

High School English Supplement for *Much Ado About Nothing*

RL.2 – Analyze how and why individuals, events and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Characterization

Review characterization terms and identify an example of each from *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Round Character – a character with many aspects to his/her personality (lots of development and details)

Flat Character – a character defined by very few traits (very little detail or development)

Dynamic Character – a character who undergoes change or growth throughout the text

Static character – a character who does not change

Don Pedro, the Prince of Aragon

Don John, the illegitimate half-brother of Don Pedro

Claudio, a Count and friend of Don Pedro

Benedick, a gentleman of Padua and member of Don Pedro's company

Conrade, a follower of Don John

Borachio, a follower of Don John

Friar Francis, the parish Friar

Balthasar, a musician in Don Pedro's company

Dogberry, Constable of the Watch in Messina

Verges, Dogberry's partner in the Watch

Leonato, a gentleman of Messina

Antonia, wife of Leonato

Hero, daughter of Leonato and Antonia

Beatrice, niece of Leonato and Antonia, cousin of Hero

Margaret, servant to Hero

Ursula, servant to Hero

RL.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including technical connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Review the “skirmish of wit” between Benedick and Beatrice in the opening scene and delve further into the significance of the insults they level at each other. “Decode” the denotative and connotative meanings behind the words to translate them into modern language and analyze the deeper meaning; an example has been done for you.

Shakespeare’s Text	Modern Translation	Significance/Connotation
BEATRICE I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick: nobody marks you.	You’re talking simply to hear the sound of your own voice; no one else is listening to you.	Beatrice accuses Benedick of being insufferably prideful and embarrasses him in front of his fellow soldiers and commanding officer.
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? 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 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.		

Essay/Discussion Questions

- The conversation during the opening scene hints at a prior acquaintance between Beatrice and Benedick; write a backstory which focuses on their past relationship.
- Compare the relationship between the two sets of lovers in the play; what kind of love does Shakespeare show the audience? How might these examples be a commentary on the nature of love?
- Why is Don John so determined to thwart his half-brother, Don Pedro? Research succession laws and traditions of the period to understand more of his motivation.
- During the chapel scene after the “almost wedding,” Beatrice and Benedick talk at length about “a man’s office” and what traits and behaviors define a man and a woman. How does the text as a whole offer a definition of manhood and womanhood?
- In Act 5, Scene 2, Benedick attempts to demonstrate his love for Beatrice by writing her a poem. Examine other sonnets of the period to gain a better idea of the models he follows in this undertaking. Why is language the preferred “gift” or expression of love?

Sonnet 116 by William Shakespeare: <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/sonnets/116.html>

Sonnet 1 from *Astrophil & Stella* by Sir Philip Sidney: http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/English/Sidney1thru27.htm#_Toc88297044

RL.9 – Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Each performance of a text is an interpretation, filtered through the minds of directors and actors before it is brought to life on stage or screen. While the text is essentially the same, the lens through which each production views the same words is slightly different, producing a unique result. Consider this as you compare a scene from two other adaptations of *Much Ado About Nothing* to that performed by Sweet Tea Shakespeare.

Don Pedro Arrives: (“I wonder that you will still be talking...”)

Kenneth Branagh and Emma Thompson (1993): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yxey3C9BGms>

Alexis Denisof and Amy Acker (2012): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IUlllaPVVQ>

Tricking Benedick in the orchard:

David Tennant and Catherine Tate (2011): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKEJryBZ72E>

Kenneth Branagh and Emma Thompson (1993): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbF7LVDKEqk>

Chapel Scene:

David Tennant and Catherine Tate (2011): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK0jlGM-uSI>

Kenneth Branagh and Emma Thompson (1993): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WDos5YgNjI>

Alexis Denisof and Amy Acker (2012): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzuWf66R2HY>

Another possibility for comparison is the BBC's *Shakespeare Retold* (2005) miniseries, featuring an abbreviated, modernized adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*. View the opening scene here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lx6El4xDQw8>