

Shakespeare in 30 →

# MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING



**A 30-MINUTE ADAPTATION FOR TEENS**



# Bring more drama into your ELA classroom with these adaptations!

\*Reader's Theatre \*Staged Readings \*Full Productions

**PEDRO** (tada! I have worked my magic) Love!

PEDRO claps his hands. LEONATO brings BEATRICE downstage while PEDRO fetches BENEDICK and brings him down right. PEDRO joins BENEDICK and BEATRICE's hands so that they are the mirror to HERO and CLAUDIO down left. LEONATO returns to his place.

**PEDRO** (tada! I have worked my magic) Love!

PEDRO returns to his freeze. JOHN and BORACHIO reconfigure the statues: JOHN causes HERO to fall and LEONATO to appear to be kicking her R; BORACHIO turns Claudio L and then grabs MARGARET (her back to CLAUDIO) in a lewd way. All freeze except JOHN.

**JOHN** (tada! I have worked my mischief) Rejection.

JOHN moves to BENEDICK and BEATRICE and turns them so that they are back to back.

**JOHN** Hate.

**SCENE 2. The same.** JOHN and BORACHIO exit. BEATRICE pulls HERO and MARGARET away. PEDRO and LEONATO join CLAUDIO, putting their heads together and whispering. BENEDICK, left alone, inches closer trying to hear.

**PEDRO** (you mean to say Beatrice loves Benedick? I don't believe it.) Love?

**CLAUDIO** (oh, yes, it's absolutely true) Love!

**LEONATO** (you're pulling my leg, it can't be.) Love?

**BENEDICK** (having heard and rolling his eyes in disdain, as usual) Love!

**CLAUDIO** (quickly, before Benedick can walk away) Beatrice!

**LEONATO** (you're pulling my leg. It can't be. Not Beatrice!) Beatrice!

**CLAUDIO & PEDRO** (believe it!) Love!

**LEONATO** (still can't believe it; more emphatic) Beatrice!

**CLAUDIO & PEDRO** (believe it!) Beatrice!

**LEONATO** (happy) Love!

**BENEDICK** (you're pulling my leg. It can't be. Not Beatrice!) Beatrice?

**PEDRO** (the fish is on the hook, let's continue the deception; to Claudio) Who?

**PEDRO** (happy) Love!

**LEONATO** (still not so sure) Love?

**CLAUDIO & PEDRO** (loudly) Yes!

**LEONATO** (It simply can't be) Beatrice?

**CLAUDIO & PEDRO** (even louder) Yes!

**CLAUDIO, PEDRO & LEONATO** Love!

**BENEDICK** (to himself) Who?

**CLAUDIO, PEDRO & LEONATO** (turning quickly to yell the word and then immediately back to their huddle and pretending they don't know Benedick is there) YOU!

**BENEDICK** (loudly) What?

**CLAUDIO** (nodding his head and amused) Benedick.

**PEDRO** (meaning Benedick hates her!) Benedick.

**LEONATO** (full of sorrow for Beatrice) Benedick.

**CLAUDIO, PEDRO & LEONATO** (laughing because the very idea of Benedick being in love is ridiculous) Benedick! Love!

## Abridged to focus on mime and vocal expression

\*Very little dialogue\*

## 13 Roles with Flexible Casting

**SCENE 3. Outside the city.** VERGES, HUGH, and GEORGE SEACOLE are marched in by DOGBERRY. They salute their orders. DOGBERRY should not find their physical comedy funny, but to the audience they should be hysterical. This is physical comedy and can take as long as the actors can hold their breaths.

**DOGBERRY** (commanding) Stand! (deputies stand at attention) Salute! (deputies salute in three different ways) Watch! (deputies make a show of looking for danger and then they all sleep. (deputies let heads fall onto each other's shoulders) (this has been a test, and they have failed it; very loud) Wake up! (deputies awake)

# Teaching Drama

IN THE ELA CLASSROOM

Drama is such a valuable addition to any ELA curriculum because students can get so much out of it at any level. It doesn't have to take a lot of time or space, either! One of our goals in bringing you these 30-minute scripts is to give you space to deep dive into the experience without having to devote two or three months to a show.

## Lessons learned

- ❑ **Adaptability** – “the show must go on!”, no matter what happens.
- ❑ **Articulation** – you learn to communicate clearly
- ❑ **Situational Awareness** – others are counting on you to move to the same position every time (without bumping into anyone!)
- ❑ **Reliability** – you need to be present (physically and mentally) to act your part!
- ❑ **Team work** – a great show only happens when everyone works together.
- ❑ **Constructive criticism** – to improve and help others improve, you need to give and receive feedback graciously.
- ❑ **Preparation** – to be ready for a good rehearsal, you must prepare your lines and set goals.
- ❑ **Active listening/observation** – you must be aware of the actions and intentions of your castmates, so you must listen carefully.
- ❑ **Self-confidence** – as you work and receive feedback from your peers and audience, your self-confidence increases.
- ❑ **Empathy** – As you put yourself in the shoes of a wide range of characters, you develop empathy for other worldviews.

The most obvious benefit to using drama in ELA is building students' communication skills, particularly public speaking. Students learn to ease their worries about public speaking through preparation, practice, and multiple opportunities for success.

Students also learn a range of **soft skills**, some of which are outlined here to the left. These are the things that are hardest for teachers to grade, and thus get overlooked in today's high-stakes educational environment. Nevertheless, these are truly the skills that propel students to success in all of their future endeavors.

## 3 WARM-UPS

**Stretching** – Have students stretch in a circle, and make sure to include some stretches that cross the midline. This gets those synapses firing and energizes us. :)

**Vocal Rollercoasters** – Warm up the voice by moving up and down the vocal register, sliding

# Questions to Consider

WHEN USING THESE SCRIPTS

These scripts have been abridged in order to be performed in thirty minutes or less. At times, they tell a different story than the original play, and at others, they tell a more straight-forward version without the subplots. **The intent is to provide students with an access point to Shakespeare's language and characters.** Here are some considerations as your students mount their production.

## 1. How much time can you commit?

How long will you spend on this project? We place value on learning opportunities when we designate time for them in our classroom. How many class days can you consecrate for rehearsals? When will your final performance be? **We recommend at least fifteen hours of rehearsal for an off-book show.** (And memorization is homework.) You can add more hours in your unit if you want to do additional mini-lessons or writing assignments. For a one-week adventure, read the **Staged Reading** page.

## 2. How will you cast the show(s)?

Each of these scripts varies largely in the number of characters involved. Some scripts have a couple of minor characters. Will you have your students divide into three or four separate groups and each work on one show? Will you have two or three very flexible students pick up more than one minor role?

How will you choose performance groups? Student ownership is important, but students may worry about taking on large roles because they're afraid of disappointing their cast members. You'll probably need to encourage some leaders to step up. ☺

## 3. How will you start things off on the right foot?

At the beginning of this endeavor, you'll want to fill your students' toolkit. Even if you choose to let students direct their own rehearsals later on, you can start with some common work and minilessons. Each cast should do a **read-through**, which is simply reading the lines without any mention of blocking. Additionally, this is a good time to model **table work**. There are a million opinions on this, but let's stick to a simple take away here: **students should work together to figure out their characters' intentions throughout the script before they ever start moving around (blocking).** Blocking is such an exciting time for students, but the most important aspect of the show is characters' intentions. Devote at least one class period to this alone.

## 4. Where will your students rehearse?

Resource includes a full Teacher's Guide with practical options and time commitments for using this script:

- \*Informal Reader's Theatre (1-2 hrs)\*
- \*A Staged Reading with scripts in hand (1 wk)\*
- \*A full production (3-4 wks)\*

# Evaluating Drama

You may have a lot of enthusiasm for integrating drama in ELA, but you may be wondering **how to assess** it. If your students are working on these short plays for 2-3 weeks, how will you keep your gradebook up-to-date? You can provide several opportunities for formative and summative assessment along the way.

## Split the grading into three parts:

1. **Objective** grading of vocabulary, blocking, and parts of the stage quizzes
2. **Semi-subjective** grading of practice logs (largely focused on grading ideas and content) and lines test
3. **Subjective** assessment of student reflection on soft skills.

Included in this resource is an editable rubric with descriptors about attitude, focus, problem-solving, and engagement. As they wrap up practices and performances, students have to self-assess by writing justifications for each score using concrete examples. For example, to get a "10" on problem-solving, a student has to describe a problem that s/he actually solved.

Whatever grading strategy you use, make sure that your students know how it's going to work before starting rehearsals. Our students need to know that they are expected to solve their own problems, and we have to brainstorm what focus looks like.

**PRACTICE LOGS**

*Engage* "me going to do while blocking and I have  
What I did throughout the hour, our lines with Park & Adam.  
We had a great time teaching Engage how to solve,  
even though it was a challenge

Date: 2/10/16  
Goal: Run lines with Oben & Park to see how they're  
doing with their lines, help them practice

What I did in lines with  
pretty good memorizing but

Date: 2/10/16  
Goal: Finish the *Engage*  
& writing

*Engage*

*Engage* "me going to do while blocking and I have  
What I did I on stage lines and practiced scenes with  
Park, Engage and Park organized their entrance. It was  
so much fun being. Today, I worked on their walking  
& scenes? I wanted to see if they were using the physical  
writing

Date: 2/10/16  
Goal: Finally complete the big scene in the "hybrid"  
writing

What I did: Run lines with Oben & Park. After that  
and talk to Park on how the play is feeling.  
The kids can have and a way to see what's happening with

➤ Which part of rehearsal was most fun today, and why?  
➤ What is one problem you encountered today, and how did you fix it?  
➤ How was your focus today? Did you

These could use more reflection on what are you enjoying? What could be improved?

# Iambic Pentameter

## THE RHYTHM

Read the following sentence out loud:

"We hope that we may one day live the dream."

Certain syllables jump out at you and create the rhythm of the sentence. This is stress. Here's another example. Compare the word "record" in the following sentences.

He's going to record an album.  
His record label isn't well-known yet.

You can hear the stressed and unstressed syllables in the word "record", and in English, this impacts which meaning we understand.

**Iambic Pentameter** is one type of rhythm (or "meter") Shakespeare uses in his work. It consists of a line of ten syllables, alternating stressed and unstressed.

We'll use this symbol to show stress

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

Mark the stressed and unstressed syllables in the following sentences. Which ones are in iambic pentameter? Put a star next to those.

1. Our home is just a distant memory.
2. She stuck out her tongue and it stayed there, it froze.
3. Beverly, can I get you some ice cream?
4. Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May.
5. His palms are sweaty, knees weak, arms are heavy.

WHO USES IAMBIC PENTAMETER & WHY?

Wondering how to evaluate drama in the ELA classroom? You'll get rationale, ideas, student samples, and rubrics based on classroom experience.

**\*Rubrics are 100% editable\***

# Director's Notes

## SUMMARY

*Much Ado*

An abridgement with very little dialogue that focuses on the equal manipulations of Don Pedro and Don John.

Don Pedro and his troops are on leave from the wars, and they come to Leonato's villa for R & R. Don Pedro and his brother, Don John, like to manipulate people. While Pedro plots to manipulate Benedick and Beatrice into marriage, Don John schemes to manipulate Claudio and Hero into breaking up before a wedding can happen. Both are successful. Local law enforcement gets involved when Don John is overheard paying off Borachio for helping him with his deception.

**DON PEDRO:** a duke  
**DON JOHN:** his brother  
**LEONATO:** a landowner  
**HERO:** Leonato's short daughter  
**BEATRICE:** Leonato's niece  
**MARGARET:** serving woman to Hero  
**BENEDICK:** soldier in Don Pedro's army

Characters

## PROPS

- Money – Don John
- Rope – Verges
- Pliers – Verges
- Cheese Grater – Hugh Oatcake
- Pear – George Seacole
- Feather – Dogberry
- Veils – Hero, Beatrice, Margaret

## DIRECTOR'S Vision

This version of *Much Ado* has very little

## Much Ado with Very Little Dialogue

An abbreviated retelling of *Much Ado* through movement, mime, and strong vocal choices.  
Adapted by Michelle Hancock

**Cast:**  
Don Pedro: a duke  
Don John: his brother  
Leonato: a landowner  
Hero: Leonato's short daughter  
Beatrice: Leonato's niece  
Margaret: serving woman to Hero  
Benedick: soldier in Don Pedro's army  
Claudio: soldier in Don Pedro's army  
Borachio: soldier loyal to Don John  
Dogberry: the town constable  
Verges: a deputy  
Hugh Oatcake: a deputy  
George Seacole: a deputy  
13 characters; flexible casting

**SCENE 1. Leonato's villa.** Players stand in a line, frozen in character, upstage.  
The play begins when LEONATO, HERO, BEATRICE & MARGARET move downstage and PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, JOHN & BORACHIO begin galloping in place as though they are riding horses.

**LEONATO** (excited, moving down as he speaks) The men are coming!

**HERO** (almost swooning in anticipation, rushing down) Men!

**BEATRICE** (with great disdain and dripping sarcasm, stepping down) Men.

**MARGARET** (a bit of a floozy and ready for some fun, jiggling down) Ooh, men!

The men gallop downstage and get off of their "horses."

**CLAUDIO** (opposite Hero, clearly in love) Hero!

**HERO** (turning toward Claudio, equally smitten) Claudio!

**BENEDICK** (turning away from Beatrice, not happy to see her) Beatrice.

**BEATRICE** (turning away from Benedick, making her feelings clear through pronunciation) BenedICK.

**MARGARET** (Runs to Borachio's side. Throws her arms around his neck in flouncy desire) Borachio!

**BORACHIO** (yeah, Margaret will do, for now) Margaret.

**PEDRO CLAUDIO LEONATO HERO MARGARET** (it's the greatest thing ever) Level

You also get a full summary page of the play for quick reference - or distribute a blank version to your students for them to create!

\*Scripts are 100% editable\*

Your resource ALSO  
Includes:

## Close Reading scene

- \* "Deep dive" into a scene for character and conflict
- \* Connect the literature to the acting choices
- \* Edit to suit your classroom's needs and learning targets

### Close Reading

### Much Ado

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*The men gallop downstage and get off of their "horses."*

**CLAUDIO** *(opposite Hero, clearly in love)* Hero!  
**HERO** *(turning toward Claudio, equally smitten)* Claudio!  
**BENEDICK** *(turning away from Beatrice, not happy to see her)* Beatrice.  
**BEATRICE** *(turning away from Benedick, making her feelings clear through pronunciation)* BeneDICK.

**MARGARET** *(running to Borachio's side and throwing her arms around his neck in a frenzy of flouncy desire)* Borachio!

**BORACHIO** *(yeah, Margaret will do, for now)* Margaret.  
**PEDRO, CLAUDIO, LEONATO, HERO, MARGARET** *(The greatest thing ever)* Love!  
**BENEDICK, JOHN, BEATRICE, BORACHIO** *(it sucks big time)* Love.

*PEDRO claps his hands. PEDRO, conducts LEONATO and MARGARET, who bring CLAUDIO and HERO together in tableau center right; LEONATO leads HERO down while MARGARET leads CLAUDIO down and right; PEDRO joins HERO and CLAUDIO's hands. They freeze.*

**PEDRO** *(tada! I have worked my magic)* Love!

*PEDRO, LEONATO, and MARGARET return to their places and freeze. HERO and CLAUDIO remain joined and frozen. JOHN claps his hands. JOHN, aided by BORACHIO, reconfigures the tableau. BORACHIO removes CLAUDIO from the picture, and JOHN replaces him with PEDRO so that PEDRO and HERO are now holding hands.*

**JOHN** *(tada! I have worked my mischief)* Betrayal.

*PEDRO wakes and kisses HERO on the cheek. PEDRO leads HERO left to CLAUDIO and recreates his vision.*

**PEDRO** *(tada! I have worked my magic)* Love!

*PEDRO claps his hands. LEONATO brings BEATRICE downstage while PEDRO fetches BENEDICK and brings him down right; PEDRO joins BENEDICK and BEATRICE's hands so that they are the mirror to HERO and CLAUDIO down left; LEONATO returns to his place.*

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*PEDRO returns to his freeze. JOHN and BORACHIO reconfigure the statues; JOHN causes HERO to fall and LEONATO to appear to be kicking her R; BORACHIO turns Claudio L and then grabs MARGARET (her back to CLAUDIO) in a lewd way. All freeze except JOHN.*

**JOHN** *(tada! I have worked my mischief)* Betrayal.

#### FIRST READING

How does each character feel about the subject of love at the beginning of the scene? Divide them into three categories: pro-love, anti-love, and indifferent.

#### Second Reading

What function do Don Pedro and Don John serve? How does this affect the audience's interpretation of later scenes?

THIRD READING  
Does your opinion in #2 change your interpretation of these characters in #1?

CLICK TO TRY THE TEMPEST CLOSE  
READING FOR FREE

# Shakespeare's Language THOU & YOU

In Shakespeare's England class and station, known as **peerage**, were very important. This is how the system breaks down:

- Nobility**
- Highest rank: Duke, Duche
  - 2nd highest r
  - 3rd highest r
  - 4th highest r
  - 5th highest r

## WHO USES

- "you"**  
People of e  
People of k
- "Thou"**  
People of r  
People of  
People of  
People of

## Insult!

ANTONIC  
Boatswai

GONZA!

Boatsw  
SEBAST  
blaspt

Boats  
ANTC  
you v

Anal  
abo  
evo  
hov  
we

## Iambic Pentameter

Read the following sentence out loud:

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Certain syllables jump out at you and create the rhythm of the sentence. This is stress. Here's another example. Compare the word "record" in the following sentences.

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### Iambic Pentameter

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2. She stuck out her tongue and it stayed there, it
3. Beverly, can I get you some ice cream?
4. Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May.
5. His palms are sweaty, knees weak, arms are heavy.

## WHY DOES IAMBIC PENTAMETER & WHY NOT?

Not all of Shakespeare's characters speak in iambic pentameter. Some characters speak in prose, which is unrhymed, unrhymed, and imperfectly so.

Your resource ALSO Includes:

## Shakespeare's Language worksheets

- \* Study iambic pentameter and find it in your play
- \* Clarify usage of Thou & You and the impact of this choice on your scenes

Your resource ALSO  
Includes:

Writing Extensions

\*Character Analysis  
paragraph

\*Performance Review to  
promote audience engagement

\*Fully editable

**INCLUDES DIGITAL VERSIONS OF ALL  
WORKSHEETS**

**A Stellar Performance** A REVIEW

Write a paragraph about one classmate you thought performed well. What did this person do to help the audience connect to their character? Use specific moments from the play to support your opinion.

4	3	2	1
Considers the performance from multiple angles.	Considers the		

**Character**

QUICK LOOK

Write a paragraph analyzing one trait from your character or another character in your play. How is this trait developed over the course of the play? Use specific moments as evidence of this character trait. Please write your paragraph on the back of this rubric.

4	3	2	1
Considers the trait from multiple angles. Uses insightful and relevant evidence to support claims.	Considers the trait from one angle. Uses relevant evidence to support claims.	Identifies a trait. Uses somewhat relevant evidence to support claims.	Does not identify a trait. Little to no evidence to support claims.



# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Does this adaptation retain Shakespeare's language?**

*Much Ado About Nothing* is a minimalist adaptation with each character only speaking one word at a time with a focus on mime and vocal expression.

## **Can I teach this with a class of thirty students? It doesn't have enough roles.**

Yes! This resource includes ideas for addressing this concern. Generally, you'll either have multiple versions of the same play performed or you'll choose two or three plays to perform together.

## **Can I adapt this for younger students?**

Yes! These plays have been performed with students as young as 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Students may need more coaching on word meaning and more time to gain fluency, but they will amaze and astound you.

## **Is this script editable?**

Yes. All of the scripts and rubrics are 100% editable. We believe that you know your students best, so you can add back in lines from the original (if you have a favorite monologue, for example), or further pare down parts if you want.

Break a leg!