Much Ado About Nothing

Two Example Sections

Original Text

Featuring the original Shakespeare script.

Visit www.classicalcomics.com to see our range of Shakespeare and Classics graphic novels.

Copyright ©2010 Classical Comics Ltd. All rights reserved.

Copyright notice: This downloadable resource is protected by international copyright law. Teachers and students are free to reproduce these pages by any method without infringing copyright restrictions, provided that the number of copies reproduced does not exceed the amount reasonably required for their own use. Under no circumstances can these resources be reused in whole or in part, for any commercial purposes, or for any purposes that are competitive to, or could be deemed to be in competition with, the business of Classical Comics Ltd.

Adapted by: John McDonald and John Stokes
Design/Layout by: Jo Wheeler
Character Designs by: John Stokes
Artwork by: John Stokes
Lettering by: Clive Bryant

Whilst all care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, Classical Comics Ltd disclaims all warranties; expressed or implied, for any errors or omissions. Classical Comics Ltd are not responsible or liable for any alleged damage arising from reliance upon the information provided, which is provided "as-is" without guarantee or warranty.
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

(The Condensed Story)

Leonato is governor of the city of Messina in Italy. He lives with his beautiful daughter, Hero, his witty and abrasive niece, Beatrice and his elderly brother, Antonio.

Don Pedro is an Italian prince who’s returning from a successful military campaign. He’s accompanied by his deputies, Claudio and Benedick. Claudio is a handsome young Florentine and Benedick is a clever man who’s been having an ongoing battle of wits with Beatrice. Don Pedro’s bastard brother, Don John, is also a member of the group. He’s a sullen, bitter man, who likes to make trouble for the others.

Leonato invites Don Pedro and his entourage to stay in Messina for at least a month. When the guests arrive, Claudio quickly falls in love with Hero and Benedick resumes his war of words with Beatrice. A masquerade ball is held in celebration. Don Pedro, in disguise, courts Hero on Claudio’s behalf. Don John tries to cause trouble by telling Claudio that his brother wants Hero for himself. An argument ensues, but the misunderstanding is quickly resolved. Claudio and Hero pledge their love for each other and plan to get married.

To pass the time in the week before the wedding ceremony, they all decide to come up with a plan to get Benedick and Beatrice to fall in love, as the couple are clearly meant for each other, though both have said they’ll never marry. The men talk about Beatrice’s love for Benedick, while they know he’s eavesdropping and the women do likewise with Beatrice. The plan works and the couple soon fall secretly in love.

Meanwhile, Don John is plotting to ruin the wedding. His follower, Borachio, courts Margaret, Hero’s chambermaid. He calls her “Hero” at Hero’s open bedroom window, while Don John has manoeuvred Don Pedro and Claudio to lurk below. Claudio mistakes Margaret for Hero and assumes she’s being unfaithful to him. Next day, during the wedding ceremony, Claudio humiliates Hero by accusing her and abandoning her at the alter.

The presiding Friar believes Hero is innocent and convinces the family to feign Hero’s death, until her innocence can be proven. Fortunately, the night watchmen overheard Borachio and his accomplice, Conrade, bragging about their evil deed. Borachio and Conrade are arrested and Hero’s good name is restored. Meanwhile, Claudio is now full of remorse, believing Hero to have died because of him. Claudio, as a penance, agrees to marry a mysterious masked woman, who he believes to be Hero’s cousin.

Benedick and Beatrice reluctantly admit their love for each other and, during the new wedding ceremony, Hero unmasks herself to a surprised and delighted Claudio. Benedick asks Beatrice to marry him and, after some arguing and invective, she agrees. A messenger arrives to say that Don John has been arrested and a merry dance ensues, before the lovers celebrate a double wedding.
SECTION 1
Act 4, Scene 1, lines 196 to 325

Background

*Much Ado About Nothing* combines two separate stories. The first is the plotting of Don John, which causes Claudio to mistakenly think that Hero has been unfaithful, leading to the false accusation of Hero. The second is the relationship between the ‘antagonists’ Benedick and Beatrice, and the plan to get them to declare their love for each other.

Prior to this section of Act 4 – Scene 1, Hero has already been wrongly accused by Claudio and been rebuked by her father, Leonato – also, Benedick and Beatrice have already been ‘told’ of each one’s love for the other. The section begins with the Friar outlining his plan to restore Hero’s good name, which is accepted by Leonato, then the rest of the section belongs to Benedick and Beatrice, and the interplay between these two ‘reluctant’ lovers.

Benedick is the seminal ‘young lord’ or ‘courtier’. The perfect man, who’s able to love and fight with equal passion – he can sing, dance, understand diplomacy and philosophy and be extremely witty. Benedick’s intellectual qualities have been challenged by an equally intellectual Beatrice throughout the play, but the couple come to an understanding of sorts here in Act 4 – Scene 1.

Beatrice and Benedick, despite their carefree attitudes, are far more in touch with the social mores of the time than the other characters and their relationship is a microcosm of the underlying theme of the play – the men’s fears of being shamed, duped and/or outdone by the women. Beatrice indicates, when she says “O God, that I were a man!”, that she would make a better man than Benedick. The social illusions created for survival in this society are illustrated in two different, though similar, ways in the play – the first in the attitude of Claudio towards Hero and the second in the attitude of Benedick towards Beatrice.
Pause awhile, and let my counsel sway
you in this case.

Your daughter here
the princes lest for dead,
let her awhile be secretly
kept in, and publish it that
she is dead indeed.

Maintain a mourning ostentation,
and on your family's old monument hang
mournfull epitaphs; and do all rites
that appertain unto a burial.

What shall become of this?
What will this do?

Marry this,
Well carried, shall
on her behalf change
slander to remorse;
that is some good.

But not for that dream I on this strange course,
but on this truant look for greater birth.
She dying, as it must be
so mantained, upon the instant that she
was accus'd, shall be lamented, pitied,
and excuse'd of every hearer.

For it so falls out,
that what we have we prize not
to the worth whilsts we enjoy it;
but being lack'd and lost, why,
then we rack the value.
Then we find the
virtue that possession
would not show us whilsts
it was ours.

So will it fare with Claudio;
When he shall hear she died upon his words,
'th' idea of her life shall swiftly creep
into his study of imagination;

And every lovely organ of
her life shall come apparel'd
in more precious habit,
more moving, delicate, and
full of life, into the eye and
prospect of his soul, than
when she liv'd indeed.

Then shall he mourn,
if ever love had interest
in his liver, and wish he had
not so accursed her,
no, though he thought
his accusation true.

Let this be so; and doubt not but success
will fashion the event in better shape than
I can lay it down in likelihood.

But if all aim but this be
levell'd false, the supposition of
the lady's death will quench the
wonder of her infancy.

And if it sort not well, you
may conceal her, as best befits her
wounded reputation. In some reclusive
and religious life, out of all eyes,
tongues, minds, and injuries.
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Original Text

www.classicalcomics.com ©2010 Classical Comics Ltd.
I will swear by it that you love me; and I will make him eat it that says I love you not.

Will you not eat your word?

Why, then, God forswear me!

You have stayed me in a happy hour; I was about to protest I loved you, and do it with all thy heart.

I love you with so much of my heart, that none is left to protest.

Come, bid me do anything for thee.

I love you with what offence, sweet Beatrice?

Why, then, God forswear me!

I will swear by it that you love me; and I will make him eat it that says I love you not.

Will you not eat your word?

Why, then, God forswear me!

You have stayed me in a happy hour; I was about to protest I loved you, and do it with all thy heart.

I love you with what offence, sweet Beatrice?

Why, then, God forswear me!

I will swear by it that you love me; and I will make him eat it that says I love you not.

Will you not eat your word?

Why, then, God forswear me!

You have stayed me in a happy hour; I was about to protest I loved you, and do it with all thy heart.

I love you with what offence, sweet Beatrice?

Why, then, God forswear me!

I will swear by it that you love me; and I will make him eat it that says I love you not.

Will you not eat your word?

Why, then, God forswear me!

You have stayed me in a happy hour; I was about to protest I loved you, and do it with all thy heart.

I love you with what offence, sweet Beatrice?

Why, then, God forswear me!

I will swear by it that you love me; and I will make him eat it that says I love you not.

Will you not eat your word?
Much Ado About Nothing
Original Text

©2010 Classical Comics Ltd.
SINCE YOUNG, I HAVE BEEN TELLING YOU, RASH CLAUDIUS,
TO LET ME IN ALL MY LIFE. I TELL YOU, I AM NOT
THAT THE PRINCE OF DENMARK WILL BE A MAN FOR ME
OR THAT I HAD ANY FRIEND WOULD BE A MAN FOR MY SKE.
BUT MANHOOD IS MELTED IN COURTESIES, VALOUR INTO
COMPLIMENT, AND MEN ARE ONLY TURNED INTO TONGUES,
AND THEM ODD TOO.
HE IS NOW AS VALIANT AS HERCULES
THAT ONLY TELLS A LIE, AND SWEARS IT.
I CANNOT BE A MAN WITH WISHING,
THEREFORE I WILL KISS A WOMAN
WITH GRIEVINGS.

THINK YOU IN YOUR SOUL THE COUNT
CLAUDIUS HATH WROUNG? HERO?

YES, AS SURE
AS I HAVE A THOUGHT OR A SOUL.

ENOUGH! I AM ENGAGED; I WILL CHALLENGE HIM,
I WILL KISS YOUR HAND, AND SO I LEAVE YOU.
BY THIS HAND, CLAUDIUS SHALL
RENDEZ ME A DEAR ACCOUNT,
AS YOU HEAR OF ME; SO
THINK OF ME.

SO,
COMFORT YOUR COUSIN;
I MUST SAY SHE IS DEAD,
AND SO,
FAREWELL.
SECTION 2
Act 5, Scene 4

Background

The climax of any play can be said to be (a) the turning point at which the conflict begins to resolve itself, or (b) the final resolution. If we go with the first definition, then the climax is when the Friar proposes his plan to restore Hero’s good name in the first section [Act 4 – Scene 1]. According to the second definition, the climax occurs in the final scene: Act 5 – Scene 4.

Everything is resolved here in this final Scene. The Friar’s plan to restore Hero’s good name has succeeded. The third element introduced by Shakespeare, evil [in the form of Don John], has been defeated. This defeat of evil has been treated in a comic way, with the Watchmen easily uncovering Don John’s plot, despite the ineptitude of Dogberry. It could, of course, have worked out a lot worse, as in Romeo and Juliet and Othello.

All the loose ends are tied up in this scene – Claudio agrees to marry who he believes is Hero’s cousin, without seeing her face. He is delighted when he finds out it is, in fact, Hero, who isn’t dead at all. Benedick and Beatrice agree to marry, albeit without declarations of undying love – their commitments are more sarcastic and self-preserving, each saying they’ll have the other for other reasons than pure love, although the audience knows that these are just excuses and a further extension of the verbal sparring that’s been going on between them throughout the play; and that they really, deep down, love each other.

A messenger arrives to say Don John has been arrested, but his punishment is left for another day, so that the play can end on a happy, carefree note.
DID I NOT TELL YOU SHE WAS INNOCENT?

SO ARE THE PRINCE AND CLAUDIO, WHO ACCUSED HER UPON THE ERROR THAT YOU HEARD DEBATED.

BUT MARGARET WAS IN SOME FAULT FOR THIS, ALTHOUGH AGAINST HER WILL, AS IT APPEARS IN THE TRUE COURSE OF ALL THE QUESTION.

WELL, I AM GLAD THAT ALL THINGS SORT SO WELL. AND SO AM I, BEING ELSE BY FAITH ENFORCED TO CALL YOUNG CLAUDIO TO A RECKONING FOR IT.

WELL, DAUGHTER, AND YOU GENTLEWOMEN ALL, WITHDRAW INTO A CHAMBER BY YOURSELVES; AND WHEN I SEND FOR YOU, COME HITHER MASK'D.

THE PRINCE AND CLAUDIO PROMISED BY THIS HOUR TO VISIT ME, YOU KNOW YOUR OFFICE, BROTHER; YOU MUST BE FATHER TO YOUR BROTHER'S DAUGHTER, AND GIVE HER TO YOUNG CLAUDIO.

WICH I WILL DO WITH CONFIRMED COUNTENANCE.

FEAR, I MUST ENTREAT YOUR PAINS, I THINK;

TO DO WHAT, SIGNOR?

SIGNOR LEONATO, TRUTH IT IS, GOOD SIGNOR, YOUR NEESE REGARDS ME WITH AN EYE OF CAVOUR.

THAT EYE MY DAUGHTER LENT HER; IT IS MOST TRUE.

TO BIND ME, OR UNDO ME; ONE OF THEM.

AND I DO WITH AN EYE OF LOVE REquite HER.
Much Ado About Nothing
Original Text

But what's your will? your answer, sir, is enigmatical. but for my will, my will is your good will may stand with curb; this day to be confirmed in the state of honourable marriage; in whom, good friar, I shall desire your help.

My heart is with your liking. and my help, here comes the prince and claudio.

Good morrow to this fair assembly. good morrow, prince; good morrow, claudio. we here attend you. are you yet determined today to marry with my brother's daughter?

I'll hold my mind; were she an ethiop, call her forth, brother! here's the friar ready.

Good morrow, benedick. why, what's the matter, that you have such a february face, so full of frost, of storm, and cloudiness?

I think he thinks upon the savage bull; yah, fear not, man.

Well tip thy horns with gold, and all europa shall rejoice at these! as once europa did at lusty jove, when he would play the noble beast in love.
BULL JOVE, SIR, 
HAD AN AMUSABLE LOWL, 
AND SOME SUCH STRANGE 
BULL LEAPT YOUR 
FATHER'S COW, 
AND GOT A CALF IN 
THAT SAME NICE FEEAT 
MUCH LIKE TO MINE. 
FOR YOU HAVE JUST 
HIS BLEAT.

FOR THIS I 
OWE YOU, 
HERE COMES 
OTHER RECKONINGS.

WHICH IS 
THE LADY I MUST 
SEEZE UPON?

WHY, THEN, 
SHE'S MINE.

SWEET, 
LET ME SEE 
YOUR FACE.

NO, THAT YOU SHALL NOT, 
TILL YOU TAKE HER HAND BEFORE 
THIS FRAIL, AND I SWEAR TO 
MARRY HER.

AND WHEN I LIVED, 
I WAS YOUR OTHER WIFE; AND 
WHEN YOU LOVED, YOU WERE 
MY OTHER HUSBAND.

GIVE ME 
YOUR HAND;

BEFORE THIS HOLY FEAR, 
I AM YOUR HUSBAND, IF YOU LIKE OF ME.

AND WHEN I LIVED, 
I WAS YOUR OTHER WIFE; AND 
WHEN YOU LOVED, YOU WERE 
MY OTHER HUSBAND.

ANOTHER 
HERO!

NOTHING 
CERTAINER.
ONE HERO DIED DEFIL'D;
BUT I DO LIVE, AND SURELY
AS I LIVE, I AM A MAID,
The former hero!
HERO THAT IS DEAD!

SHE DIED, MY LORD,
BUT WHILES HER SLANDER LIVED.

ALL THIS AMAIEMENT CAN I QUALIFY:
WHEN, AFTER THAT THE HOLY RITES ARE ENDED,
I'LL TELL YOU LARGELY OF YOUR HERO'S DEATH.
MEANETH WE LET WONDER SEEM
FAMILIAR, AND TO THE CHAPEL
LET US PRESENTLY!

SORT AND FAIR, PRIOR,
WHICH IS BEATRICE?

I ANSWER TO THAT NAME.
WHAT IS YOUR WILL?

DO NOT YOU
LOVE ME?

WHY, NO!
NO MORE THAN REASON.

WHY, THEN YOUR UNCLE,
AND THE PRINCE, AND CLAUDIO
HAVE BEEN RECEIVED.
THEY SWEAR YOU DID.

DO NOT YOU
LOVE ME?

TRUTH, NO,
NO MORE THAN
REASON.

WHY THEN MY COUSIN MARGARET,
AND URSULA ARE MUCH DECEIVED!
FOR THEY DID SWEAR YOU DID.

THEY SWEORE THAT YOU WERE
ALMOST SICK FOR ME.

THEY SWEORE THAT YOU WERE
WELL-NISH DEAD FOR ME.

'TIS NO SUCH MATTER.
THEN YOU DO NOT LOVE HER?

NO, TRULY, BUT IN
FRIENDLY RECOMPENSE.
CLOWN, CUSIN; I AM SURE YOU LOVE THE GENTLEMAN.

AND I’LL BE SWORN UPON THAT HE LOVES HER! FOR HERE’S A PAPER, WRITTEN IN HIS HAND, A HALLING SONNET OF HIS OWN PURE BRAIN, FASHION’D TO BEATRICE.

AND HERE’S ANOTHER, WRITTEN IN MY COUSIN’S HAND, STOLEN FROM HER POCKET, CONTAINING HER AFFECTION UNTO BENEDICK.

A MIRACLE! HERE’S OUR OWN HANDS AGAINST OUR HEARTS.

COME, I WILL HAVE THESE! BUT, BY THIS LIGHT, I TAKE THEE FOR PITY.

I WOULD NOT DENY YOU, BUT, BY THIS GOOD DAY, I YIELD UPON GREAT PERSUASION.

AND PARTLY TO SAVE YOUR LIFE, FOR I WAS TOLD YOU WERE IN A CONSUMPTION.

PEACE! I WILL STOP YOUR MOUTH.

HOW DOST THOU, BENEDICK, THE MARRIED MAN?

I’LL TELL THEE WHAT, PRINCE! A COLLEGE OF WIT-CRACKERS CANNOT DECAY ME OUT OF MY HUMOUR.

DOST THOU THINK I CARE FOR A SATIRE OR AN EPGRAM?

NO! IF A MAN WILL BE BEATEN WITH BRAINS, I SHALL WEAR NOTHING HANDSOME ABOUT HIM.
IN BRIEF, SINCE I DO PURPOSE TO MARRY, I WILL THINK NOTHING TO ANY PURPOSE THAT THE WORLD CAN SAY AGAINST IT. AND THEREFORE NEVER FLOUT ME FOR WHAT I HAVE SAID AGAINST IT; FOR MAN IS A Giddy Thing, AND THIS IS MY CONCLUSION.

I HAD WELL HOPEP THOU WOULDST HAVE DENIED BEATRICE,

THAT I MIGHT HAVE CUPCISELLED THEE OUT OF THY SINGLE LIFE, TO MAKE THEE A DOUBLE-DEALER; WHICH OUT OF QUESTION THEE WILT BE, IF MY COUSIN DO NOT LOOK EXCEEDING NARROWLY TO THEE.

COME, COME, WE ARE FRIENDS.

PRINCE, THOU ART SAD, GET THEE A WIFE, GET THEE A WIFE! THERE IS NO STAFF MORE REVEREND THAN ONE TIPPED WITH HORN.

LET'S HAVE A DANCE ERE WE ARE MARRIED, THAT WE MAY LIGHTEN OUR OWN HEARTS, AND OUR WIVES' HEELS.

FIRST, OF MY WORD! THEREFORE PLAY MUSIC!

WE'LL HAVE DANCING AFTERWARD.

FOR THY PART, CLAUDIO, I DID THINK TO HAVE BEATEN THEE; BUT IN THAT THOU ART LIKE TO BE MY KINGMAN, I'LL VENGE THEE, AND LOVE MY COUSIN.
Your brother John is 'a'en in flight, and brought with armed men back to Messina.

Think not on him till tomorrow!

I'll devise thee brave punishments for him.

Strike up, pipers!
## DRAMATIS PERSONAE
(in alphabetical order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANTONIO</td>
<td>Brother to Leonato&lt;br&gt;Antonio is Leonato’s older brother, and is Uncle to Hero and Beatrice (he is therefore not Beatrice’s father).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALTHAZAR</td>
<td>Attendant on Don Pedro&lt;br&gt;Balthazar is a musician who works within Leonato’s household. He helps Leonato, Claudio and Don Pedro to trick Benedick into falling in love with Beatrice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEATRICE</td>
<td>Niece to Leonato&lt;br&gt;Hero’s cousin, Beatrice, is very quick-witted; often amusing those around her with jokes and quips. Although kindly in nature, her wit can force her into teasing and mocking others – particularly Benedick, who is her “arch-wit-rival”. But this hides her affection for him, from those who know her, and from her own self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BENEDICK</td>
<td>A young lord of Padua&lt;br&gt;A high-ranking soldier, who is also a good friend of Don Pedro and Claudio. He likes to mock those around him with his wit, particularly the quick-witted Beatrice. He is determined never to marry, and is very critical of women. Despite that, he falls in love with Beatrice and changes his opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BORACHIO</td>
<td>Follower of Don John&lt;br&gt;It is Borachio who conspires with Don John to bring about the end to the relationship between Hero and Claudio. He achieves this with the help of his lover, Margaret, who is one of Hero’s servants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAUDIO</td>
<td>A young lord of Florence&lt;br&gt;Claudio falls in love with Hero, but is tricked into believing that Hero is unfaithful to him, and so the love affair is ended. Of course, he doesn’t stop loving Hero, and the resolution of the tale is completed with him marrying his love – who he thought was dead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **CONRADE** | *Follower of Don John*  
An intimate friend of Don John, who is totally devoted to him. |
| **DOG Berry** | *A constable*  
The chief policeman in Messina. He is the focus of some word humour within the play, as although he is middle class, he acts upper class – but without the education to back it up. Consequently he is in the habit of using inappropriate and incorrect words – which betrays his upper-class appearance. |
| **DON JOHN** | *Don Pedro’s illegitimate brother*  
Don John is the play’s “nasty man”. He is deeply jealous of his brother’s power, and his sourness forces him to destroy even the happiness of Hero and Claudio. |
| **DON PEDRO** | *Prince of Arragon*  
Throughout the play, Don Pedro is often referred to as “The Prince”. He is an old friend of Leonato, the Governor of Messina (and Hero’s father). He is also close friends to the high-ranking soldiers who fight under him – Benedick and Claudio. He is a good natured prince, but has a tendency towards suspicion of others. |
| **FRIAR FRANCIS** | The Friar serves as a righteous advisor to the cast, and concocts the ploy of feigning Hero’s death in order to reinstate her good name when her reputation is tarnished by Borachio and Don John. |
| **HERO** | *Daughter to Leonato*  
Beautiful and virtuous Hero, cousin of Beatrice, is manipulated throughout. She is lied about, besmirched, has her heart broken by Claudio, is reported as dead, and only at the end has her reward in the marriage to Claudio – her one true love. |
### LEONATO
*Governor of Messina*
Hero’s father, and Beatrice’s uncle, Leonato is a respected nobleman of the highest position in Messina. Don Pedro and he are old friends.

### MARGARET
*Gentlewoman attending Hero*
Margaret unwittingly helps Don John and Borachio destroy Hero’s character by making her look unfaithful to her love, Claudio. She is the lover of Borachio.

### URSULA
*Gentlewoman attending Hero*
Another servant to Hero – though true to her, unlike Margaret.

### VERGES
*A headborough*
Deputy to Dogberry in the police force of Messina.

---

**POSTSCRIPT**

*Much Ado About Nothing* is unusual insofar as most of it is written in ordinary prose rather than the blank verse favoured by Shakespeare. However, this prose is still full of Shakespeare’s rich, colourful imagery and his brilliant plays on words.

Those exchanges which are in blank verse are usually between Claudio and Hero, perhaps to express – or even mock – their exalted feelings of love – and between Leonato and the Friar, perhaps to express the formality of their roles as Governor and Priest.