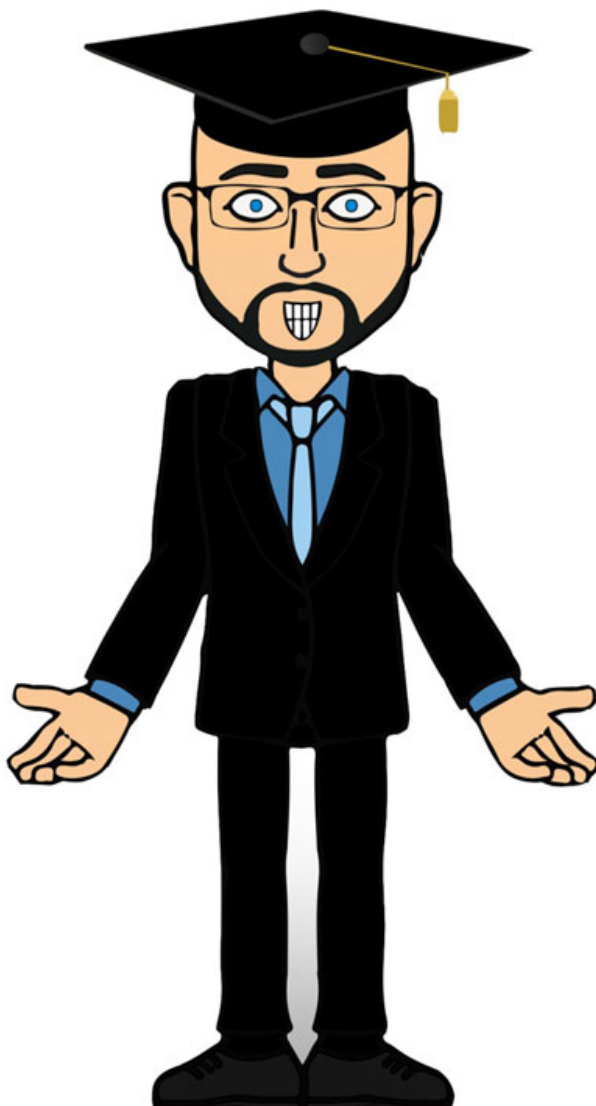


Mr Bruff

ONLINE REVISION

MR Bruff's Guide To Much Ado About Nothing



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SAMPLE

Text of Much Ado About Nothing Act 1 Scene 1	Translation into Modern English Act 1 Scene 1
<p>ACT I</p> <p>SCENE I. Before LEONATO'S house.</p> <p><i>Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE, with a MESSENGER</i></p> <p>LEONATO I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Aragon comes this night to Messina.</p> <p>MESSENGER He is very near by this: he was not three leagues off when I left him.</p> <p>LEONATO How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?</p> <p>MESSENGER But few of any sort, and none of name.</p> <p>LEONATO A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings home full numbers. I find here that Don Pedro hath bestowed much honour on a young Florentine called Claudio.</p> <p>MESSENGER Much deserved on his part and equally remembered by Don Pedro: he hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing, in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion: he hath indeed better bettered expectation than you must expect of me to tell you how.</p>	<p>ACT I</p> <p>SCENE I. In front of LEONATO'S house. <i>Enter LEONATO, HERO, his daughter, and BEATRICE, his niece, with a MESSENGER</i></p> <p>LEONATO (<i>reading a letter</i>) This letter says Don Pedro of Aragon is coming to Messina tonight.</p> <p>MESSENGER He is very near here: he was about nine miles away when I left him.</p> <p>LEONATO How many noblemen died in the battle?</p> <p>MESSENGER Very few, and no one important.</p> <p>LEONATO It's a double victory when you both win the battle and also bring your soldiers home safely. .. I read in my letter that Don Pedro has given honours to a young man from Florence called Claudio.</p> <p>MESSENGER Claudio really deserved it and Don Pedro has suitably rewarded him: Claudio has been braver than you'd expect from someone of his age, like a lamb fighting with a lion's courage: he's done so well that I can't to tell you of all the details now.</p>

LEONATO

He hath an uncle here in Messina will be very much glad of it.

MESSENGER

I have already delivered him letters, and there appears much joy in him; even so much that joy could not show itself modest enough without a badge of bitterness.

LEONATO

Did he break out into tears?

MESSENGER

In great measure.

LEONATO

A kind overflow of kindness: there are no faces truer than those that are so washed. How much better is it to weep at joy than to joy at weeping!

BEATRICE

I pray you, is Signor Mountanto returned from the wars or no?

MESSENGER

I know none of that name, lady: there was none such in the army of any sort.

LEONATO

What is he that you ask for, niece?

HERO

My cousin means Signor Benedick of Padua.

MESSENGER

O, he's returned; and as pleasant as ever he was.

LEONATO

He has an uncle here in Messina who will be very proud and delighted to hear this news.

MESSENGER

I have already delivered some letters to him, and he was so overjoyed he actually looked as though he was in pain.

LEONATO

Did he burst into tears?

MESSENGER

Yes, he cried a lot.

LEONATO

He was literally overflowing with emotion: his tears show how much it meant to him. It's far better to cry with joy than to enjoy crying!

BEATRICE

Please tell me, has Sir Mountanto (Mr 'Social Climber') returned from the battle or not?

MESSENGER

I don't know of anyone with that name, lady: there was no Sir Mountanto in our army.

LEONATO

Who are you talking about, niece?

HERO

My cousin means Sir Benedick of Padua.

MESSENGER

O, yes, Benedick has returned; and is as nice as always.

BEATRICE

He set up his bills here in Messina and challenged Cupid at the flight; and my uncle's fool, reading the challenge, subscribed for Cupid, and challenged him at the bird-bolt. I pray you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed? for indeed I promised to eat all of his killing.

LEONATO

Faith, niece, you tax Signor Benedick too much; but he'll be meet with you, I doubt it not.

MESSENGER

He hath done good service, lady, in these wars.

BEATRICE

You had musty victual, and he hath help to eat it: he is a very valiant trencherman; he hath an excellent stomach.

MESSENGER

And a good soldier too, lady.

BEATRICE

And a good soldier to a lady: but what is he to a lord?

MESSENGER

A lord to a lord, a man to a man; stuffed with all honourable virtues.

BEATRICE

It is so, indeed; he is no less than a stuffed man: but for the stuffing,--well, we are all mortal.

BEATRICE

Benedick challenged Cupid to an archery contest here in Messina, publicly boasting he could make more women fall in love with him than Cupid's arrows could hit; and my uncle's jester, reading the challenge, accepted on Cupid's behalf but used blunt arrows normally used for shooting birds at close range. Tell me, how many men has Benedick killed and eaten in these wars? Or more importantly, how many has he killed? Because I actually promised to eat anyone he killed.

LEONATO

Good grief, Beatrice! You insult Sir Benedick too much; but I'm sure he'll get even.

MESSENGER

He has proved a good soldier, lady, in these wars.

BEATRICE

You had rotten food, and he helped you to eat it: he is a very brave eater; he has an excellent stomach.

MESSENGER

He is a good soldier too, lady.

BEATRICE

And a good soldier to a lady: but what is he to a lord?

MESSENGER

A lord to a lord, a man to a man; he is stuffed full of honourable virtues.

BEATRICE

Absolutely; he is stuffed, like a dummy: but as for the stuffing,--well, no body is perfect.

LEONATO

You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signor Benedick and her: they never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them.

BEATRICE

Alas! he gets nothing by that. In our last conflict four of his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man governed with one: so that if he have wit enough to keep himself warm, let him bear it for a difference between himself and his horse; for it is all the wealth that he hath left, to be known a reasonable creature. Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother.

MESSENGER

Is't possible?

BEATRICE

Very easily possible: he wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat; it ever changes with the next block.

MESSENGER

I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books.

BEATRICE

No; an he were, I would burn my study. But, I pray you, who is his companion? Is there no young

LEONATO

Please don't misunderstand my niece. There is a kind of enjoyable banter between Benedick and her: whenever they meet they try to outwit each other.

BEATRICE

Poor dear! He never wins. In our last clash he was so confused he wasn't much cleverer than his horse; all he has in his favour is that people think he's reasonable. Who is his best friend now? Every month he has a new blood brother.

MESSENGER

Is that possible?

BEATRICE

Very easily possible: his loyalty changes as easily and as often as the style of his hat.

MESSENGER

I see, lady, you don't like him: he's obviously not in your good books.

BEATRICE

No; and if he were, I'd burn my library. But tell me, who is his new best friend? Is there no young warrior who'll travel with him to hell and back?

squarer now that will make a voyage with him to the devil?

MESSENGER

He is most in the company of the right noble Claudio.

BEATRICE

O Lord, he will hang upon him like a disease: he is sooner caught than the pestilence, and the taker runs presently mad. God help the noble Claudio! if he have caught the Benedick, it will cost him a thousand pound ere a' be cured.

MESSENGER

I will hold friends with you, lady.

BEATRICE

Do, good friend.

LEONATO

You will never run mad, niece.

BEATRICE

No, not till a hot January.

MESSENGER

Don Pedro is approached.
Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and BALTHASAR

DON PEDRO

Good Signor Leonato, you are come to meet your trouble: the fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.

LEONATO

Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your grace: for trouble being gone, comfort should

MESSENGER

He mostly hangs around the honourable nobleman Claudio.

BEATRICE

O Lord, Benedick will stick to him like a disease: he is an infection more easily caught than the plague, driving those he plagues mad. God help the noble Claudio! If he has caught 'the Benedick', he'll be taking on an expensive friend.

MESSENGER

I'll stay friends with you, lady.

BEATRICE

Please do, good friend.

LEONATO

You'll never fall madly in love, niece.

BEATRICE

No, not until January is a hot month.

MESSENGER

Don Pedro is arriving.
Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and BALTHASAR

DON PEDRO

Good Sir Leonato, most people avoid trouble, yet you welcome us: most people avoid cost, yet you come to meet me and my expensive army.

LEONATO

You are no trouble, your Grace: when trouble goes away, it's a relief; but when you leave me, happiness goes with you and sorrow remains.

remain; but when you depart from me,
sorrow abides and happiness takes his leave.

DON PEDRO

You embrace your charge too willingly. I
think this
is your daughter.

LEONATO

Her mother hath many times told me so.

BENEDICK

Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked her?

LEONATO

Signor Benedick, no; for then were you a
child.

DON PEDRO

You have it full, Benedick: we may guess by
this
what you are, being a man. Truly, the lady
fathers
herself. Be happy, lady; for you are like an
honourable father.

BENEDICK

If Signor Leonato be her father, she would
not
have his head on her shoulders for all
Messina, as
like him as she is.

BEATRICE

I wonder that you will still be talking,
Signor
Benedick: nobody marks you.

BENEDICK

What, my dear Lady Disdain! are you yet
living?

BEATRICE

Is it possible disdain should die while she
hath
such meet food to feed it as Signor

DON PEDRO

You accept the role of host too willingly.
(turning to HERO) I think this is your
daughter.

LEONATO

Her mother has often told me so.

BENEDICK

Did you doubt it, sir- is that why you
asked her?

LEONATO

No Sir Benedick, because you were only a
child at the time, too young to seduce my
wife.

DON PEDRO

Ha, burn Benedick! Leonato knows your
reputation! Truly, the lady looks like her
father. Be happy, lady; for you resemble
an honourable man.

BENEDICK

Well, even if Sir Leonato is her father,
she wouldn't want to have his head on her
shoulders for all Messina, even if she is
like him.

BEATRICE

I'm surprised you're still talking, Sir
Benedick: nobody takes any notice of you.

BENEDICK

What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you still
alive?

BEATRICE

How could disdain die while she has you to
feed on? Courtesy itself must become
disdain, if you come into her presence.

Benedick?

Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

BENEDICK

Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted: and I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart; for, truly, I love none.

BEATRICE

A dear happiness to women: they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that: I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

BENEDICK

God keep your ladyship still in that mind! so some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face.

BEATRICE

Scratching could not make it worse, an 'twere such a face as yours were.

BENEDICK

Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

BEATRICE

A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

BENEDICK

Then is courtesy a traitor. All ladies love me except for you: what a shame I'm so hard-hearted I love no one.

BEATRICE

How lucky for women: now at least they won't be bothered by a spiteful suitor. Thankfully I'm as cold-blooded as you are: I would rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man say he loves me.

BENEDICK

I hope to God you won't change your mind! Otherwise some gentleman or other will end up with a scratched face.

BEATRICE

Scratching could not make it worse, if he looked like you.

BENEDICK

Well, you are parroting everything I say!

BEATRICE

Well a squawking bird is better than being a beast.

BENEDICK

I wish my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer. But keep your way, i' God's name; I have done.

BEATRICE

You always end with a jade's trick: I know you of old.

DON PEDRO

That is the sum of all, Leonato. Signor Claudio and Signor Benedick, my dear friend Leonato hath invited you all. I tell him we shall stay here at the least a month; and he heartily prays some occasion may detain us longer. I dare swear he is no hypocrite, but prays from his heart.

LEONATO

If you swear, my lord, you shall not be forsworn. *To DON JOHN*
Let me bid you welcome, my lord: being reconciled to the prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

DON JOHN

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

LEONATO

Please it your grace lead on?

DON PEDRO

Your hand, Leonato; we will go together.

BENEDICK

I wish my horse was as fast and tireless as your tongue. But that's enough; I've finished.

BEATRICE

You always end the argument so that you can have the last word: I know you well.

DON PEDRO (who has been chatting quietly to Leonato)

That is all the news, Leonato. Sir Claudio and Sir Benedick, my dear friend Leonato has invited you all to stay here. I've told him we'll stay here at least a month, but he says he hopes we stay longer. I'm sure he means it too, its not just good manners.

LEONATO

I am serious, my lord.
To DON JOHN

Welcome, my lord: now that you're at peace with the prince your brother, I owe you the same loyalty as I owe Don Pedro.

DON JOHN

I thank you: I don't say much, but I thank you.

LEONATO

Would you please lead us all inside your grace?

DON PEDRO

Give me your hand, Leonato; we will go together.

Exeunt all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO

CLAUDIO

Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signor Leonato?

BENEDICK

I noted her not; but I looked on her.

CLAUDIO

Is she not a modest young lady?

BENEDICK

Do you question me, as an honest man should do, for my simple true judgment; or would you have me speak after my custom, as being a professed tyrant to their sex?

CLAUDIO

No; I pray thee speak in sober judgment.

BENEDICK

Why, i' faith, methinks she's too low for a high
praise, too brown for a fair praise and too little
for a great praise: only this commendation I can
afford her, that were she other than she is, she
were unhandsome; and being no other but as
she is, I do not like her.

CLAUDIO

Thou thinkest I am in sport: I pray thee tell me
truly how thou likest her.

BENEDICK

Would you buy her, that you inquire after her?

CLAUDIO

Can the world buy such a jewel?

Exit all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO

CLAUDIO

Benedick, did you notice Sir Leonato's daughter?

BENEDICK

I saw her; but I didn't notice her.

CLAUDIO

Isn't she the ideal young lady?

BENEDICK

Do you want my true opinion; or do you want one of my speciality full-on criticisms of her as another woman to mock? I'm known as a woman-hater.

CLAUDIO

No; please speak truthfully.

BENEDICK

Well, I think she's too short for a high
praise, too dark to be praised fairly and
too small
for a great praise: I can only say, if she
wasn't so well connected and wealthy she'd
be ugly; and even being who she is, I do
not like her.

CLAUDIO

You think I'm joking: please tell me
honestly what you think of her.

BENEDICK

Are you asking because you want to buy her?

CLAUDIO

Is it possible to buy such a treasure?

BENEDICK

Yea, and a case to put it into. But speak you this with a sad brow? or do you play the flouting Jack, to tell us Cupid is a good hare-finder and Vulcan a rare carpenter? Come, in what key shall a man take you, to go in the song?

CLAUDIO

In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on.

BENEDICK

I can see yet without spectacles and I see no such matter: there's her cousin, and she were not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December. But I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

CLAUDIO

I would scarce trust myself, though I had sworn the contrary, if Hero would be my wife.

BENEDICK

Is't come to this? In faith, hath not the world one man but he will wear his cap with suspicion? Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again? Go to, i' faith; and thou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke, wear the print of it and sigh away Sundays. Look Don Pedro is returned to seek you.

BENEDICK

Yes, and a case to put it into. But are you serious? or are you just messing about, having a laugh? Come on, if you want me to sing along with you, I need to know what key you're singing in.

CLAUDIO

To my eye she is the sweetest lady that I ever saw.

BENEDICK

I can see without spectacles and I don't see it: her cousin, on the other hand - if she wasn't so bad-tempered- is so much more beautiful than Hero it's like comparing the first of May with the last of December. But I hope you're not thinking of marriage, are you?

CLAUDIO

Even if I had sworn never to marry, I would not trust myself to keep that promise if Hero agreed to be my wife.

BENEDICK

Has it come to this? Is there no man left who can avoid marriage and the risk of being cheated on? Will I never see a sixty year old bachelor again? Go ahead and you'll be thrusting your neck into a yoke, like an ox. The burden of it will scar you and even Sundays won't be free. Look Don Pedro has come looking for you.

Re-enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO

What secret hath held you here, that you followed
not to Leonato's?

BENEDICK

I would your grace would constrain me to tell.

DON PEDRO

I charge thee on thy allegiance.

BENEDICK

You hear, Count Claudio: I can be secret as a dumb man; I would have you think so; but, on my allegiance, mark you this, on my allegiance. He is in love. With who? now that is your grace's part.

Mark how short his answer is;--With Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

CLAUDIO

If this were so, so were it uttered.

BENEDICK

Like the old tale, my lord: 'it is not so, nor 'twas not so, but, indeed, God forbid it should be so.'

CLAUDIO

If my passion change not shortly, God forbid it should be otherwise.

DON PEDRO

Amen, if you love her; for the lady is very well worthy.

CLAUDIO

You speak this to fetch me in, my lord.

DON PEDRO

By my troth, I speak my thought.

Re-enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO

What secrets have stopped following us to Leonato's?

BENEDICK

I wish your grace would force me to tell you.

DON PEDRO

I order you as an act of loyalty to tell me.

BENEDICK

Listen, Count Claudio: I can keep secrets like a mute, I assure you; but my allegiance forces me to tell Don Pedro - this is a matter of loyalty. Claudio is in love. With whom? That's what your grace should ask. Notice how 'short' his answer is;--With Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

CLAUDIO

If you say so.

BENEDICK

Like that old story, my lord: where the defendant in a murder trial keeps denying his guilt until he's proved guilty!

CLAUDIO

Unless my feelings change soon, I have to admit it is true.

DON PEDRO

That's great, if you love her; Hero is definitely worthy of your love.

CLAUDIO

You're only saying this to trick me, my lord.

DON PEDRO

I swear, I that's my honest opinion.

CLAUDIO

And, in faith, my lord, I spoke mine.

BENEDICK

And, by my two faiths and troths, my lord, I spoke mine.

CLAUDIO

That I love her, I feel.

DON PEDRO

That she is worthy, I know.

BENEDICK

That I neither feel how she should be loved nor know how she should be worthy, is the opinion that fire cannot melt out of me: I will die in it at the stake.

DON PEDRO

Thou wast ever an obstinate heretic in the despite of beauty.

CLAUDIO

And never could maintain his part but in the force of his will.

BENEDICK

That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks: but that I will have a recheat winded in my forehead, or hang my bugle in an invisible baldrick, all women shall pardon me. Because I will not do them the wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself the right to trust none; and the fine is, for the

CLAUDIO

And I swear I shared my honest opinion with Benedick: I love Hero.

BENEDICK

And, I swear, my lord, I gave my honest opinion: I meant what I said.

CLAUDIO

I feel that I love her.

DON PEDRO

I know that she's worthy.

BENEDICK

I *don't* feel how she should be loved nor know how she should be worth loving, and that is the opinion that fire can't melt out of me: you could burn me at the stake and I'd still think so.

DON PEDRO

You never did believe in the power of beauty.

CLAUDIO

And it took all his will power to stick to that view.

BENEDICK

I'm grateful that a woman conceived me, I thank her that she brought me up: but all women will have to forgive me for being unwilling to be their plaything - I won't be cheated on by a wife. Because I don't want to doubt and mistrust any woman, I'll just avoid them all. I will live as a bachelor - and the benefit is, I'll have more money for fine clothes.

which

I may go the finer, I will live a bachelor.

DON PEDRO

I shall see thee, ere I die, look pale with love.

BENEDICK

With anger, with sickness, or with hunger,
my lord,
not with love: prove that ever I lose more
blood
with love than I will get again with drinking,
pick
out mine eyes with a ballad-maker's pen and
hang me up at the door of a brothel-house
for the sign of
blind Cupid.

DON PEDRO

Well, if ever thou dost fall from this faith,
thou
wilt prove a notable argument.

BENEDICK

If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat and
shoot
at me; and he that hits me, let him be
clapped on
the shoulder, and called Adam.

DON PEDRO

Well, as time shall try: 'In time the savage
bull
doth bear the yoke.'

BENEDICK

The savage bull may; but if ever the
sensible
Benedick bear it, pluck off the bull's horns
and set
them in my forehead: and let me be vilely
painted,
and in such great letters as they write

DON PEDRO

Before I die, I'll see you look pale with love.

BENEDICK

With anger, with illness, or with hunger
maybe, my lord, but not sick with love. If
you can prove that I'll ever be so in love
that I can't be brought to my senses by a
night in the pub, you can pluck
out my eyes with a love-poet's pen and
hang me up at the door of a brothel where
the blind Cupid sign usually goes.

DON PEDRO

Well, if you ever do fall in love, I'm sure
everyone would be interested in hearing
these promises.

BENEDICK

If I do, use me for target practice and
make a hero of everyone that hits me. Call
them 'Adam Bell' after the famous archer.

DON PEDRO

Well, we'll see. Remember the saying: 'In
time the savage bull bears the yoke.'

BENEDICK

The savage bull may; but if ever the
sensible
Benedick is domesticated, you can put the
bull's horns on my forehead, because any
wife is sure to cheat on me. You might as
well hang a big sign with huge lettering
around my neck. Instead of saying 'Here is

'Here is
good horse to hire,' let them signify under
my sign
'Here you may see Benedick the married
man.'

CLAUDIO

If this should ever happen, thou wouldst be
horn-mad.

DON PEDRO

Nay, if Cupid have not spent all his quiver in
Venice, thou wilt quake for this shortly.

BENEDICK

I look for an earthquake too, then.

DON PEDRO

Well, you temporize with the hours. In the
meantime, good Signor Benedick, repair to
Leonato's: commend me to him and tell him
I will
not fail him at supper; for indeed he hath
made
great preparation.

BENEDICK

I have almost matter enough in me for such
an
embassage; and so I commit you--

CLAUDIO

To the tuition of God: From my house, if I
had it,--

DON PEDRO

The sixth of July: Your loving friend,
Benedick.

BENEDICK

Nay, mock not, mock not. The body of your
discourse is sometime guarded with
fragments, and
the guards are but slightly basted on
neither: ere

good horse to hire,' let is say, 'Here you
may see Benedick the married man.'

CLAUDIO

If that should ever happen, you would go
mad like a rutting buck.

DON PEDRO

No, if Cupid hasn't used up all his arrows in
Venice, I predict you will soon be quaking
with love.

BENEDICK

I'll expect an earthquake too, then.

DON PEDRO

Well, you'll soften in time. Meantime, good
Sir Benedick, hurry to Leonato's: pay my
respects and tell him I'll definitely be
there for supper; I know he's gone to a lot
of trouble to make it a feast.

BENEDICK

I think I should be able to manage that;
and so I commit you--

CLAUDIO

'Into God's protection: From my house, if I
had it--'

DON PEDRO

'The sixth of July: Your loving friend,
Benedick.'

BENEDICK

Don't mock, don't mock. Sometimes you
two weave fragments of wit into your
conversation, but it weakens rather than
improves it. Before you joke about me,
look long and hard at yourself, examine

you flout old ends any further, examine
your
conscience: and so I leave you.
Exit

CLAUDIO

My liege, your highness now may do me
good.

DON PEDRO

My love is thine to teach: teach it but how,
And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn
Any hard lesson that may do thee good.

CLAUDIO

Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

DON PEDRO

No child but Hero; she's his only heir.
Dost thou affect her, Claudio?

CLAUDIO

O, my lord,
When you went onward on this ended action,
I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,
That liked, but had a rougher task in hand
Than to drive liking to the name of love:
But now I am return'd and that war-
thoughts
Have left their places vacant, in their
rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
Saying, I liked her ere I went to wars.

DON PEDRO

Thou wilt be like a lover presently
And tire the hearer with a book of words.
If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,
And I will break with her and with her
father,
And thou shalt have her. Was't not to this
end
That thou began'st to twist so fine a story?

your conscience: I'm going now.
Exit

CLAUDIO

My lord, I'd appreciate your help with this.

DON PEDRO

I'm at your service: just tell me how I can
help and I'll do my best. No matter how
difficult the favour, I'm eager to help.

CLAUDIO

Does Leonato have a son, my lord?

DON PEDRO

Hero is his only child; she's his only heir.
Do you love her, Claudio?

CLAUDIO

O, my lord, when left Messina to fight the
war just over, I looked at her with a
soldier's eye. I liked what I saw, but my
attention was on the violent battle ahead,
so I couldn't allow liking to become love.
But now that I'm back, thoughts of war
have receded, leaving space for the soft,
delicate feelings of love, making me notice
how beautiful young Hero is, reminding me
why I liked her before I went to war.

DON PEDRO

You'll soon be like a true lover exhausting
everyone with endless discussions of love.
If you *do* love beautiful Hero, treasure it;
I'll negotiate with her and with her father,
persuading Leonato to let you have Hero.
Isn't that the reason you told me all this?

CLAUDIO

How sweetly you do minister to love,
That know love's grief by his complexion!
But lest my liking might too sudden seem,
I would have salved it with a longer
treatise.

DON PEDRO

What need the bridge much broader than
the flood?
The fairest grant is the necessity.
Look, what will serve is fit: 'tis once, thou
lovest,
And I will fit thee with the remedy.
I know we shall have revelling to-night:
I will assume thy part in some disguise
And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,
And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart
And take her hearing prisoner with the
force
And strong encounter of my amorous tale:
Then after to her father will I break;
And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.
In practise let us put it presently.

Exeunt

CLAUDIO

You know just how to care for the love-
sick!
But I'm worried that I might seem over
hasty in my emotions. Shall I explain the
whole story, to you and to them?

DON PEDRO

Why speak longer than you have to? A
bridge goes directly across even a flooded
river.
Whatever gets the job done is enough.
Look, I only need to know that you love
Hero to find a solution to your problem.
Now, I know we'll have a masked ball to-
night:
I'll disguise myself as you and tell Hero
that I am Claudio, and pour out 'my' loving
feelings
so persuasively that she'll be captured by
love.
Then I'll negotiate with her father,
Leonato;
And the conclusion is, she'll be your wife.
So, let's get started right away.

They both exit.

Analysis of Act 1 scene1

In this scene we meet the main characters and become aware of the themes the play will explore.

Summary:

When a messenger brings Leonato news that Don Pedro and his army are coming to stay with him, he reports that one of the noblemen, Count Claudio, has stood out as a brave soldier. Beatrice questions the messenger about Benedick, all the while insulting him, so Leonato explains that there is a 'merry war' between them.

The men arrive and Don Pedro praises Leonato for his hospitality and, noticing Hero, asks whether she is Leonato's daughter. Benedick uses the opportunity to joke about her legitimacy using double meanings. Beatrice sneers that no one is listening to Benedick, which leads to a 'merry war' of words. They trade insults for a while, then Benedick says he's had enough and walks away, leaving Beatrice fuming that he has had the last word as usual.

As the prince [Don Pedro] and Leonato go inside with everyone else, Claudio asks Benedick what he thinks of Hero. It becomes clear that he wants to marry her, a thought that disgusts the confirmed bachelor, Benedick.

Returning to see what is keeping the two, Don Pedro predicts that he will see Benedick fall in love one day and, after sending Benedick off on an errand so that they can talk, promises to help Claudio win Hero at the masked ball that night.

Title:

Much Ado About Nothing literally means 'a lot of fuss about something insignificant', so as you read the play, be on the alert for things that seem to be important but turn out to be 'no big deal'- we'll discuss examples as we come across them.

There are other interpretations of the title: 'nothing' and 'noting' were apparently homophones in Shakespeare's day. 'Noting' used to mean chiefly gossiping, overhearing things, circulating rumours: think of it as 'hot news'. So notice how many times letters, notes, notices, taking note- as in spying and eavesdropping- and outward show - something 'of note' - are foregrounded. Musical notation is also referred to in Balthazar's speech: 'Note this before my

notes/There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting' as well as the songs and references to music.

Genre:

Shakespeare explores love in this **romantic comedy** and in Scene1 we see two types of love.

Claudio is everything an Elizabethan nobleman was meant to be: honorable, a brave soldier, someone who made his family proud. In fact, his uncle was so delighted by the good reputation Claudio earned he burst into tears at the news of his valor. Hero is his female counterpart: a wealthy heiress, beautiful and meek - she has hardly said a word so far (one sentence). Notice throughout the play how little she speaks in comparison to Beatrice. In fact, she has the fewest lines of the four main characters. What she *doesn't* say is almost more noteworthy than what she does say: she seems to have no opinions, is never critical and never angry. You could say she's more of an ideal than a real person.

So on the one hand we have Hero and Claudio (notice both names end in 'o', perhaps suggesting they're not quite so great after all?) as the ideal couple with the 'fairytale love'.

Beatrice and Benedick (both names begin with a plosive 'B') on the other hand, are far from ideal. They are both too opinionated, argumentative and determined not to be hurt by love. Beatrice particularly refuses to conform to the role of obedient companion assigned to women in the patriarchal society, where men were in charge and women were their possessions.

Context:

Shakespeare himself didn't conform to the norms of his time when it came to love.

Because marriage was more like a business transaction (notice Claudio asking whether Leonato has a son, to check who'll get the money!), Shakespeare should have consulted his father, then together they would have negotiated with his younger bride's family- a bit like Don Pedro will do for Claudio ... but what actually happened was that he fell in love with a 26 year old when he was only 18. Ann Hathaway was fairly independent and though she lived with her brother, she owned her own land. Remember, Shakespeare was not famous at the time,

nor was he rich: not much of a catch. *Germaine Greer* suggests that both families would probably have been against the marriage and so to make it happen the couple decided to have a baby, which meant they had to get married before the child was born to save it from being illegitimate.

Themes:

- Relationships

The relationship Shakespeare explores in Beatrice and Benedick is a much more modern one than the Elizabethan ideal. They know each other, 'warts and all'. Their 'merry war' ensures that they notice and talk to each other at every opportunity.

Despite disguising it as a chance to be insulting about him, notice that Beatrice is actually trying to get information about Benedick from the messenger. Has he returned safely? Was he brave? Who is his friend?

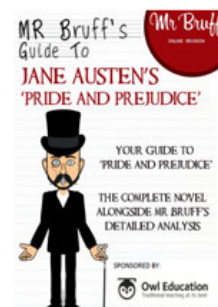
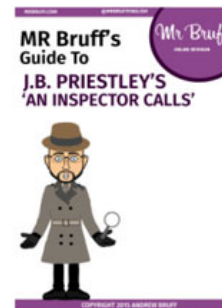
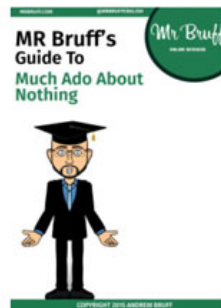
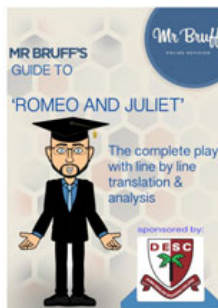
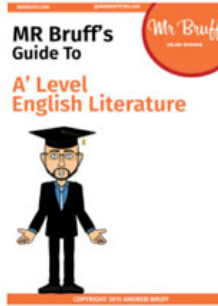
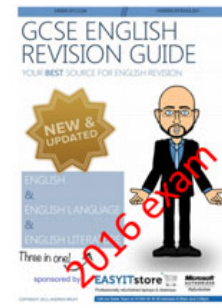
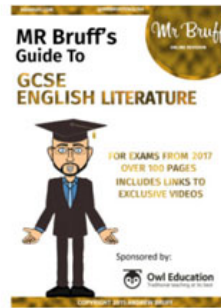
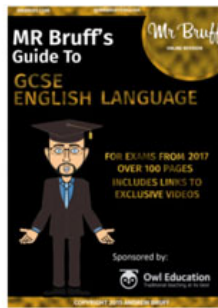
Claudio had merely looked at Hero 'with a soldier's eye,/That liked, but had a rougher task in hand/Than to drive liking to the name of love', but Beatrice says she had promised Benedick 'to eat all of his killing', which suggests they'd definitely been at each other before the soldiers left for war. The pre-existing relationship is confirmed later in the scene when Beatrice says 'I know you of old', meaning she knows all his tricks from before. In Act 2 you'll discover a bit more about their former relationship, but for now it is worth noticing how paranoid Benedick is about being cheated on. He calls Beatrice 'Lady Disdain', suggesting she is always putting him down, scorning him. Again in Act 2 you'll see more of the effect her scornful attitude has on him.

The real give-away of course is Benedick's verdict that Beatrice is actually much more beautiful than Hero: 'there's her cousin, and she were not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December'.

Language

Shakespeare loves to play with words and uses puns and double meanings throughout the play. For example, when Beatrice says: 'Is it possible disdain should die when she hath such meet food to feed it...' the word 'meet' means 'suitable', but it's a pun on 'meat' as well, linking with the idea of food to eat. The animal imagery in their 'slanging match' suggests that despite their 'witty'

veneer, the insults Beatrice and Benedick hurl at each other are expressing very basic emotions. On the other hand, Claudio calls Hero a 'jewel', claiming 'In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on' and 'I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,/That liked' - all suggest infatuation, rather than love based on knowing each other. He even leaves wooing her [chatting her up] to Don Pedro! He seems more in love with the idea of being in love than with Hero: Shakespeare suggests that he is playing a role when Don Pedro says, 'Thou wilt be like a lover presently,/ And tire the hearer with a book of words', also suggesting that he has been twisting a fine story - or manipulating the conversation - to get Don Pedro to agree to broker the deal in his name.



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