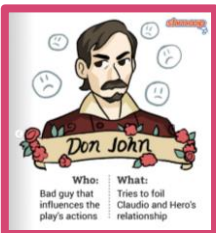
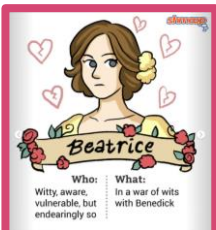


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Main Characters

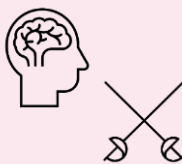


Key Themes



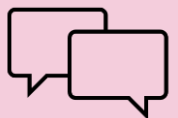
Love and Masquerade

- Love in the play is always involved with tricks, games and disguises: every romance takes place through some form of deception.
- Every step in romance takes place by way of masquerade. **Hero** is won for **Claudio** by Don **Pedro** in disguise. **Benedick** and **Beatrice** are brought together through an elaborate prank. Claudio can be reconciled with Hero only after her faked death. Altogether, these things suggest that love—like a play or masquerade—is a game based on appearances, poses and the manipulation of situations.



Wit and Warfare

- Much Ado constantly compares the social world (relationships/ banter etc) with warfare.
- War of wit and love are compared to real wars in a metaphor that extends through every part of the play. The rivalry of **Benedick** and **Beatrice** is called a “merry war,” and the language they use with and about each other is almost always military.
- Like generals, the characters execute careful strategies and tricks.



Language and Communication

- *Much Ado* dwells on the way that language and communication affect the way we see the world.
- Tricks of language alone repeatedly change the entire situation of the play. Overheard conversations cause **Benedick** and **Beatrice** to fall in love, and the sonnets they have written one another stop them from separating once the prank behind their romance has been revealed.



Marriage and Freedom

- In *Much Ado*, romantic experiences are always connected to issues of freedom and shame. If dignity comes from having a strong and free will, then love, desire and marriage are a threat to it.
- This is the position taken by most of the characters. **Benedick**, for example, compares the married man to a tame, humiliated animal. The events of the play confirm this position on love and dignity taken by most of the characters

Act 1

- Soldiers arrive at Leonato's house after fighting in a war.
- Claudio falls in love with Hero and plans to marry her.
- Benedick and Beatrice argue and swear off marriage forever.
- Don John plans to make trouble for Claudio.

Act 2

- At a masked ball Don Pedro convinces Hero to marry Claudio.
- Group decide to trick Benedick and Beatrice into falling in love.
- Don John plans to make Claudio think Hero is unfaithful.
- Don Pedro and Claudio trick Benedick into thinking Beatrice loves him.

Act 3

- Hero tricks Beatrice into thinking Benedick loves her.
- Don John tell Claudio he can prove that Hero is unfaithful.
- Hero Prepares for her wedding and mocks Beatrice's attitude to love.
- Leonato and Dogberry discuss interrogating criminals.

Act 4

- Claudio accuses Hero of being unfaithful.
- Beatrice, Benedick and the priest argue she is innocent.
- Beatrice convinces Benedick to challenge Claudio to a duel.
- The guards interrogate men who helped Don John.

Act 5

- Leonato and Benedick challenge Claudio to a duel.
- Borachio reveals his role in tricking Claudio.
- Leonato tells Claudio he must be punished for his behaviour
- At the wedding Hero reveals herself, Benedick and Beatrice reveal their love for each other.
- Don John is arrested.

Much Ado About Nothing- Knowledge Organiser

Term	Definition	Term	Definition
Prose	Form of language that is like natural speech.	Mirror characters	Mirror characters tend to share several qualities and are used to complement and highlight each other's traits.
Verse	Form of language that is with metre and rhyme.	Malapropism	The mistaken use of a word in place of a similar-sounding one, often with an amusing effect.
Rhyming couplets	A rhyming pair of lines in verse.	Dramatic irony	When the audience knows something that the characters don't.
Antithesis	A person or thing that is the direct opposite of someone or something else.	Virtuous	Having or showing high moral standards
Thee, thine, thou	A more familiar and informal way of saying "you".	Pernicious	Harmful or dangerous
You	A more formal term used for addressing strangers/ politeness.	Malice	The desire to harm someone.
Shakespearean	Something characteristic of William Shakespeare or his works.	Deceit	The action or practice of deceiving someone by concealing or misrepresenting the truth.
Elizabethan	The era in which Shakespeare wrote Much Ado.	Courtly love	Courtly love is a French concept that is based on gallantry and chivalry.
Stichomythia	When two characters speak alternate lines of verse – shows they are likely to share ideas too	Erudite	Having or showing great knowledge or learning.
Monologue	A Speech by a single character which expresses their thoughts/ feelings.	Cynical	Cynicism is an attitude characterized by a general distrust of others' motives.
Comedy	Comedy is a genre of fiction intended to be humorous or amusing by inducing laughter.	Masquerade	A false show or pretence, also a type of party where everyone wears masks.
Juxtaposition	When two things are placed close together with contrasting effect.	Imagery	Visually descriptive or figurative language

Context and Comedic Structure

1. Context

Shakespeare's **comedies**, including this one, often include mistaken identities and gender swapping, where male and female characters dress up and pretend to be each other. Given that all actors during this time were male, there were several layers of performing at play. These situations were played for humour and helped relieve the anxiety that English society felt during this time of changing ideas about gender roles.

2. Gender roles

Explorations of gender may have been inspired by the influence and behaviour of Elizabeth I who famously never married and was extremely powerful in her own right. However, women played a secondary role to men in Elizabethan England, especially in public. The stereotype of the typical Elizabethan women, as often portrayed in literature, is that she was chaste, modest, subservient, and wholly dependent on the men in her life—first her father, then her husband. In those portrayals marriage is expected as unmarried women didn't have any means of supporting themselves. Though some people adhered to the standards presented by these so-called authorities on morals and behaviour, that wasn't how most people lived their lives.

3. Comedic Structure

In Shakespeare's comedies we tend to find wordplay and confusions. There are lots of examples in *Much Ado About Nothing* of mistaken identity, overheard conversations and misunderstandings. Shakespeare uses **dramatic irony**, in which the audience is aware of things that the characters are not, to create comedy.

