

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-61989-0 – Much Ado About Nothing

Rex Gibson General Editor Vicki Wienand and Richard Andrews Edited by Anthony Partington and Richard Spencer Michael Clamp Mary Berry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



**Cambridge School  
Shakespeare**

# MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Edited by Anthony Partington and Richard Spencer

Series editors: Richard Andrews and Vicki Wienand

Founding editor: Rex Gibson

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-61989-0 – Much Ado About Nothing

Rex Gibson General Editor Vicki Wienand and Richard Andrews Edited by Anthony Partington and Richard Spencer Michael Clamp Mary Berry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107619890](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107619890)

Commentary and notes © Cambridge University Press 1993, 2014

Text © Cambridge University Press 1988, 2014

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1993

Second edition 2005

Third edition 2014

Printed in India by Replika Press Pvt. Ltd

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-1-107-61989-0 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

---

### NOTICE TO TEACHERS IN THE UK

It is illegal to reproduce any part of this work in material form (including photocopying and electronic storage) except under the following circumstances:

- (i) where you are abiding by a licence granted to your school or institution by the Copyright Licensing Agency;
- (ii) where no such licence exists, or where you wish to exceed the terms of a licence, and you have gained the written permission of Cambridge University Press;
- (iii) where you are allowed to reproduce without permission under the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, which covers, for example, the reproduction of short passages within certain types of educational anthology and reproduction for the purposes of setting examination questions.

# Contents

Introduction	iv
Photo gallery	v
<b><i>Much Ado About Nothing</i></b>	
List of characters	1
Act 1	3
Act 2	27
Act 3	65
Act 4	101
Act 5	129
Perspectives and themes	164
Fashion and appearance	171
Characters	174
The language of <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	182
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> in performance	190
Writing about Shakespeare	198
Writing about <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	200
Timeline	202
Acknowledgements	203



**Cambridge School  
Shakespeare**

# Introduction

This *Much Ado About Nothing* is part of the **Cambridge School Shakespeare** series. Like every other play in the series, it has been specially prepared to help all students in schools and colleges.

The **Cambridge School Shakespeare** *Much Ado About Nothing* aims to be different. It invites you to lift the words from the page and to bring the play to life in your classroom, hall or drama studio. Through enjoyable and focused activities, you will increase your understanding of the play. Actors have created their different interpretations of the play over the centuries. Similarly, you are invited to make up your own mind about *Much Ado About Nothing*, rather than having someone else's interpretation handed down to you.

**Cambridge School Shakespeare** does not offer you a cut-down or simplified version of the play. This is Shakespeare's language, filled with imaginative possibilities. You will find on every left-hand page: a summary of the action, an explanation of unfamiliar words, and a choice of activities on Shakespeare's stagecraft, characters, themes and language.

Between each act and in the pages at the end of the play, you will find notes, illustrations and activities. These will help to encourage reflection after every act and give you insights into the background and context of the play as a whole.

This edition will be of value to you whether you are studying for an examination, reading for pleasure or thinking of putting on the play to entertain others. You can work on the activities on your own or in groups. Many of the activities suggest a particular group size, but don't be afraid to make up larger or smaller groups to suit your own purposes. Please don't think you have to do every activity: choose those that will help you most.

Although you are invited to treat *Much Ado About Nothing* as a play, you don't need special dramatic or theatrical skills to do the activities. By choosing your activities, and by exploring and experimenting, you can make your own interpretations of Shakespeare's language, characters and stories.

Whatever you do, remember that Shakespeare wrote his plays to be acted, watched and enjoyed.

## Rex Gibson

Founding editor

This new edition contains more photographs, more diversity and more supporting material than previous editions, whilst remaining true to Rex's original vision. Specifically, it contains more activities and commentary on stagecraft and writing about Shakespeare, to reflect contemporary interest. The glossary has been enlarged too. Finally, this edition aims to reflect the best teaching and learning possible, and to represent not only Shakespeare through the ages, but also the relevance and excitement of Shakespeare today.

## Richard Andrews and Vicki Wienand

Series editors

This edition of *Much Ado About Nothing* uses the text of the play established by F. H. Mares in **The New Cambridge Shakespeare**.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-61989-0 – Much Ado About Nothing

Rex Gibson General Editor Vicki Wienand and Richard Andrews Edited by Anthony Partington and Richard Spencer Michael Clamp Mary Berry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

*Much Ado About Nothing* is particularly admired for the wit and intelligence of Beatrice and Benedick, the warring couple comically tricked into falling in love.



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

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-61989-0 – Much Ado About Nothing

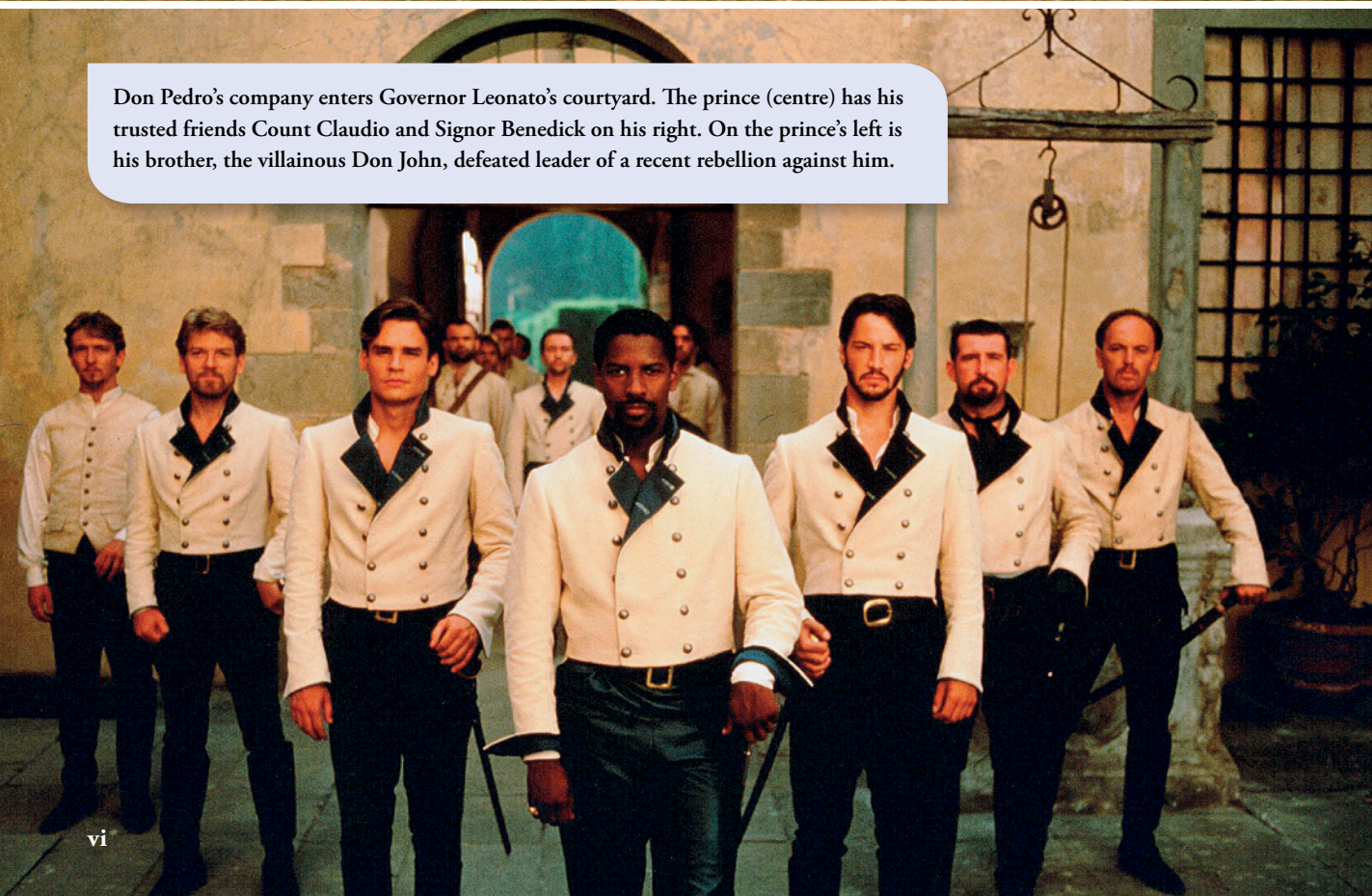
Rex Gibson General Editor Vicki Wienand and Richard Andrews Edited by Anthony Partington and Richard Spencer Michael Clamp Mary Berry Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The story begins with the return of Don Pedro's army from the wars. In this 1993 Kenneth Branagh film, the young women of Governor Leonato's household in Messina, led by Beatrice (left) and Leonato's daughter Hero (centre), scamper excitedly down the hill to greet the men.



Don Pedro's company enters Governor Leonato's courtyard. The prince (centre) has his trusted friends Count Claudio and Signor Benedick on his right. On the prince's left is his brother, the villainous Don John, defeated leader of a recent rebellion against him.




Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-61989-0 – Much Ado About Nothing

Rex Gibson General Editor Vicki Wienand and Richard Andrews Edited by Anthony Partington and Richard Spencer Michael Clamp Mary Berry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

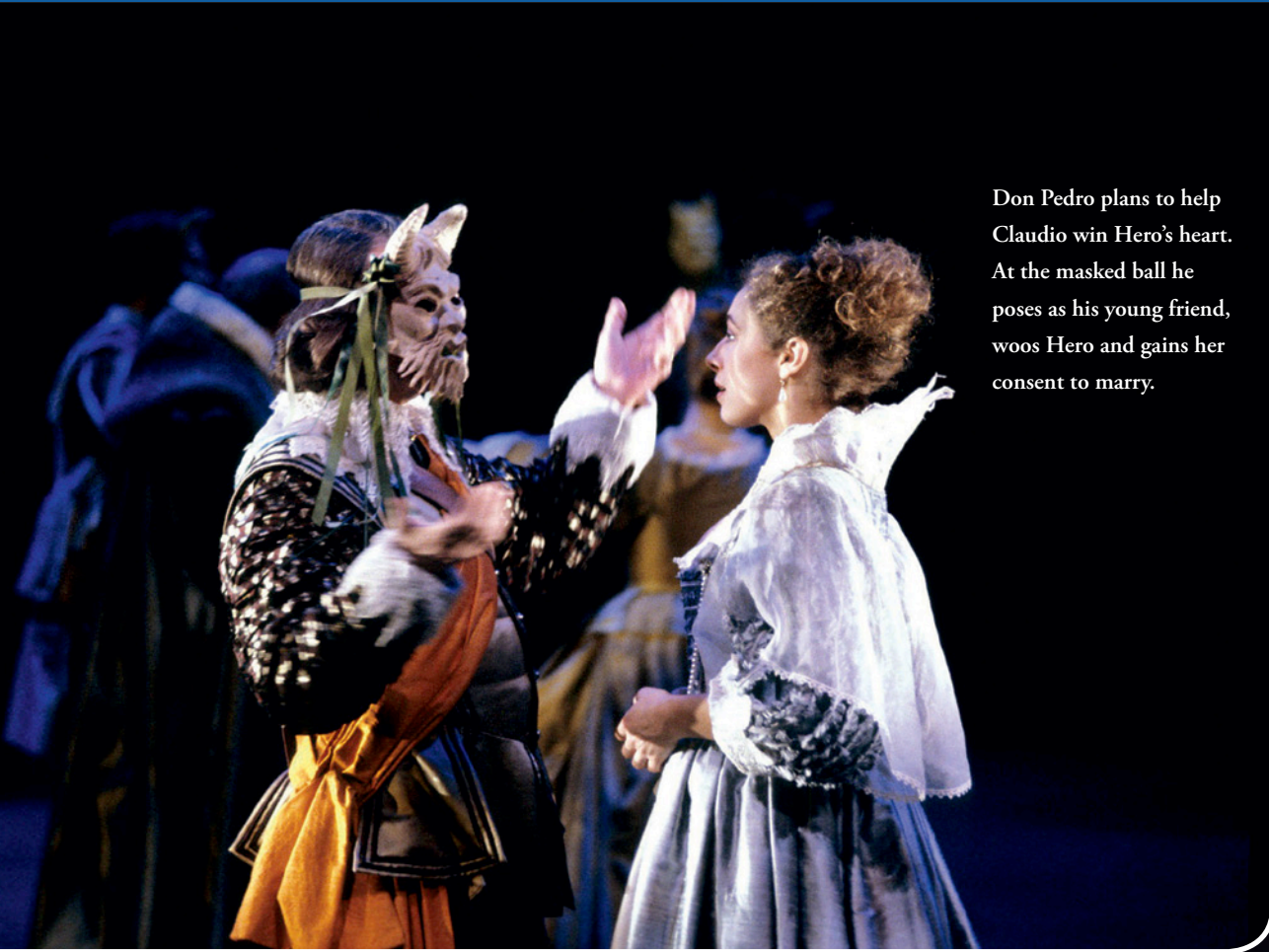
Count Claudio, highly praised for his bravery in the recent war, wishes to marry Hero, Leonato's only child. The wealthy governor of Messina is only too delighted to have his daughter make such a magnificent alliance.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-61989-0 – Much Ado About Nothing

Rex Gibson General Editor Vicki Wienand and Richard Andrews Edited by Anthony Partington and Richard Spencer Michael Clamp Mary Berry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Don Pedro plans to help Claudio win Hero's heart. At the masked ball he poses as his young friend, woos Hero and gains her consent to marry.

'She told me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was the prince's jester.' At the masked ball, Benedick also pretends to be someone else. Beatrice, however, sees through his disguise and uses the opportunity to make wittily insulting comments about the 'absent Benedick'.





Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-61989-0 – Much Ado About Nothing

Rex Gibson General Editor Vicki Wienand and Richard Andrews Edited by Anthony Partington and Richard Spencer Michael Clamp Mary Berry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

▲ Don Pedro arranges a second deception. Benedick and Beatrice are both tricked into believing the other is secretly in love with them. Benedick's overhearing of his friends' 'secret' conversation is often played for laughs, as in the production above, set in twentieth-century Sicily.

► The 'gulling' (tricking) of Beatrice is usually played more seriously. The mirror she hides behind here is made of semi-transparent glass, so the audience can see both the hoaxers and Beatrice's shocked yet delighted reaction.



Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-61989-0 – Much Ado About Nothing

Rex Gibson General Editor Vicki Wienand and Richard Andrews Edited by Anthony Partington and Richard Spencer Michael Clamp Mary Berry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

◀ Don John maliciously tricks Claudio and Don Pedro into believing they have seen Hero entertaining another man in her bedroom. At the wedding ceremony, Claudio publicly and savagely rejects Hero as a common whore.

▼ Faced with such accusations, Hero faints with shock. Beatrice believes her cousin to be innocent. She urges Benedick to challenge Claudio to single combat. On the Friar's advice, Leonato orders that Hero be hidden and reported dead until her innocence is proved.



Cambridge University Press

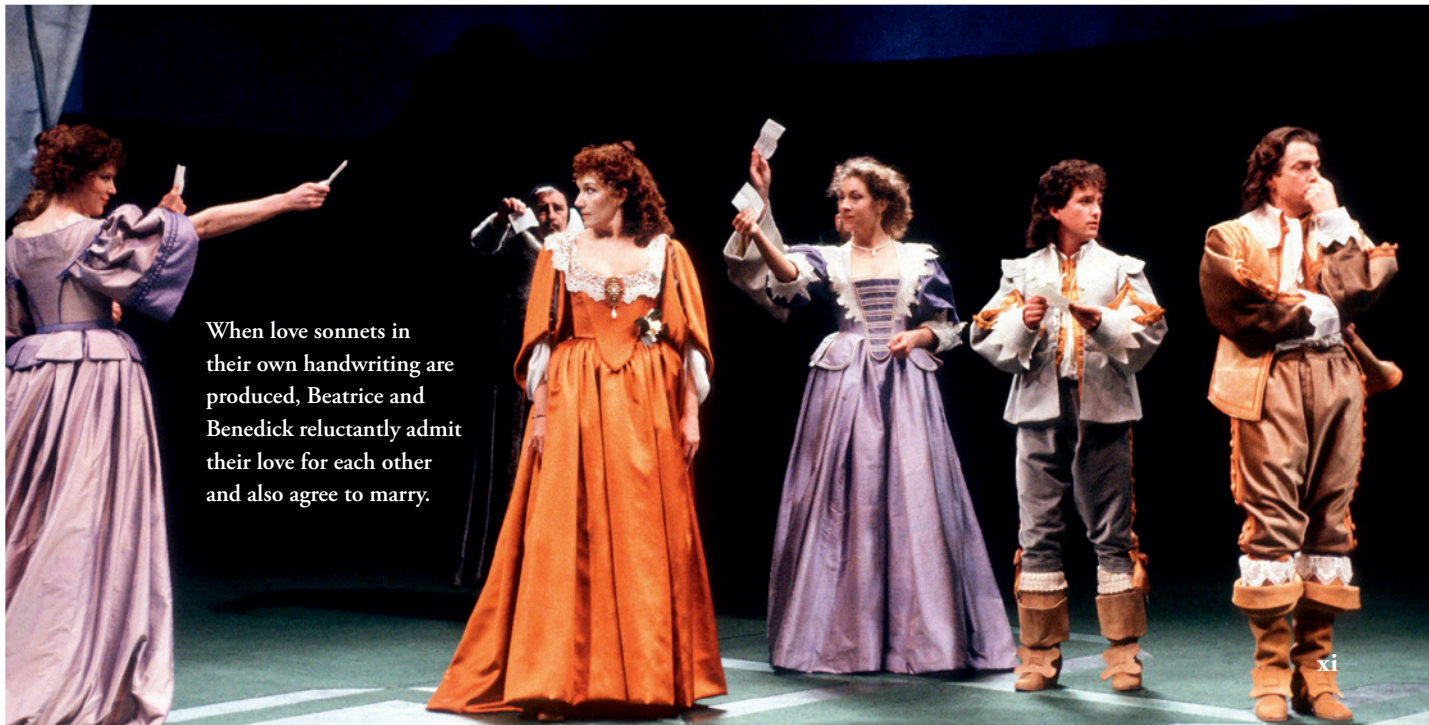
978-1-107-61989-0 – Much Ado About Nothing

Rex Gibson General Editor Vicki Wienand and Richard Andrews Edited by Anthony Partington and Richard Spencer Michael Clamp Mary Berry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Fortunately, Don John's plot is accidentally uncovered by the town's incompetent Watchmen, led by Dogberry, their even more inept Master Constable. Still believing Hero is dead, a penitent Claudio agrees to marry Leonato's niece, said to be the 'image' of Hero. She is, of course, Hero herself.



When love sonnets in their own handwriting are produced, Beatrice and Benedick reluctantly admit their love for each other and also agree to marry.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-61989-0 – Much Ado About Nothing

Rex Gibson General Editor Vicki Wienand and Richard Andrews Edited by Anthony Partington and Richard Spencer Michael Clamp Mary Berry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

► A delighted Benedick kisses his bride-to-be, then leads the whole company in a celebratory dance. Not even news that Don John has been captured can spoil his happiness.

▼ ‘Prince, thou art sad, get thee a wife, get thee a wife’. Productions often show Don Pedro (seated, left) alone at the end of the play, while couples dance happily around him.

