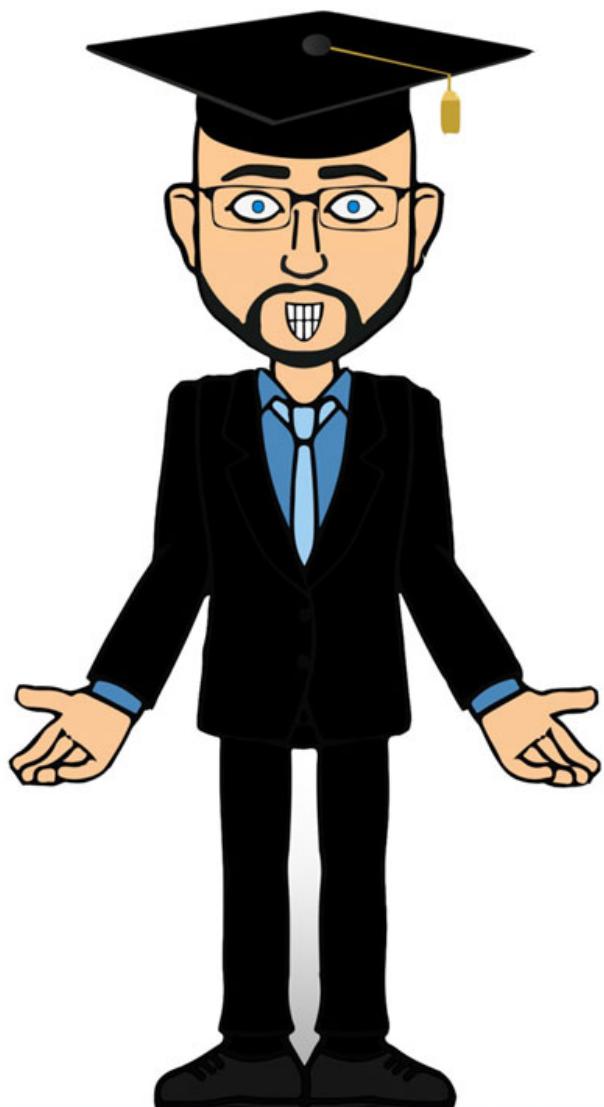


# MR Bruff's Guide To **Much Ado About Nothing**

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ONLINE REVISION



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SAMPLE

Text of Much Ado About Nothing Act 1 Scene 1	Translation into Modern English Act 1 Scene 1
<p><b>ACT I</b></p> <p><b>SCENE I.</b> Before LEONATO'S house.</p> <p>Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE, with a MESSENGER</p> <p><b>LEONATO</b> I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Aragon comes this night to Messina.</p> <p><b>MESSENGER</b> He is very near by this: he was not three leagues off when I left him.</p> <p><b>LEONATO</b> How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?</p> <p><b>MESSENGER</b> But few of any sort, and none of name.</p> <p><b>LEONATO</b> 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><b>MESSENGER</b> 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 bettered expectation than you must expect of me to tell you how.</p>	<p><b>ACT I</b></p> <p><b>SCENE I.</b> In front of LEONATO'S house.</p> <p>Enter LEONATO, HERO, his daughter, and BEATRICE, his niece, with a MESSENGER</p> <p><b>LEONATO</b> (reading a letter) This letter says Don Pedro of Aragon is coming to Messina tonight.</p> <p><b>MESSENGER</b> He is very near here: he was about nine miles away when I left him.</p> <p><b>LEONATO</b> How many noblemen died in the battle?</p> <p><b>MESSENGER</b> Very few, and no one important.</p> <p><b>LEONATO</b> 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><b>MESSENGER</b> 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 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 holp 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?

squerer 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 would 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 forswned. 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, an 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; an 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 wouldest 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 'fairytales 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?

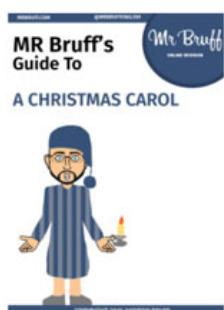
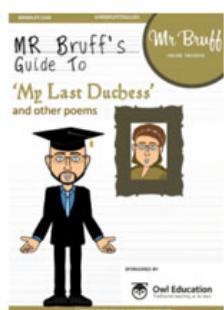
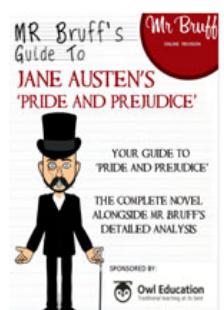
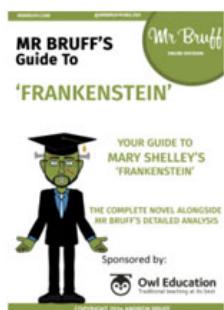
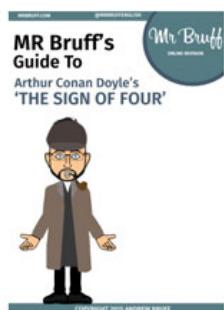
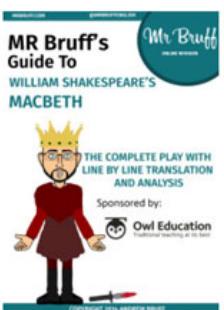
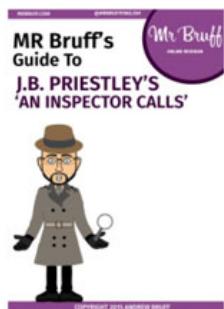
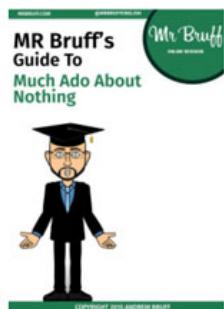
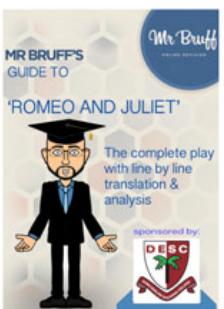
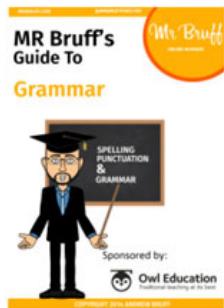
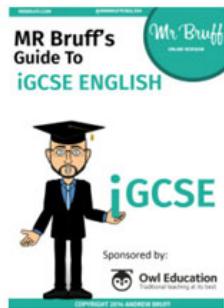
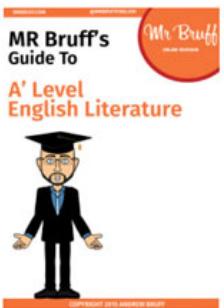
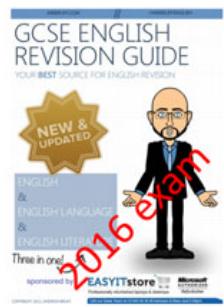
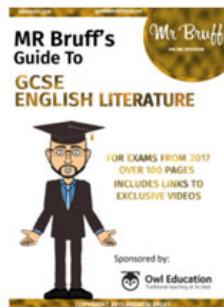
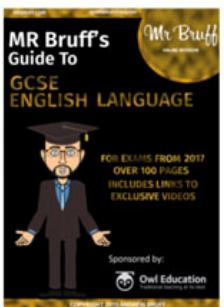
Claudio had merely looked at Hero 'with a soldier's eye,/That liked, but had a rougher task in hand/Than to drive liking to the name of love', but Beatrice says she had promised Benedick 'to eat all of his killing', which suggests they'd definitely been at each other before the soldiers left for war. 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, an 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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