

Much Ado About Nothing is a comedy by [William Shakespeare](#) about two pairs of lovers, Benedick and Beatrice, and Claudio and Hero. From Wikipedia

Benedick and Beatrice are engaged in a very "merry war"; they are both very glib and proclaim their scorn for love, marriage, and each other. In contrast, Claudio and Hero are sweet young people who are rendered practically speechless by their love for one another. By means of "noting" (which sounds the same as "nothing," and which is gossip, rumour, and overhearing), Benedick and Beatrice are tricked into confessing their love for each other, and Claudio is tricked into rejecting Hero at the altar. However, Dogberry, a Constable who is a master of [malapropisms](#), discovers the evil trickery of the villain, Don John. In the end, Don John is captured and everyone else joins in a dance celebrating the marriages of the two couples.

- **[Don Pedro](#)**, *Prince of [Aragon](#)*: A kind, good Prince who helps Claudio win Hero. It was very common for the superiors of that time to find suitable wives for their men. He later helps Claudio disgrace Hero when he believes that she is unfaithful and he also tricks **Benedick** and **Beatrice** to fall in love.
- **Benedick**, of [Padua](#); *companion of Don Pedro*: A sarcastic, witty bachelor who swears he will never marry, he later falls in love with Beatrice when he is tricked into believing that she loves him. He is said to be very good in battle and there is hinting at a past relationship with Beatrice, though they do nothing but fight when the story opens.
- **Claudio**, of [Florence](#); *a count, companion of Don Pedro*
- **Balthasar**, *attendant on Don Pedro, a singer*: Though Don Pedro praises his singing, Benedick calls him a "cat who sounds as if someone is killing it."
- **Don John**, "*the [Bastard Prince](#), brother of Don Pedro and the main villain.*"
- **Borachio and Conrade**, *followers of Don John*: They are the ones who actually initiate the plot to frame Hero as an adulteress. Borachio, who is in a relationship with Margaret, gets her into Hero's clothes and makes love to her on the balcony window, in full sight of Don John, Don Pedro, and Claudio.
- **Leonato**, *governor of Messina*: He is ready to kill Hero himself when he believes she has dishonored him, but when he starts to believe her innocence, is ready to turn and kill Claudio instead.
- **Hero**, *Leonato's daughter*: Beautiful, sweet, gentle, and demure, she is wrongfully accused of unfaithfulness and publicly

humiliated on her wedding day. Wounded by Claudio's anger and her love for him, she swoons, and later pretends to be dead to bring remorse to her beloved. She marries Claudio in the end.

- **Beatrice**, *niece of Leonato*: Hero's witty, older cousin, she attacks Benedick verbally, though she mentions once that "I wish he would have boarded me," insinuating that they had a past relationship. She swears never to marry, but after being tricked into believing that Benedick loves her, falls in love with him. She asks him to avenge Hero's dishonor and he reluctantly agrees to challenge Claudio to a duel. Her father is Antonio.
- **Antonio**, *an old man, brother of Leonato*: Offers to fight Claudio after Hero is pronounced "dead."
- **Margaret**, *waiting-gentlewoman attendant on Hero*: Borachio's lover,

she wears Hero's clothes and is thought to be her mistress. It is not known if she was tricked or was in on the plot.^[8]

- **Ursula**, *waiting-gentlewoman attendant on Hero*
- **Friar Francis**, *a priest*: The priest who believes in Hero's innocence and proposes the plot to pretend that she is dead.
- **Dogberry**, *the constable in charge of Messina's night watch*: An idiot with a too-large sense of self-importance, he continuously botches everything he tries to do but is indirectly responsible for Hero's public redemption from disgrace.
- **Verges**, *the Headborough, Dogberry's partner*
- **A Sexton**, *the judge of the trial of Borachio*
- **The Watch**, *watchmen of Messina*

At Messina, a messenger brings news that Don Pedro, a Spanish prince from Aragon, and his officers, Claudio and Benedick, have returned from a successful battle. Leonato, the governor of Messina, welcomes the messenger and announces that Don Pedro and his men will stay for a month. Beatrice, Leonato's niece, asks the messenger about Benedick, and makes sarcastic remarks about his ineptitude as a soldier. Leonato explains that "There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her."^[9]

Beatrice and Benedick, longtime adversaries, carry on their arguments. Claudio's feelings for Hero, Leonato's only daughter, are rekindled upon seeing her, and Claudio soon announces to Benedick his intention to court her. Benedick tries to dissuade his friend but is unsuccessful in the face of Don Pedro's encouragement. While Benedick

teases Claudio, Benedick swears that he will never get married. Don Pedro laughs at him and tells him that when he has found the right person he shall get married.

A masquerade ball is planned in celebration, giving a disguised Don Pedro the opportunity to [woo](#) Hero on Claudio's behalf. Don John uses this situation to get revenge on his brother Don Pedro by telling young Claudio that Don Pedro is wooing Hero for himself. Claudio becomes furious at Don Pedro and confronts him. The misunderstanding is quickly resolved and Claudio wins Hero's hand in marriage.

Don Pedro and his men, bored at the prospect of waiting a week for the wedding, harbour a plan to matchmake between Beatrice and Benedick. The men led by Don Pedro proclaim Beatrice's love for Benedick while knowing he is eavesdropping on their conversation. The women led by Hero do the same to Beatrice. Struck by the fact that they are apparently thought to be too proud to love each other, Beatrice and Benedick, neither willing to bear the reputation of pride, each decides to requite the love of the other.

Meanwhile Don John, "The Bastard" (Don Pedro's illegitimate brother), is a malcontent who plots to ruin Claudio and Hero's wedding by casting aspersions upon Hero's character. His follower Borachio courts Margaret, Hero's chambermaid calling her "Hero", at Hero's open bedroom window while Don John leads Don Pedro and Claudio to spy below. The latter mistaking Margaret for Hero are convinced of Hero's [infidelity](#).

The next day during the wedding, Claudio refuses to marry Hero. He and Don Pedro humiliate Hero publicly before a stunned congregation and Margaret, who is attending the wedding, does not speak up in Hero's defence. The two exit, leaving the rest in shock. Hero, who has fainted, revives after Don Pedro and Claudio leave, only to be reprimanded by her father. The presiding Friar interrupts, believing Hero to be innocent and convinces the family to fake Hero's death in order to extract the truth and Claudio's remorse. Prompted by the day's harrowing events, Benedick and Beatrice confess their love for each other. Beatrice then asks Benedick to slay Claudio as proof of his

devotion, since he has slandered her kinswoman. Benedick is horrified and denies her request.

Leonato and Antonio, Hero's uncle, subsequently blame Don Pedro and Claudio for Hero's death and challenge Claudio to duels. Benedick, prompted by Beatrice, does the same.

Luckily, on the night of Don John's treachery the local Watch has apprehended Borachio and his ally Conrade. Despite the Watch's comic ineptness (headed by constable Dogberry, a master of [malapropisms](#)), they have overheard the duo discussing their evil plans. The Watch arrest them and eventually obtain the villains' confession, informing Leonato of Hero's innocence. Though Don John has fled the city a force is sent to capture him. Claudio, though maintaining he made an honest mistake, is repentant; he agrees to not only post a proper epitaph for Hero but to marry a substitute, Hero's cousin (not Beatrice) in her place.

During Claudio's second wedding as the dancers enter, the "cousin" is unmasked as Hero to a most surprised and gratified Claudio. An impromptu dance is announced. Beatrice and Benedick, prompted by their friends' interference finally confess their love for each other to the group at large. As the play draws to a close a messenger arrives with news of Don John's capture – but his punishment is postponed another day so that the couples can enjoy their new-found happiness.