

William Shakespeare's

Much Ado About Nothing

The Life of William Shakespeare



Comedy vs. Tragedy

- In a comedy, no one actually dies in the end, but in all of Shakespeare's plays he incorporates humor and depth of feeling.
- Death is a theme of this play, but the play has a happy ending so it qualifies as the genre of (Romantic) Comedy.
- This play was written in the later part of Shakespeare's life—circa 1600.

Power Players

- Leonato—the story is set at his home. He is a noble and the governor of the town of Messina, second in power only to Don Pedro. He has one daughter, Hero, and a niece, Beatrice.
- Don Pedro—most powerful man in the play, a nobleman from Aragon. Soldiers have been fighting under his command.

The Fair Maidens

- Hero—beautiful and gentle daughter of Leonata. She falls in love with Claudio, a soldier.
- Beatrice—cousin to Hero, her wit and strength makes her an equal in a patriarchal society. She plans never to marry, but remains a pleasant and kind woman.. She exchanges disparaging remarks with Benedict.

The Dashing Young Men

- Benedict—like Beatrice he is an aristocrat, witty and vows never to marry. He has just been fighting under the direction of Don Pedro.
- Claudio—Another soldier under Don Pedro, who returning from battle falls in love with Hero.

The Villians

- Don Jon—the illegitimate brother of Don Pedro, sometimes referred to as the “The Bastard,” who creates havoc due to his jealousy of his brother’s power.
- Borachio—A friend to Don Jon and a lover to one of Hero’s waiting women.
- Conrad—A devoted friend to Don Jon.

The Help

- Margaret—a “waiting woman” for Hero; she is having an affair with Borachio.
- Ursula—a servant or “waiting woman” for Hero

The Cops

- Dogberry—head of the cops—is very middle class; he tries to speak eloquently like the nobles, but he mixes up his words in humorous ways.
- Verges—deputy or side-kick to Dogberry

Shakespeare's plays remain timeless...

- *Romeo & Juliet* becomes *West Side Story* and *A High School Musical*
- *Taming of the Shrew* becomes *Ten Things I Hate About You*
- *A Mid Summer's Night Dream* becomes *Get Over It*
- *Hamlet* becomes *The Lion King*
- *King Lear* becomes *A Thousand Acres*
- *Othello* becomes *O* (Julia Stiles & Mehki Phifer)
- Other plays have retained the Shakespearian language but have been updated to new settings: *Romeo & Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

