays that are in continuous performance around the world today.

1599 marked the opening of the outdoor Globe theatre in which Shakespeare was a shareholder. Between 1610 and 1612, Shakespeare retired to Stratford, where he died in 1616 at age 52. He is buried in Stratford Parish Church.

Other plays by Shakespeare produced at A Noise Within include: *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Coriolanus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, *King Richard III*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Cymbeline*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Pericles*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*. ❖

# Shakespeare Timeline 1564-1623

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**1564**

Conquistadores cross the Pacific ocean. William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Galileo Galilei are born.

**1565**

St. Augustine, FL is founded, making it the oldest remaining European settlement.

**1567**

King James VI becomes King of Scotland.

**1572**

The St. Bartholemew's Day Massacre in Paris.

**1577**

Sir Francis Drake sets out on his voyage around the world.

**1579**

Sir Francis Drake lands in California and claims it for Queen Elizabeth I.

**1582**

Pope Gregory XIII implements the Gregorian calendar. William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway marry.

**1583**

Shakespeare's first child, Susana, is born.

**1585**

Shakespeare's twins, Hamnet and Judith, are born.

**1587**

A group of settlers arrive off Roanoke Island, VA to resettle the deserted colony. Mary, Queen of Scots, is beheaded. The Rose Theatre is founded in London.

**1590-1591**

*Henry VI* Parts II and III written.

**1592**

*Henry VI* Part I written. *Richard III* completed. *Comedy of Errors* possibly written.

**1593**

Plague epidemic rages in London, killing over 11,000 people. Christopher Marlowe murdered. *Titus Andronicus* probably written. *The Taming of the Shrew* is probably written.

**1594**

Shakespeare is an actor, playwright, and part owner of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. *Love's Labour's Lost* is written. *Two Gentlemen of Verona* possibly written. *Romeo and Juliet* most likely written. *Love's Labour's Won* written, which has since been lost.

**1595**

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is performed for the first time. Shakespeare probably writes *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Richard II*.

**1596**

Cambridge University is founded. *King John* probably written. *The Merchant of Venice* first performed.

**1597**

*Henry IV* Part I most likely written.

**1598**

Shakespeare's name begins to appear on the title page of his plays. *Henry IV* Part II probably written.

**1599**

First performance of *Julius Caesar* and *Henry V* in London. Shakespeare most likely writes *Much Ado About Nothing*. Shakespeare probably authors *As You Like It*.

**1600**

Telescope invented by Dutch Opticians. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* completed.

**1601**

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* premieres in London. *Othello* possibly written. *Troilus and Cressida* most probably written. Shakespeare drafts *Hamlet*.

**1602**

First performance of *Twelfth Night*.

**1603**

Queen Elizabeth I dies and is succeeded by her cousin, King James I of England, uniting the crowns of England and Scotland. Plague in England. Shakespeare writes *All's Well that Ends Well*.

**1604**

Montreal, Canada is founded. Shakespeare's *Othello* is performed for the first time. *Measure for Measure* performed at court.

**1605**

The Gunpowder Plot. First public library established in Rome. The first part of Miguel Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is published. *King Lear* possibly written. *Macbeth* possibly written.

**1606**

*Antony and Cleopatra* possibly written.

**1607**

Jamestown, VA is founded and becomes the first permanent English Colony. *Timon of Athens* possibly written. *Coriolanus* possibly written.

**1608**

Quebec City, Canada is founded by the French. *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* possibly written.

**1609**

Galileo demonstrates the first telescope. Henry Hudson discovers the Hudson River. *Shakespeare's Sonnets* are published. *Cymbeline* written.

**1610**

*The Winter's Tale* possibly written.

**1611**

The King James Bible is printed for the first time in England. *The Tempest* is performed for the first time.

**1612**

Henry VIII written. *The Two Noble Kinsman* most likely written. *Cardenio* written (with John Fletcher).

**1613**

A fire destroys London's Globe Theatre.

**1615**

The second volume of Miguel Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is published.

**1616**

William Shakespeare dies and is buried in the chancel of the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon.

**1623**

First Folio published.

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*The dates of Shakespeare's plays are a subject of continuing debate and should be taken as approximate.*

# Shakespeare's Verse and Prose

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Costume Design by Soojin Lee.

**MANY PEOPLE** are “turned off” by Shakespeare as they find his works difficult to read and understand. It is hard to believe that people spoke the way his characters do. But with a little information, you too can speak the speech and talk the talk. Shakespeare wrote his plays in two forms: prose and verse.

## PROSE

Prose is the form used by the common people in Shakespearean drama. It is also the form used when a character reads a letter out loud. There is no rhythm or meter in the line. It is everyday language and Shakespeare’s audience would recognize it as their language. The members of the royal family rarely uses prose speech, but the common citizens frequently use prose. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, the bumbling members of the Watch use prose. Here, Dogberry uses prose to describe two of his detainees:

### DOGBERRY

Marry, sir, they have committed false report, moreover they have spoken untruths, secondarily, they are slanders, sixth and lastly, they have belied a lady, thirdly they have verified unjust things, and to conclude, they are lying knaves.”

(Act V, sc. i)

## VERSE

The majority of Shakespeare’s plays are written in verse, for two primary reasons: tradition and memorization. Since the beginning of theatre, plays had been written in verse. Shakespeare was one of the first playwrights to use both prose and verse when it suited him. Verse is easier to memorize than prose. Shakespeare uses verse to denote members of the nobility and the upper class. Shakespeare’s noble characters may speak in verse, but the average noble did not. The verse form that Shakespeare uses is called blank verse. It does not contain rhyme, but each line has an internal rhythm and a regular rhythmic pattern, like a heartbeat. Shakespeare utilizes iambic pentameter. An iambic pentameter is a combination of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Pentameter means that there are five stressed syllables per line. For a ten-syllable line, iambic pentameter features the accent on alternating syllables, beginning with the second syllable. Like this:

dah-DUM, dah-DUM, dah-DUM, dah-DUM, dah-DUM

Here is an example from *Much Ado About Nothing*:

### HERO

O god of love! I know he doth deserve  
As much as may be yielded to a man;  
But Nature never fram’d a woman’s heart  
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries enjoyed using other literary devices such as alliteration, in which the same sound is repeated in a line or group of lines; repetition, where the same word is repeated in the verse; and antanaclosis, the repetition of a certain word or phrase, but with a different meaning each instance.

Sometimes Shakespeare adjusted words to fit the verse. For example, if you have the word *dangerous*, it can be adjusted to fit two syllables:

ANTONIO  
Go anticly, show outward hideousness,  
And speak off half a dozen dang'rous words

Other times, words can be stretched to fit an extra syllable, as in the following example, which stretches the word *betrothed* (normally two syllables,) to be spoken as *be-troth-ed*.

HERO  
So says the Prince and my new-betrothed  
Lord

The next quote is an instance where a word was truncated in order to fit the verse.

BENEDICK  
Is't possible? Sits the wind in that corner?

Here, "is" and "it" are written together with an apostrophe so as to clearly indicate that the words are to be pronounced in one syllable. Part of the actors' homework when preparing for a Shakespearean role is to dissect each line, picking out the words that should be

stressed, truncating and elongating words when necessary, and working out where to breathe between lines. Surprisingly, Shakespeare makes this quite easy in the iambic pentameter. He places the most important words on the accent. Words like "the," "is," and "and" are on the unaccented portions.

Actors can tell by scanning a line (called "scansion") which words are important and how fast to say them. When two characters are speaking, they will finish the ten syllables needed for a line. This is called a *shared line* or *split line*.

LEONATO  
Sweet Prince, why speak not you?

DON PEDRO  
What should I speak?

Shakespeare's language may seem foreign to us today, but it is an older version of our language. Shakespeare and his contemporaries looked upon language as flexible and constantly evolving. He changed and borrowed words from other languages and invented some himself. He used verbs in both their antiquated and modern forms. Glossaries are available defining the archaic words and any editions of Shakespeare's plays contain a glossary or footnotes. However, the *Oxford English Dictionary* includes many obsolete words and gives examples of usage and when it was first used in literature. Most college and university libraries have a copy of the OED and it is also available on CD-Rom. ❖

## Theatre Lore

Why are actors called thespians?

In the sixth century B.C., a Greek chorus performer named Thespis was the first person in history to step away from the chorus and speak by himself, exchanging dialogue with the group and impersonating a character instead of simply reciting a story as the chorus had done before then.

# Shakespeare's Words and Phrases

"Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

HAMLET, ACT III, SCENE III



## CLASSROOM CONNECTION

■ Shakespeare coined words for his plays that were directly and immediately needed to tell his stories. Consider how the words Shakespeare coined for *Much Ado About Nothing* connect to the themes of the play, and ask students to do the same.

■ Ask students to take two of the words coined in the play and describe how it interacts with one of its characters in order to theorize Shakespeare's need to coin those words. For example, how would the character Dogberry present the need to Shakespeare for creating the words "lie low" and to "negotiate"?

WHEN SHAKESPEARE WAS WRITING HIS PLAYS, modern English was in a constant state of change. The language was absorbing words from other cultures, due to war, diplomacy and colonization. Many of Shakespeare's contemporaries lacked the vocabulary to express their ideas. So, writers such as Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser or Sir Philip Sidney invented, borrowed or adopted words from other languages. This process is called neologizing. It is estimated that between the years 1500 and 1659, 30,000 new words were added to the English language. Calculating the number of words invented by Shakespeare is difficult, but overlooking variations on already existing words of the day and compounds, it is estimated that Shakespeare coined approximately 600 words deriving from Latin alone. Some experts set the total number of words contributed by Shakespeare to be 10,000. Many of the words we use in our common, everyday language were invented by Shakespeare.

Words that appeared in print for the first time in *Much Ado About Nothing*:

- as merry as the day is long
- comparisons are odorous
- to lie low
- employer
- to negotiate
- reclusive (first use as an adjective)
- unmitigated

BERNARD LEVIN sums up the impact of Shakespeare's phraseology in the following from *The Story of English*. Robert McCrum, William Cran and Robert MacNeil. Viking 1986:

If you cannot understand my argument and declare "It's Greek to me", you are quoting Shakespeare; if you claim to be more sinned against than sinning, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you recall your salad days, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you act more in sorrow than in anger, if your wish is father to the thought, if your lost property has vanished into thin air, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you have ever refused to budge an inch or suffered from green-eyed jealousy, if you have played fast and loose, if you have been tongue-tied, a tower of strength, hoodwinked or in a pickle, if you have knitted your brows, made a virtue of necessity, insisted on fair play, slept not one wink, stood on ceremony, danced attendance (on your lord and master), laughed yourself into stitches. Had short shrift, cold comfort or too much of a good thing, if you have seen better days or lived in a fool's paradise—why, be that as it may, the more fool of you, for it is a

foregone conclusion that you are (as good luck would have it) quoting Shakespeare; if you think it is early days and clear out bag and baggage, if you think it is high time and that that is the long and short of it, if you believe that the game is up and that truth will out even if it involves your own flesh and blood, if you lie low till the crack of doom because you suspect foul play, if you have your teeth set on edge (at one fell swoop) without rhyme or reason, then—to give the devil his due—if the truth were known (for surely you have a tongue in your head) you are quoting Shakespeare; even if you bid me good riddance and send me packing, if you wish I were dead as a door-nail, if you think I am an eyesore, a laughing stock, the devil incarnate, a stony hearted villain, the bloody-minded or a blinking idiot, then—by Jove! O Lord! Tut, Tut! For goodness sake! What the dickens! But me no buts—it is all one to me, for you are quoting Shakespeare.

Other Words Coined by Shakespeare:

Accessible	Clutch	Flawed	Lustrous	Savagery
Accommodation	Coldhearted	Fortuneteller	Madcap	Schoolboy
Accused	Colorful	Foulmouthed	Majestic	Scuffle
Addiction	Comply	Frugal	Metamorphize	Secure
(Shakespeare meant 'tendency')	Compromise	Full-grown	Mimic	Shipwrecked
Admirable	Courtship	Generous	Monumental	Skim milk
Advertising	Countless	Gloomy	Motionless	Submerge
Amazement	Critic	Gnarl	Negotiate	Torture
Assassination	Dauntless	Gossip	Obscene	Tranquil
Bandit	Dislocate	Gust	Overgrowth	Undress
Belongings	Distasteful	Hint	Pageantry	Unmitigated
Birthplace	Distrustful	Hobnob	Paternal	Unreal
Blanket	Downstairs	Hurried	Pious	Unrivalled
Barefaced	Dwindle	Impede	Premeditated	Upstairs
Blushing	Embrace	Impartial	Priceless	Useful
Bet	Engagement	Invulnerable	Puking	Useless
Cater	Epileptic	Jaded	Radiance	Worthless
Champion	Eventful	Label	Reliance	Zany
Circumstantial	Exposure	Lonely	Restoration	
	Fashionable	Love Letter	Retirement	
	Fixture	Luggage	Revolt	

## English Stereotypes of Italy and Italians

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A painting of Mezzetin, the amorous valet, suffering unrequited love. Oil on canvas by Jean-Antoine Watteau, 1717-19.

**ITALY AND ITALIANS** dominate so many of Shakespeare's plays that it's clear that Shakespeare, together with many English people in his day, loved Italy—or what they thought was Italy. Some scholars think that Italy represented everything that England was not: a warm, easygoing place, where discipline was lax and people ate, drank and were merry all day. Italy, then, was a stage where anything could happen.

More than a dozen of Shakespeare's 37 plays take place in Italy, including: *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Cymbeline*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Winter's Tale*. Many scholars believe that Shakespeare may have visited Italy in 1591, when the plague swept through London. The Black Death was so terrible that theatres were ordered closed to stop the spread of the disease. While some members of Shakespeare's acting company went to Italy, there is no firm evidence that Shakespeare himself ever did. These plays, however, are full of vivid detail and knowledge of Italian cities, names and customs, as if written by one who had spent a great deal of time there.

Much of what English people "knew" about Italy was based on exaggerated travelers' tales and stories. Many people from England traveled to Italy to see the ruins of ancient times and to enjoy warm weather and good food and wine. So even if Shakespeare never left his home country, Italian characters, culture and literature were a strong presence in the literature and drama of the day.

Within his theatre and in his works, Shakespeare makes great use of Italian architecture. He sets some of his plays in walled cities, within which characters assume different identities, or from which someone could be banished. Intimate scenes frequently take place in lush gardens that allow privacy. Marketplaces and large, open piazzas were natural gathering places where people could gather in a play to establish a mood, gossip about a character's reputation, or to discuss the latest events.

As in Shakespeare's England, Italian ports and cities attracted travelers from around the world, and many people—including Shakespeare himself—were drawn



Pantalone, one of the Commedia Dell'Arte characters, print by Maurice Sand, 1862.



A typical lover (Inamorata) in Commedia Dell'Arte, print by Maurice Sand, 1867.

to the great cities to seek their fortunes, a spouse, money or higher learning. During Shakespeare's time a style of Italian comedy called "commedia dell'arte," meaning "comedy of art" or "comedy of the profession," was very popular. The conflict in a commedia plot revolved around disguises, mistaken identities, and misunderstandings that are happily resolved in the end. Traveling groups of actors, or players, would perform in public places, and frequently add juggling, acrobatics, physical ("slapstick") humor and improvised actions—called "lazzis." The commedia plots almost always involved love and jealousy; difficulties between men and women; servants and masters; and overcoming obstacles to love and marriage, such as money, class or a father's opposition.

Commedia included stock characters that were easily recognizable. There was usually a miserly merchant (Pantalone); an old man or woman (La Ruffinana) who blocks the love of a young couple; Il Dottore (the doctor), a pompous caricature of an educated man; the two young people themselves (the Inamorato and Inamorata); a mischievous servant (Arlecchino) who often had to

masquerade as his master; and a man who would do anything for money (Brighella). Masks, disguises and elaborate costumes were common. The characters were beloved by, and familiar to, Shakespeare's audiences.

In addition to a fascination with Italy, there was another good reason for Shakespeare to set his plays abroad. Censorship was strong in England during his lifetime, and theatres whose works offended the queen could be shut down. It was safer to set the stories in Italy—a symbol to the English of corruption and lost ancient glory. Audiences could both admire Italy's classical foundations, its economic energy and cultural richness, and also hold the people in contempt for their hypocritical behaviors. By setting his plays abroad, Shakespeare could write more freely about what he thought of class differences, hypocrisy, religion and politics in his own country since his barbs were not directly aimed at his country or queen. By setting his plays in a very different country, Shakespeare gives his audience distance, both literally and figuratively, to reflect on its own society's ills. ❖

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# Notes on Noting and Nothing

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*MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING* contains numerous references and plays on the words “nothing”, “noting”, “notes”. These can all be understood by absorbing this key fact: In Shakespeare’s time, the words “nothing” and “noting” were homophones. (Words that sounded alike, but had different meanings and sometimes spellings.)

Taken literally, the title *Much Ado About Nothing* implies that a great fuss (“much ado”) is made of something which is insignificant (“nothing”), such as the unfounded claims of Hero’s infidelity. However, the title could also be understood as “Much Ado about Noting.” Indeed, much of the action of the play revolves around interest in and critique of others, written messages, spying, and eavesdropping. This is a theme used throughout the play, and is mentioned multiple times, particularly in reference to immediate outward impressions—or how people are *noted* by others..

Additionally, nothing is a double-entendre; an “O-thing” (also a “nothing,” or “no thing”) was Elizabethan slang for a woman’s genitalia--ostensibly derived from the idea that women had nothing between their legs. This double-entendre makes a well-known appearance in *Hamlet*, wherein the title character lies on Ophelia’s lap as they prepare to watch the play he has prepared. Hamlet’s physical position in relation to Ophelia’s “no thing” add to the racy joke he makes:

**Ophelia:** I think nothing, my lord.  
**Hamlet:** That’s a fair thought to lie between maids’ legs.  
**Ophelia:** What is, my lord?  
**Hamlet:** Nothing.

Finally, “noting” can refer to singing, especially sight-reading. In *Much Ado*, examples of “noting” which mean “noticing” occur in the following instances: (1.1.131-132

**Claudio:** Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signor Leonato?  
**Benedick:** I noted her not, but I looked on her.

and (4.1.154-157).

**Friar:** Hear me a little,  
For I have only been silent so long  
And given way unto this course of  
fortune  
By noting of the lady.

At (3.3.102-104), Borachio indicates that a man’s clothing doesn’t indicate his character:

**Borachio:** Thou knowest that the  
fashion of a doublet,  
or a hat, or a cloak is nothing to a man.

A triple play on words in which noting signifies noticing, musical notes, and nothing occurs at (2.3.47-52):

**Don Pedro:**  
Nay pray thee, come;  
Or if thou wilt hold longer argument,  
Do it in notes.

**Balthasar:**  
Note this before my notes:  
There’s not a note of mine that’s worth  
the noting.

**Don Pedro:**  
Why, these are very crotchets that he  
speaks —  
Note notes, forsooth, and nothing!

Don Pedro’s last line can be understood to mean, “Pay attention to your music and nothing else!” The complex layers of meaning include a pun on “crotchets,” which can mean both “quarter notes” (in music) and whimsical notions.

Sources used: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Much\\_Ado\\_About\\_Nothing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Much_Ado_About_Nothing)

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## CLASSROOM CONNECTION

■ Ask students to listen to or read *Much Ado* and notice how Shakespeare uses the words “nothing”, “noting”, “notes” and “no thing”. Highlight or circle and verbally discuss the frequent use of double meaning with regards to these in the play.

## Directing *Much Ado About Nothing* at A Noise Within

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Michael Murray is a Director who has worked with A Noise Within on *Ghosts*, *The Night of the Iguana*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Touch of the Poet*, and *Arms and the Man*. Mr. Murray was also Producing Director of the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park for nine years where he directed more than 25 productions. He was previously the co founder (with Olympia Dukakis and others) and Artistic Director of the pioneering Charles Playhouse in Boston, a company that included at various times Al Pacino, Jane Alexander, Jill Clayburgh, Linda Lavin, John Seitz, Ned Beatty among many others. Mr. Murray has directed at numerous regional and New York theaters including the Hartford Stage Company, Center Stage in Baltimore, the Philadelphia Drama Guild, the Huntington Theater Company in Boston and the Alaska Repertory Theater. Recently he was Blanche, Barbara and Irving Laurie Professor of Theater Arts and Director of the Professional Theater Training Program at Brandeis University. Mr. Murray received his BA from Catholic University, and an MFA from Boston University.

AS A WRITER, Shakespeare never minded mixing comedy into his tragedies (think of the Porter in *Macbeth*,) and tragedy into his comedies. *Much Ado About Nothing* is considered one of his most sparkling comedies, but the story hinges on a shocking incident that disrupts the sunny surface of the play, turning father against daughter and friend against friend. What has been a scintillating and hilarious battle of wits between Beatrice and Benedict suddenly darkens, and all the relationships in the play become tense and fearful. And then, within a few scenes, the friction is resolved and the play ends in a joyous celebration. This is the miracle of Shakespeare as a writer. He takes us on the rich and suspenseful journey through all the dramas of life.

I think the play is mostly about men and women, and how much trouble they have in getting together. Beatrice is a proud and intelligent woman who is afraid of losing her independence and being diminished by marriage. Benedict doesn't know how to give up the carefree, joking life of a soldier that makes him comfortable, even though he's really in love with Beatrice. Claudio sees the beautiful Hero as a kind of dream woman who he's deliriously "in love" with—but he doesn't really know her at all, and so he ditches her as soon as somebody says a bad thing about her. Don Pedro, the professional soldier, cannot commit to any relationship, so he meddles in everybody else's relationships. And so on. For almost everyone, love can be an excruciating, but often very funny, negotiation.

Shakespeare sets the play in Sicily, and our production will follow that, but we are updating the time to the early years of the 20th century. This was a time when—just to complicate the situation even more for our lovers—a code of honor, the family, and the church were most important, and when strict rules governed behavior during courtship. The language in the play is Shakespeare at his wittiest, setting the style for dramatists to come—the Restoration wits, Oscar Wilde, Shaw, Noel Coward—with a dash of Monty Python in the screwball antics of the constable Dogberry and his ragtag, bumbling police force. ❖

—MICHAEL MURRAY, DIRECTOR

## English Language Arts: The Most Vigilant Lawman Ever



Costume Design by Soojin Lee.

**DOGBERRY AND HIS COMPANIONS** provide gregarious humor in *Much Ado About Nothing*. By turning the watch into bumbling fools, Shakespeare pokes fun at the law. The goal of this lesson is to help students interpret Dogberry's haphazard speeches. The students should be able to identify his malapropisms and fix them. They should find the humor in the language of the scenes and devise actions to support the humor through performance.

### Scenes:

*Much Ado About Nothing* 3.3, 3.5, 4.2, 5.1

### What To Do

1. Read Act 3, scene 3 aloud. Each student in the class should read one line at a time until the scene is finished. Ask the class what they understood and what they didn't understand about the scene. Don't get flustered if they say, "It doesn't make sense." This reaction is a good lead-in to the activity.
2. Explain the concept of a "malapropism" (the ludicrous misuse of words, especially through confusion caused by resemblance in sound). You may wish to introduce *The Rivals* by Sheridan, and the character of Mrs. Malaprop. Although this play was written much later than *Much Ado About Nothing*, Mrs. Malaprop became so famous for misusing big words that her name became the root word for this kind of verbal confusion. An example of an elementary-age appropriate book with a similar character would be any belonging to the *Amelia Bedelia* series.
3. Read the scene aloud again and have students stop every time they find a malapropism. Write each word on the board, and have students guess at the correct word. Then have the students come up with a short definition of the correct word. Continue identifying the malapropisms.

Dogberry's Word	Correct Word	Definition
Desartless	Deserving	Worthy of the position
Senseless	Sensible	Logical choice
Comprehend	Apprehend	Take into custody

# malapropism

4. Assign students in pairs to work on 3.5, 4.2, or 5.1 to identify all of Dogberry's malapropisms. They may work on this assignment in class or complete it as homework.

5. Dogberry not only uses malapropisms; he uses entire phrases incorrectly. Ask the class to identify these phrases and find an action that illustrates them. Assign students into groups of three to five, and choose a few lines for each group to perform for the class. For example, scene 5.1 lines 217-233 is a wonderful passage for this activity: "Marry, sir, they have committed false report, moreover they have spoken untruths, secondarily, they are slanders, sixth and lastly, they have belied a lady, thirdly they have verified unjust things, and to conclude, they are lying knaves" (5.1.225-229). Students should come up with the actions to fit key words or phrases, and then perform the passage to emphasize the ridiculousness of the situation.

**Follow Up:**

Ask students to turn in their lists of malapropisms. Assign points for acting out the scenes. Then hold a class discussion to analyze each performance. What did the actors do to illustrate Dogberry's incompetence? Were the scenes funny? Why or why not? ❖

## Theatre Lore

Why is it bad luck to say "Macbeth" inside the theatre?

There are many origins for this superstition. Old actors believe the witches' song in *Macbeth* to possess the uncanny power of casting evil spells. The reasons for this fear usually bring tales of accidents and ill-fortunes that have plagued productions of the play throughout the world. An alternative is that the superstition began in the days of stock companies, which would struggle to remain in business. Frequently, near the end of a season, a company would realize it was not going to break even, and, in an attempt to boost ticket sales, would announce the production of a crowd favorite: *Macbeth*. If times were particularly bad, the play would frequently be a portent of the company's demise.

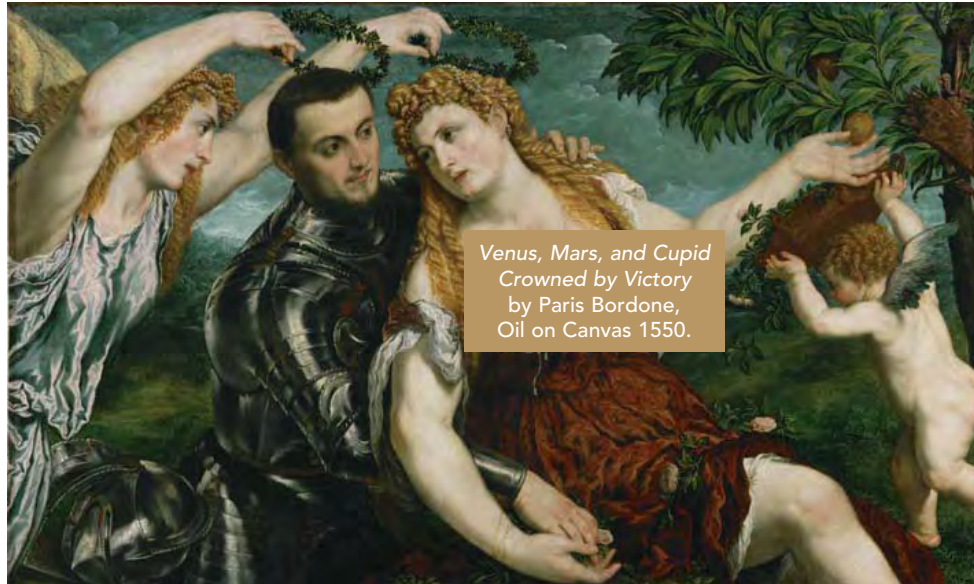
This lesson plan was adapted from the one created by Janell Bemis of J.F. Kennedy Jr. High School in West Valley City, Utah. The original lesson is featured on the Folger Shakespeare Library Website at: <http://www.folger.edu/eduLesPlanDtl.cfm?pid=588> Copyright Folger Shakespeare Library Education Department 1999.

**CA English Language Arts Standards, Grades 9 &10:** Vocabulary and Concept Development 1.1, 1.2, Literary Response and Analysis 3.3, 3.4, 3.7, 3.8, 3.10, Literary Criticism 3.11.

**NCTE Standards Addressed:** 1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works. 3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics). 6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

## Visual Arts: Venetian Renaissance

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**THE DESIGN** for *Much Ado About Nothing* draws upon the work of Italian Renaissance painter Paris Bordone. A student of pre-eminent Venetian artist Titian, Bordone is best known for his sensual paintings with mythological subject matter. Set designer Kurt Boetcher's stage environment provides a playful, fluid playing space for the characters to enact their many intrigues:

*"I was very much inspired by a painting from the 1550s by Italian painter Paris Bordone entitled 'Venus, Mars and Cupid crowned by Victory'. Even though our production of Much Ado is set in turn of the century Sicily, we felt that this image perfectly conveys the mood of the merry war between Beatrice and Benedick in the play. We modernized the play world by adding electric light fixtures, like a large chandelier, and some wall sconces. A green marble floor treatment work for both interior and exterior scenes, and is reminiscent of both the grand palazzos in Venice as well as a vast carpet of green grass.*

*The Director, Michael Murray, and I wanted to keep the scenic elements very simple and suggest changes in locale by moving chairs, small decorative benches and a set of potted topiary trees around the space. We also had to make sure we had enough hiding places for Beatrice and Benedick. They have to be able to hide (while still in view of the audience,) and overhear the other characters talking about them. We chose a passionate yet soothing color palette for the set, and retained a somewhat abstracted theme throughout to modernize the Renaissance elements."*

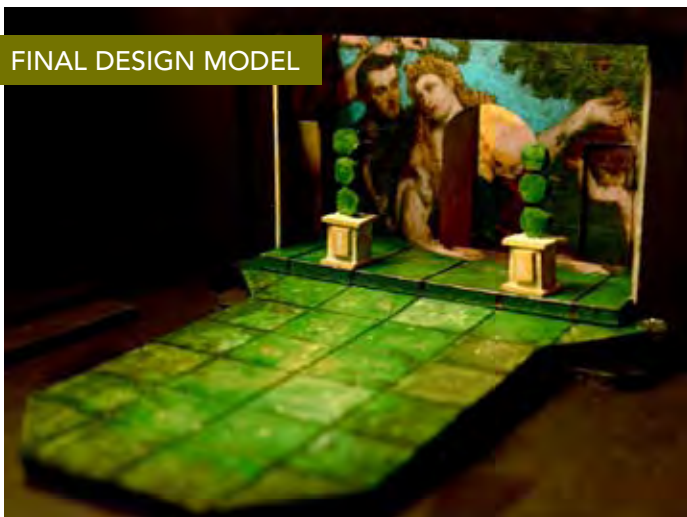
## EARLY ABSTRACT CONCEPT DESIGN



For this concept design, designer Kurt Boetcher used the inspiration piece by Paris Bordone as a jumping-off point. According to Boetcher, "Abstracting the main feature of Venus' eye, I let all of the other elements of the piece become subordinate to her all-knowing gaze." The mythological story of Venus ties into the play's central love theme, and it almost seems as if Venus will watch over the entire action of the play in this design.

When set designers create an early concept piece such as this, it helps shape the ongoing creative process. Although the finalized set design looks very different than this piece, it informed the designer and director in the process, as they began to create an environment that fully realized their vision.

## FINAL DESIGN MODEL



Set design model for *Much Ado About Nothing* by Kurt Boetcher.

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

**1. Show examples of art** from the European Renaissance, featuring Venetian painters such as Paris Bordone and Titian. Ask students to identify and describe key trends reflected in their works that mark them as Renaissance style paintings. (Mythic or poetic subject matter, use of natural or pastoral elements, rounded shapes in floral forms and human figures, depiction of variations in fabric texture, vivid use of color, etc.)

**2. Sculptural model:** Using air-dry or kiln-fired clay, ask students to model a piece of furniture to add to our set for *Much Ado About Nothing*. Students may model a stone bench, chandelier or wall sconce, large table, or throne. Use designs of the set from this study guide and photographs of ancient Sicily and other Italian locations as sources of visual inspiration. When complete, ask students to explain the nature of the piece—where it belongs on stage, and why it either reinforces or acts in opposition to one of the central themes of the play. For example, if an angular chair is modeled, ask students to verbally describe or write how it contrasts with the soft, romantic country feeling of the environment. Using the concepts of dominance and subordination, ask students if how their piece might reflect a particular character's presence in the room. or example, Don John might use the angular chair which would dominate the romantic set for *Much Ado*, which would become subordinate to the piece of furniture. This would reinforce his overpowering, contradictory presence. ❖

# Music: Italian Folk Dance

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La Tarantella, Léon Bazille Perrault

## FOLK MUSIC

The textbook definition of folk music can be cited as, "The traditional and typically anonymous music that is the expression of the life of people in a community."

A NOISE WITHIN'S production of *Much Ado About Nothing* uses folk dance music from the late 19th and early 20th centuries with origins in Italy to underscore the playful nature of the plot. The upbeat 6/8 dance tempo used for the Pizzica lends a playful party atmosphere to the dance scenes in *Much Ado*. The country Pizzica dance is closely related to the more well-known Tarantella—and each has its roots in Italy.

The Tarantella is defined as "a very quick Neapolitan dance in 6/8 time for one couple." Often danced by couples of the same gender, the Tarantella has an etymology related to folklore, as well. According to *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, the name "Tarantella" is "...said to have been based on the gyrations carried out by those whom the tarantula had bitten." It may be that physicians back when the Tarantella originated thought that dancing provided a form of antivenom for the bite of the spider.

In 1938, the word "tarantism" came into use, which was related to "Tarantella" and is defined as "a hysterical malady, characterized by an extreme impulse to dance." The city of Taranto—whose name is unmistakably related to the Tarantella dance—is located on the southeastern side of Italy—underneath the heel section of the boot shape of the country. (For more fun with word etymology, check out this website that features podcasts describing word etymology: <http://podictionary.com/?p=2011>.)

Examples of Italian folk dance in theatre are prevalent, and are often used to immediately signify to the audience three clues about a particular scene: 1. Setting (usually pastoral, or countryside,) 2. Status (usually middle class characters dance these folk dances, or nobility if they are "slumming it",) and 3. Mood (usually jovial, festive, and often romantic.)

A Noise Within's sound designer Benjamine Kamine has worked with Director Michael Murray to weave the use of the Pizzica through the play—using portions for the wedding celebrations and masquerade ball. In addition, he has selected Italian brass band music for the incidental music—for non-dance sequences—which was a common element at wedding parties at the turn of the century. Military associations that the audience may have when hearing brass instruments are intentional, as Don Pedro, Benedick, Claudio, and their compatriots are indeed military men who have just returned from war.

### SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

**1. Folk Dance Exploration:** Bring in examples of folk dance music from several cultures, and play representative samples for the class. Without labeling each culture that produced the music initially, try to determine if students can identify particular elements of the pieces that make them “sound” as if they represent a particular culture. These elements could include instrumentation, melodic structure, tempo, etc. Ask students to identify elements of form—such as repeated verses, or rhyming structure of the songs, and imagine how the dance might correlate to the musical structure.

**2. Connections:** Ask students to bring aural samples of music that they feel is a representation of traditional or “folk” music from their own family, neighborhood, or regional culture. Play these samples for the rest of the class. Ask students to share how their families, friends, and neighbors use and respond to the music. After playing samples, work with students as a group to try to come up with a definition of the term “folk music”. Using the definition provided in this guide, ask students if they agree with it, and if there is anything missing. For example, how is folk music most often passed from person to person, or from generation to generation? Should that be a part of the definition?



Woody Guthrie

Finally, Share pieces of biography from well-known folk music composers and performers, such as Pete Seeger, Bessie Smith, Burl Ives, Woody Guthrie, or Robert Johnson. Be sure to include performers of Mexican folk music such as Son Jarocho and modern performers of the genre including Los Lobos or Ritchie Valens. ❖

# Just for Fun: Reproducible Quiz

## Which Shakespearean Villain Are You?

Written by Amanda Fink and Veronica Wickline

**You have to do something that you have qualms about. You:**

- A. Get my boyfriend/girlfriend to do it for me
- B. Ask a friend to do it for me
- C. Get it over with
- D. Do it if my parents insist
- E. Pay someone to do it for me
- F. By asking this question, you assume I have a moral code. Hehehe...bad move, kid, bad move.

**After you do something most people would consider wrong, you:**

- A. Experience a guilt trip to the point of insanity.
- B. Feel guilty once someone finds out that I did it.
- C. If nobody knows, who's to tell? (And I make sure to leave no witnesses.)
- D. Only feel sorry when it's too late to do anything about it.
- E. Nothing is wrong if it moves me higher up.
- F. Bask in the glory of my evil. Mwahaha!

**How important to you are your friends and family?**

- A. Very. Nothing matters more to me.
- B. Enough that I enjoy making their lives... "interesting".
- C. I either want to kill them or marry them, depending on the person.
- D. I respect one member of my family in particular above all others
- E. "I do love thee so, that I will soon send thy soul to Heaven."
- F. I don't have or need either.

**You've been caught! Who do you frame?**

- A. The witches told me to!
- B. My brother.
- C. Whoever is accusing me and my posse.
- D. Me? You're accusing sweet, innocent, blameless little me???
- E. I take the blame because it was so worth it. Plus, no one else is cool enough to pull off the stuff I do.
- F. I don't need to frame anyone, because I don't care!

**If you had a dog:**

- A. I'd name him Spot.
- B. Maybe a dog would fix all of my problems.
- C. I'd sick 'em on the family members that bug me.
- D. I'd teach him how to take down the mailman.
- E. I am one. Why do I need another?
- F. Use him as a pawn in my master plan.

**Usually, when you do something kinda sketchy, it's because:**

- A. I just want my loved ones to make it to the top.
- B. The world was getting to be too perfect.
- C. ...of a girl (or boy).
- D. I want what's owed to me.
- E. I want to be King/Queen.
- F. It's fun to watch people squirm.

**Which of the following would you most likely say:**

- A. *"Put this night's business into my dispatch, which shall to all...give solely sovereign sway and masterdom."* (Or: "I'll do all the dirty work so you can make it big.")
- B. *"I cannot hide what I am: I must be sad when I have cause and smile at no man's jests."* (Or: "I am what I am, and I can't pretend to be nice if I don't feel like it!")
- C. *"O! my offence is rank, it smells to heaven."* (Or: "Wow, I really screwed up.")
- D. *"The wheel is come full circle: I am here."* (Or: "Stupid karma...")
- E. *"And therefore,—since I cannot prove a lover, To entertain these fair well-spoken days,— I am determined to prove a villain."* (Or: "Mwahaha!!! Cue evil music.")
- F. *"I am not what I am"* (Or: "I am full of mystery and therefore the most interesting person you will ever meet.")

### Student Focus

VERONICA WICKLINE is a 10th grader at Polytechnic High School in Pasadena, California. Avidly enjoying all things Shakespeare, she contributed questions and answers to this quiz in conjunction with the A Noise Within Education Department. Veronica enjoys a wide range of activities, such as competitive Latin trivia, Lincoln Douglas debate, and (of course) acting. Veronica participated in Summer With Shakespeare and conservatory acting classes at A Noise Within for many years. She also wrote this bio.

## Theatre Lore

What is a raked stage?

Where do the terms upstage and downstage originate?

Historically, stages were built on inclines, with the backs of the stages slightly higher than the fronts. The incline was called a rake and helped those in the back of the audience see the action onstage. Eventually, theatres started placing seats on inclines instead of stages, but the terminology stuck. Downstage is the front of the stage, closest to the audience, and upstage is the back of the stage. Some theatres, like *A Noise Within*, still participate in the tradition of using raked stages.

What is a ghost light?

There is a superstition that if an emptied theater is ever left completely dark, a ghost will take up residence. In other versions of the same superstition the ghosts of past performances return to the stage to live out their glory moments. To prevent this, a single light called a ghost light is left burning at center stage after the audience and all of the actors and musicians have gone.

Now, those in the world of theatre know that a “dark” theatre is one without a play. There is nothing sadder to a dramatic artist than an empty house and a playless stage. Therefore, a light is left burning center stage so that the theatre is never “dark;” it is simply awaiting the next production.

### SCORING:

Add up the number of times you answered “A”, “B”, “C”, “D”, “E”, and “F”. Then, read the description below to see which Shakespeare villain you are most like!

#### **Mostly As: Lady Macbeth from *Macbeth***

You are devious and manipulative, but most of your plans are to help your friends and family improve their position in the world. Wily and cunning, you can be heartless in this quest. Even your poor dog is dismissed with an evil, “Out, out damned Spot!” Our advice to you is to try to appreciate your life a bit more—life is pretty good just where you are.

#### **Mostly Bs: Don John from *Much Ado About Nothing***

You seem to harbor feelings of resentment towards just one or two select friends or family. You would much rather have your friends take care of the “messy business,” and seek to avoid it yourself, creating elaborate schemes and deceptions to get what you want. Our advice to you is to take a bit more responsibility your ownself, and live much more truthfully and simply.

#### **Mostly Cs: Claudius from *Hamlet***

Having the habit of denying your own feelings for a long time, you are prone to launch into overblown schemes to get back at someone that you feel has wronged you. Although you are essentially kind and good, love can cause you to have such strong feelings that you have to resist the urge to do something unsavory. Our advice to you is to remember that there are always more fish in the sea.

#### **Mostly Ds: Edmund from *King Lear***

Feigning innocence, you are determined that everyone should like you no matter what. However, you have a wild streak, and if you’re not careful you could end up creating some serious turmoil! Our advice to you is to deal straight and tell it like it is. Keep things on the up-and-up, and smell the roses.

#### **Mostly Es: Richard III from *Richard III***

You will do anything you can in order to claw your way to the top, including stepping on friends and family. After being caught in a string of mistakes, you do eventually feel badly about something you’ve done that isn’t so nice—but by that time it’s too late! Our advice to you is to turn over a new leaf entirely and cultivate the love, buddy.

#### **Mostly Fs: Iago from *Othello***

Super intelligent and supremely manipulative, you will do anything to get what you want if you give in to the urge. You seem most interested in proving that you are right and justifying what you do—and can lapse into being oblivious of others’ feelings. Our advice is to, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

# Resource Guide

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## BOOKS ON SHAKESPEARE

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- Asimov, Isaac. *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare*. Doubleday, 1978.
- Cahn, Victor L. *The Plays of Shakespeare: A Thematic Guide*. Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Epstein, Norrie. *The Friendly Shakespeare*. Penguin Books, 1993.
- Fallon, Robert Thomas. *A Theatregoer's Guide to Shakespeare*. Ivan M. Dee, 2001.
- Gibson, Janet and Rex Gibson. *Discovering Shakespeare's Language*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World*. W.W. Norton, 2004.
- Holmes, Martin. *Shakespeare and His Players*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972.
- Kermode, Frank. *Shakespeare's Language*. Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 2000.
- Linklater, Kristin. *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*. Theatre Communications Group, 1992.
- Pritchard, R. E. *Shakespeare's England*. Sutton Publishing Limited, 1999.
- Papp, Joseph and Elizabeth Kirkland. *Shakespeare Alive*. Bantam Books, 1988.
- Schumacher, Allison Wedell. *Shaking Hands With Shakespeare*. Simon & Schuster, 2004.

## BOOKS ON TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

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- Gibson, Rex. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Reynolds, P. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Rosenblum, Joseph. *A Reader's Guide to Shakespeare*. Salem Press, Inc., 1998.
- Toropov, Brandon. *Shakespeare for Beginners*. Writers and Readers Publishing Inc., 1997.

## WEBSITES

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- The Folger Library: [www.folger.edu](http://www.folger.edu)
- The Commedia Dell'Arte: [www.theatrehistory.com/italian/commedia\\_dell\\_arte\\_001.html](http://www.theatrehistory.com/italian/commedia_dell_arte_001.html)
- Judith Chaffee's Commedia Web Site: <http://www.commedia-dell-arte.com>
- Play Shakespeare: The Ultimate Free Shakespeare Resource: <http://www.playshakespeare.com>
- Ellis Island: [www.ellisland.org](http://www.ellisland.org)
- Etymology blog: <http://podictionary.com/?p=2011>

## VIDEOS

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- *Much Ado About Nothing* - directed by Kenneth Branagh, 1993. Starring Emma Thompson, Kenneth Branagh, Denzel Washington, Michael Keaton, and others.
- *Much Ado About Nothing* - directed by Joseph Papp, 1973. Starring Sam Waterston, Kathleen Widdoes, and Barnard Hughes.



## Being an Audience Member

Today, movies and television take audiences away from what was once the number one form of amusement: going to the theatre. But attending a live theatrical performance is still one of the most thrilling and active forms of entertainment. In a theatre, observers are catapulted into the action, especially at an intimate venue like *A Noise Within*, whose thrust stage reaches out into the audience and whose actors can see, hear, and feel the response of the crowd. Although playhouses in the past could sometimes be rowdy, participating in the performance by giving respect and attention to the actors is the most appropriate behavior at a theatrical performance today. Shouting out (or even whispering) can be heard throughout the auditorium, as can rustling paper or ringing phones.

After *A Noise Within*'s performance of *Much Ado About Nothing*, you will have the opportunity to discuss the play's content and style with the performing artists and directors. You may wish to remind students to observe the performance carefully or to compile questions ahead of time so they are prepared to participate in the discussion.

## Theatre Vocabulary

These terms will be included in pre- and post-performance discussions at *A Noise Within*.

**blocking:** The instructions a director gives his actors that tell them how and where to move in relation to each other or to the set in a particular scene.

**character:** The personality or part portrayed by an actor on stage.

**conflict:** The opposition of people or forces which causes the play's rising action.

**dramatic irony:** A dramatic technique used by a writer in which a character is unaware of something the audience knows.

**genre:** Literally, "kind" or "type." In literary terms, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally comedy and tragedy. It can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy such as the comedy of manners, farce or social drama.

**motivation:** The situation or mood which initiates an action. Actors often look for their "motivation" when they try to dissect how a character thinks or acts.

**props:** Items carried on stage by an actor to represent objects mentioned in or implied by the script. Sometimes the props are actual, sometimes they are manufactured in the theatre shop.

**proscenium stage:** There is usually a front curtain on a proscenium stage. The audience views the play from the front through a "frame" called the proscenium arch. In this scenario, all audience members have the same view of the actors.

**set:** The physical world created on stage in which the action of the play takes place.

**setting:** The environment in which a play takes place. It may include the historical period as well as the physical space.

**stage areas:** The stage is divided into areas to help the director to note where action will take place.

**Upstage** is the area furthest from the audience. **Downstage** is the area closest to the audience. **Center stage** defines the middle of the playing space. **Stage left** is the actor's left as he faces the audience. **Stage right** is the actor's right as he faces the audience.

**theme:** The overarching message or main idea of a literary or dramatic work. A recurring idea in a play or story.

**thrust stage:** A stage that juts out into the audience seating area so that patrons are seated on three sides. In this scenario, audience members see the play from varying viewpoints. *A Noise Within* features a thrust stage.

## About A Noise Within

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**A NOISE WITHIN'S MISSION** is to produce the great works of world drama in rotating repertory, with a company of professional, classically-trained actors. *A Noise Within* educates the public through comprehensive outreach efforts and conservatory training programs that foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of history's greatest plays and playwrights.

As the only company in southern California working in the repertory tradition (rotating productions using a resident ensemble of professional, trained artists), *A Noise Within* is dedicated solely to producing classical literature from authors such as Shakespeare, Molière, Ibsen, Shaw, and Euripides.

The company was formed in 1991 by founders Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott, both of whom were classically trained at the acclaimed American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco. They envisioned *A Noise Within* after recognizing a lack of professional, classical productions and education in Southern California and sought out and assembled their own company of actors to meet the need. All of *A Noise Within's* resident artists have been classically

trained, and many hold Master of Fine Arts degrees from some of the nation's most respected institutions, such as Juilliard, Yale, and the American Conservatory Theatre.

In its 17-year history, *A Noise Within* has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle's revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

In 2004, *A Noise Within* accepted an invitation to collaborate with the Los Angeles Philharmonic for a tandem performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Hollywood Bowl.

More than 25,000 individuals attend productions at *A Noise Within* annually, and the company draws over 10,000 student participants to its education programs every year. Students benefit from in-school workshops, conservatory training, and an internship program, as well as subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, discussions with artists, and state standards-compliant study guides.

### Study Guides

*A Noise Within* creates California standards-compliant study guides to help educators prepare their students for their visit to our theatre. Study guides are available at no extra cost to download through our website: [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org). All of the information and activities outlined in these guides are designed to work in compliance with Visual and Performing Arts, English Language, and other subject standards as set forth by the state of California.

Study guides include background information on the plays and playwrights, historical context, textual analysis, in-depth discussion of *A Noise Within's* artistic interpretation of the work, interviews with directors and designers, as well as discussion points and suggested classroom activities. Guides from past seasons are also available to download from the website.



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### Study Guide Credits

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