



[Much Ado About Nothing](#), by William Shakespeare

In A Nutshell

Much Ado About Nothing is one of William Shakespeare's best-loved comedies. Written around 1598, the play is about a young woman wrongly accused of being unchaste who is later reconciled with her accusing lover. It is also about a second couple – two witty, bright individuals who swear they will never fall in love.

Stories about young women wrongly accused, brought close to death, and then rejoined with their lovers were really popular during the Renaissance. Shakespeare used that trope (which can be traced all the way back to the Greek romances) to make this light and silly comedy. The play trips along at a steady pace as characters invent and pass on totally misleading information; watching this process as it undoes characters is like playing a 16th century game of Telephone.

This is a neat chance to watch Shakespeare shake a complex (sometimes unnecessarily complex) plot. Further, it's a cool "study in progress" of Shakespeare: Beatrice and Benedick's acidic romance is a more developed version of the hatred-turned-to-love from *The Taming of the Shrew*; and Don John, the inexplicably evil villain of this play, is a sort of character study for the inexplicably evil Iago of Shakespeare's later play *Othello*.

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- [Much Ado About Nothing Summary](#)
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Big Picture Study Questions

- 1 What is Shakespeare actually suggesting about love in this play? Though we come to like Beatrice and Benedick, and to root for their romance, in the end, they get the same reward (marriage) as Claudio and Hero. Is Shakespeare undermining marriage here, by saying it 's not necessarily an indicator of true love? Do Claudio and Hero have true love? Do Beatrice and Benedick?
- 2 The only way to justify all the "ado" about Hero 's virginity is to understand that in Shakespeare 's day, all a woman really brought to a marriage was her chastity. It seems our modern mores, being different than Shakespeare 's, that make the foundation of the play a little tenuous. If this scandal of disloyalty before a wedding were to crop up today, would the same brouhaha occur? Is it fair to say that this fuss is really "about nothing"?
- 3 Is there a hero in this play? Are there any characters you trust to be simply "good" people, or do each of the characters transform too much in order to trust them?

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