


# School of Shakespeare Series

## 'Much Ado About Nothing'

## *Teenage boys and girls find each other really annoying!*

Shakespeare was a master at creating sensational characters. They are strong, brave, determined, ruthless, funny, selfish, vulnerable, jealous and at times incredibly evil. Often they are placed in extreme circumstances and faced with epic choices or challenges that are unfamiliar to our modern lives. But what is familiar is that within each character, there is something that we can all connect with. One reason why Shakespeare's stories have lasted the test of time is because we may not always understand the circumstance the characters are in, but we can always relate in some way to how the characters ***feel***.

Use the scenes and activities to demonstrate that Shakespearian teenagers found each other just as annoying 400 years ago as they do today!

**School of Shakespeare**
Mr Bard is determined to get his English class to understand why Shakespeare is so valuable. The class are very resistant and think that Shakespeare is boring and irrelevant. Mr Bard has one chance to prove that Shakespeare has a huge part to play in their young lives.

**Much Ado About Nothing**
Benedict and Beatrice are both known for their quick wit, strong opinions and stubborn approach to life, and most importantly, to love. Whilst the other young people in Messina are falling in love, they are determined to stay single, and as far away from each other as they possibly can.

## Drama Activities

*Arguments can be really fun to act out but they can get very loud and the words can get garbled! To keep a good pace in the scenes, here are some top tips to help you have the most dramatic argument you can!*

### 'School of Shakespeare' Group Activity

- Divide class into two groups one playing 'Katie' and the other 'Julian'
- Groups stand in two lines facing each other at opposite sides of room
- Teacher stands in middle of room between two lines in role as Mr Bard
- Each group says character lines in unison and takes a step forwards after they have finished each section of dialogue
- By the end of the scene, the lines should be close enough to look their opposite character in the eye
- Lock eye contact with a character in the opposite line
- Keep staring until one character cracks a smile and then quietly sit down where standing.
- Swap roles and return to lines to repeat activity
- Which character can hold their stare and focus the longest?

### 'Much Ado About Nothing' Group Activity

- Sit on chairs in a circle
- Chose someone to start to read the first line
- When there is any piece of punctuation the group has to all stand up and move clockwise to sit on the next chair.
- When everyone is sitting again, the next person in the circle then continues to read until the next piece of punctuation
- Continue until the end of the scene when the group should have moved often and may be slightly out of breath – just like a good argument!

**'Much Ado About Nothing' Paired Activity**

- Decide who will play Benedict and Beatrice
- Important to keep the dialogue flowing even if there are words or phrases that are confusing. Keep on going!
- Face each other at start of the scene
- Take a step in any direction whenever there is a piece of punctuation.
- Go through the scene playing each part moving with every piece of punctuation
- At first this will seem very robotic but as get more confident, the movement can become more fluid and don't need to be always with feet. Can move head sharply on punctuation, or point, or turn their back. Important that there is movement, large or small when there is punctuation.
- Teacher assigns each group 2 lines to practise and perform to the rest of the group.
- Place groups in order to perform entire scene

**School of Shakespeare**

**Act I Scene 1**

*Mr Bard is trying to convince his class that it is important for them to study Shakespeare.*

JULIAN Sir - Shakespeare is meaningless boring rubbish, written by someone whose plays should have died with him 400 years ago.

MR BARD Well let me try and prove you wrong.

KATIE You won't.

MR BARD If after looking at one play, you still think it's a waste of time then we won't continue. Ok?

JULIAN Fair enough. Wake me up when it's over!

MR BARD Our first volunteer. Perfect. We'll start with one of Shakespeare's comedies, called 'Much Ado About Nothing'. You will play the part of Benedick, who thinks that no woman will ever be good enough for him.

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KATIE Well he sounds like an idiot. Julian is the perfect choice to play him.

JULIAN What's that? I'm perfect? Katie we've been over this, you're just not my type. I go for pretty girls.

KATIE Pretty desperate girls!

MR BARD Look's like we've found our next volunteer! Katie – you're Beatrice!

JULIAN But sir - are you sure she can read?

KATIE Are you still talking? Nobody cares about what you have to say! Sir – no way – I find him offensive!

MR BARD Look - Benedick and Beatrice can't stand each other. Trust me - I think you'll enjoy it! Come on - off you go.

*(KATIE and JULIAN stand opposite each other at the front of the classroom)*

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KATIE *(reluctant)* I wonder that you will still be talking Signior Benedick: nobody marks you.

JULIAN *(embarrassed)* What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living…..

*Katie and Julian become less self-conscious in playing these parts and become more animated and annoyed with one another as they become Benedick and Beatrice.*

**Much Ado About Nothing**

**Act 1 Scene 1**

BEATRICE I wonder that you will still be talking Signior 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 Signior Benedick?

BENEDICK 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: 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 escape a 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. But keep your way - I have done.

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

(Exit, BEATRICE)

BENEDICK That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks: I will do myself the right to trust none; and the fine is, for the which I may go the finer, I will live a bachelor.

*School of Shakespeare is a two-act school play that invites a class of reluctant readers to study Shakespeare. Through their classroom chat and teenage banter, they realise that the conversations in many of Shakespeare's plays, mirror the realities of their own lives. The play moves between classroom to Shakespearian scenes, weaving itself through Romeo & Juliet, Macbeth, Twelfth Night, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, Hamlet and Henry V. School of Shakespeare is a play for 8-18 year olds to perform with a flexible cast of 50-100 performers. More scenes to download are available at [www.treepress.org](http://www.treepress.org)*