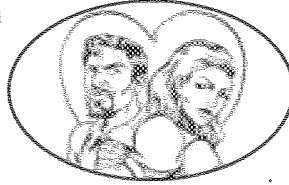


BACKGROUND INFORMATION

# Much Ado About Nothing

*Much Ado About Nothing*, written in 1598 and first published in 1600, is a romantic comedy that takes place in aristocratic circles in 13th-century Italy. It offers plenty of humor, but a touch of sadness as well.



characters note rather than see, and as a result are easily induced to fall in or out of love. The play also deals with the themes of honor and shame, as well as loyalty—very important ideas in Elizabethan times.

The play weaves together the story of two sets of lovers: Beatrice and Benedick, who are brought together by the workings of their friends and relatives; and Hero and Claudio, who are nearly destroyed by a person's deceit and trickery.

One of the main themes of this play is perception. In both love stories, at least one member of the couple overhears something that alters his or her feelings for the other. Elizabethan audiences would have been tipped off to the plot by its title—"nothing" was pronounced "noting" back then. The

**Activity:** Ask students to imagine they are Beatrice or Benedick, and write a sonnet to the other after they have overheard of the other's supposed love for them. (An English sonnet is a 14-line poem with the rhyme scheme *abab cdcd efef gg*, and the rhythm in iambic pentameter, *da DA da DA da DA da DA*, with the capitalized "DA" representing the stressed syllables.) Discuss with students what the sonnets might have been like before each believed the other loved them. Some students might want to write "before" and "after" sonnets.

**BARD CARD**

## Much Ado About Nothing

**Plot Summary:** *Much Ado About Nothing* is the story of two pairs of lovers, one brought together by meddling, and the other, almost destroyed by it. This comedy takes place in 13th-century Italy.

### Main Characters

- Don Pedro:** Prince of Arragon
- Leonato:** Governor of Messina
- Benedick:** a young lord
- Claudio:** a young lord
- Hero:** Leonato's daughter
- Beatrice:** Leonato's niece
- Don John:** Don Pedro's evil half-brother

### Glossary

- arrant:** extreme
- confirmed:** fixed in a habit and unlikely to change
- cunning:** clever
- defiled:** dishonored
- disdain:** to look down on something
- ducats:** gold coins
- knave:** a tricky, deceitful person
- meet:** fit
- prolong'd:** lengthened in time
- reconciled:** had resolved their differences
- requite:** repay
- ruffian:** a brutal person; a bully
- wanton:** a person who is indecent or morally offensive
- wooed:** courted
- yield:** give up