

Much Ado About Nothing - Questions

Act I

Act I Scene I

Much Ado About Nothing is a comedy play written by Shakespeare that talks about marriage, love, and other aspects of life.

1. When, according to the letter, is Don Pedro scheduled to arrive in Messina?

In the beginning of the play, according to the letter, Don Pedro is scheduled to arrive at Messina at night that day.

2. Where has Don Pedro been?

He was a soldier in the army and returns from a war.

3. How many men were killed on Don Pedro's side?

On Don Pedro's side, very few men were lost, and their army came back with almost full numbers.

4. A young Florentine named Claudio is credited with much of the victory, paraphrase the messenger's words describing Claudio's performance in battle.

A messenger present states that one of Don Pedro's men, Claudio, did exceptionally well in the war, and displayed skills beyond his age. He also displayed skills like if a lamb carried out the feats of a lion.

5. How do we know Beatrice cares somewhat for Benedick?

We know that Beatrice cares about Benedick since she asks about his health, and then proceeds to "roast" and mock him. As a messenger says that Benedick is a good man, Leonato says that Benedick and Beatrice like each other, and just mock each other for fun.

6. Who is Benedick's new friend?

Claudio is Benedick's new friend, and he is the one accompanying him back to their town.

7. This play is full of puns, fun with language and playful toying with words. In the two passages below, explain the double meanings that reveal Beatrice's wit. (You will have to study these lines in context to appreciate their full meaning.)

"It is so indeed; he is no less than a stuffed/ man."

Beatrice shows her wit in many ways, and this is one of them. The messenger states that Benedick is "stuffed" with many good qualities, and to mock Benedick, Beatrice responds by saying that he is "stuffed" like a dummy, and responding to the messenger, she says that nobody's perfect, which is another way of mocking Benedick.

"No; an he were, I would burn my study."

Beatrice continues mocking and making fun of Benedick, and another way she does that is, after the messenger assumes that Beatrice does not like Benedick, Beatrice responds by saying "if I liked Benedick, I would burn my study", which implies that "I never liked Benedick, neither will I ever".

8. Beatrice says, "God help the noble Claudio." Why does she feel Claudio is in trouble?

Continuing her conversation with the messenger, Beatrice says that Benedick is like a disease, and if Claudio gets too close with Benedick, Benedick will drive him crazy and will lose a thousand pounds before he gets cured from the "disease".

9. a. Claudio asks Benedick what he thinks of Hero. How does Benedick answer?

Once they return to Messina that night, Claudio asks Benedick what he feels about Hero, and Benedick says that he doesn't like her, since she is too short, too brown, and too dark. He doesn't want her to change to impress him, but he still doesn't like her.

b. If you were Claudio, how would you feel about Benedick's response?

If I was Claudio, I would respect Benedick's judgement, but I would also think about him being a little too harsh.

c. If you were Claudio's friend, how might you have answered him?

If I was Claudio's friend, I would respond by saying "I respect thou judgement", or something along those lines, even if I was thinking about something else.

10. Claudio tells Don Pedro how his feelings evolved for Hero. Recount his story.

Claudio, though, loves Hero, and explains to Don Pedro how his love evolved. Before leaving to war, Claudio says how his thoughts of Hero were that he likes her, and his mind was filled with worries of the war. After the war, though, his mind was clear and he started to love Hero.

11. What is the plan the Prince comes up with for wooing Hero?

The prince comes up with a plan to speak to Hero, and his plan is to disguise himself as Claudio and speak to Hero about his feelings for her.

Act I Scene II

1. What dramatic purpose does this scene serve?

Act I Scene II serves as the scene where the King learns about Claudio and the prince's feelings, but instead misunderstands that the prince actually likes Hero, and not Claudio.

2. a. How does this scene reflect the title of this play?

This scene represents the name of the play well, since the action of "noting" was done incorrectly, and they "noted" wrongly thinking that the prince himself likes Hero.

b. Do you think it is a more suitable title for the play?

Yes, this is a more suitable name for the play, since it reflects the actions going on in the play.

Act I Scene III

1. What do we learn about Don Jon's relationship with his brother?

Don John and Don Pedro are brothers, and Don John is jealous of his more successful brother, and is depressed.

2. How did Borachio learn about Don Pedro's and Claudio's plan for wooing Hero?

Borachio was hired to put scent in the rooms of Leonato, and he overheard the prince and Claudio speaking about this matter, so he knows about prince's plan to speak to Hero.

3. a. What does Don Jon mean when he says, "Would the cook were of my mind"?

Since Don John is depressed, he usually has negative thoughts, and he is saying that people should be glad the cook in the feast does not have negative thoughts, or they would poison and kill everyone.

b. What does this quotation tell us about Don Jon's personality?

This quote tells us that Don John is very depressed and pessimistic.

Narrative Paragraph - Act I

Act I is where we learn about the characters, the setting, and the beginning of the plot. From then on out, the plot begins to unfold. The play takes place in the Italian town of Messina, and the king Leonato is receiving his friends, Claudio, Don Pedro, and Benedick from war. Leonato's has a daughter, Hero, and a niece, Beatrice. Beatrice and Benedick are constantly mocking each other, and this continues even when Benedick arrives and meets Beatrice. After they meet and get settled, Claudio, who loves Hero, asks Benedick about her. He jokingly plays down her beauty after Claudio confesses his love for Hero. Don Pedro, hearing all of this, proposes a plan. He will dress up as Claudio in the dance, and confess Claudio's feelings to Hero. Don Pedro will then speak to Leonato about giving Hero up for marriage, thus confirming the marriage. Meanwhile, Leonato's brother, Antonio, tells Leonato that his servant overhears Don Pedro, Claudio, and Benedick speaking, and he incorrectly interprets their conversation as Don Pedro himself falling in love with Hero. Leonato then tells Hero, but also remembers not to listen to any rumours, until they court. Don John, Don Pedro's brother, is always depressed and pessimistic, and when asked why, he responds by saying that he lacks the skills to get out of his depression. Borachio, one of Don John's servants, tells him that he had also overheard their conversation, and correctly interprets it, and tells Don John. Don John does not like Claudio due to him being well-liked, so he wants to cause trouble with him, while Borachio, and another one of Don John's servants, Conrad, promise to help him.

Act II

Act II - Scene I

1. Beatrice and Leonato discuss the shortcomings of Benedick and Don Jon in this Act's opening. Reread the lines and explain the combination of Benedick's and Don Jon's characters that would make for an ideal man according to Beatrice and Leonato.

An Ideal man would be one that speaks less than Benedick does, while also having less of the seriousness of Don John, while being handsome, rich, and agile.

2. What is a visor?

A visor is a mask.

3. As the party begins, the couples pair off. List four couples who do so.

Benedick and Beatrice, Don Pedro and Hero, Ursula and Antonio, and Balthasar and Margaret.

4. Beatrice pretends not to know the identity of her partner in order to play a cruel trick.

a. Who is her partner?

Benedick.

b. What trick does Beatrice play on him?

Beatrice speaks very poorly of Benedick, criticising him with every opportunity she gets.

5. Paraphrase Claudio's soliloquy, lines 166-176.

I pretended I was Benedick, but I was Claudio, Hero's lover. Now I know that Don Pedro wants Hero for himself. Friendship is loyal, except when love is involved, and I shouldn't have involved anyone in my love. This occurs a lot, and now it just happened to me.

6. Benedick chastises Claudio for behaving as he is. (lines 191-192) The meaning of the phrase Benedick uses is unclear to us so we must use the footnotes provided for a possible translation or explanation.

a. Recount the story Benedick refers to in these lines.

Benedick knows that Don Pedro did not actually court Hero for himself, rather he tried to help Claudio. Claudio does not believe this, and Benedick is saying that when someone does something bad to Claudio, he misunderstands who did it and would get angry and chastise the wrong person.

b. How does this story apply to Claudio?

Claudio is person involved in this, since Don John tricked him into believing that his brother, Don Pedro took Hero for himself.

7.

a. Describe Beatrice's behavior upon hearing of Claudio's and Hero's marriage.

Beatrice starts saying how everyone gets a spouse, and she does not since she is "sunburned".

b. What does this reveal about Beatrice's character?

This reveals that Beatrice doesn't want a spouse no matter what. She seems very fixed in her decisions and always gets what she wants.

c. Don Pedro's words also give us insight into Beatrice's character. What does he observe about her?

Don Pedro says that it is good when Beatrice is happy and merry, and that suits her well rather than being silent.

8. What plan does Don Pedro come up with at the close of this scene?

Don Pedro's plan at the close of the scene is to make sure Benedick and Beatrice fall in love, by tricking Benedick into thinking that Beatrice loves him.

Act II Scene II

1. How do Don John and Borachio plan to ruin the impending marriage of Claudio and Hero?

Borachio, one of Don John's servants, suggests that Don John tells Claudio that Hero is a whore, and to prove it, they will set up Margaret, Borachio's lover, making love with Borachio, who Claudio will assume is Hero.

2. What have we seen in Claudio's behavior thus far that leads us to believe he will be fooled by this plot?

Claudio is very nervous and also very gullible. We saw this, when Don John tricked Claudio into thinking that the prince, Don Pedro, courted Hero for himself, and Claudio believed it. It took some convincing to Claudio for him to trust Don Pedro again.

Act II Scene III

1. What is the dramatic purpose of the small disagreement between the Boy and Benedick as three opens?

The small disagreement between the Boy and Benedick represents how someone can take something literally, and Benedick uses that to his advantage to make the boy go out so he can stay in the "Orchard of Eavesdropping" and listen to his friends talking. What he doesn't know, is that his friends know he is there and listening.

2. What does Benedick learn in this scene?

Benedick “learns” (wrongly) that Beatrice actually loves him. At first, he questions it, but Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato tell the story very convincingly with supporting details that make him believe it

3. Analyze Benedick's aside, lines 122-125, to explain his reason for believing what he overhears about Beatrice.

Benedick believes what he overhears about Beatrice because Leonato, a “respectable” man in Benedick’s eyes, also says that Beatrice loves Benedick, and he “knows” that a respectable man wouldn’t lie, so he believes what Leonato says.

4. What does Don Pedro plan for Beatrice? (lines 211-216)

Don Pedro tells Leonato that the same plan must be carried out to Beatrice, which is Hero's and her servants’ jobs to do. Don Pedro wants Beatrice to also believe that Benedick loves her and wants her to love him back.

5. Find proof from the text that Benedick's feelings for Beatrice already begin to change before she even enters at the end of the scene.

Before she enters, Benedick speaks his thoughts, saying how he believes that they are speaking the truth, how he thinks that Beatrice is actually very beautiful, smart, very witty, and that she loves him too.

6. What is humorous about Benedick's analysis of his conversation with Beatrice at the close of the scene?

Since Benedick thinks Beatrice loves him, he mistakes her mocking and “roasting” as a love sign, so he leaves happy instead of sad that Beatrice made fun of and mocked him.

Act 2 - Descriptive Paragraph

Don John is the antagonist of the play *Much Ado About Nothing* since he tries to ruin others’ plans and lives. Don John is the brother of Don Pedro, and he seems to always be in a state of depression because he is jealous of his brother, the Prince, who is more successful than him. Also, he shows his hatred on others, such as Claudio. For example, he desperately tries to ruin Claudio’s and Hero’s marriage by tricking Claudio into thinking that Hero is unloyal and unfaithful. He tells his servant, Borachio, to make love with his partner, Hero’s servant, who is Margaret. Margaret is dressed with Hero’s clothes, and when Claudio asks for proof that

Hero is not loyal, Don John shows Claudio Borachio and Margaret (who is wearing Hero's clothes) making love. Claudio, being the gullible person he is, believes him. After ruining Claudio and Hero's marriage, Don John runs away. This shows that Don John is also a coward, aside from trying to ruin others' lives. In conclusion, Don John the antagonist of the story, since, because of his pessimism and depression, he tries to ruin other people's lives by using trickery and deceit.

Act 2 - Narrative Paragraph

While waiting for the dance, Hero and Beatrice discuss the "perfect" man, who is a mix of Don John, who barely talks, and Benedick, who talks too much. After this, the dance starts. The men put on masks, so the women do not know who the men are, but the men know who the women are. Then, they form couples and start dancing. Benedick is partnered with Beatrice, and Beatrice, not knowing her partner is Benedick, starts insulting him. On the other side, Don John notices Don Pedro courting Hero, and to make Claudio jealous, Don John tells Claudio (falsely) that Don Pedro is courting Hero for himself. Claudio believes for a few moments, until Don Pedro and Hero come out, when he understands the truth. Claudio is even more surprised when Hero and Leonato support his marriage to Hero, and they start making marriage plans, which was planned to be held the following Monday. Don John, meanwhile, vows to devise another plan to ruin their marriage. Borachio, one of Don John's servants, suggests that Don John tells Claudio that Hero is a whore, and to prove it, they will set up Margaret, Borachio's lover, making love with Borachio, who Claudio will assume is Hero. Meanwhile, Benedick's friends, before Claudio and Hero's wedding, make it a goal to get Benedick and Beatrice to fall in love. Benedick, in the garden, hears Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato coming. They "talk" about how Beatrice loves him. Benedick, believing this, speaks to Beatrice with love, who, as usual, speaks rudely and mocks him. Benedick, believing the mocking to be a sign of love, really believes that Beatrice loves him.

Act III

Act III Scene I

1. What metaphor does Ursula use to describe Beatrice's anticipated Behavior?

Ursula uses the metaphor of a fish cutting through the water and taking the bait, while Beatrice is in the harbour. Ursula then says that they need to catch Beatrice and bait her in.

2. When Hero begins talking about Benedick's love for Beatrice, what reason does Hero give for keeping the news from her?

Hero "wants" to keep the news from Beatrice because she "believes" and says out loud that Beatrice would mock her and make fun of her so much, and she would also make fun of Benedick, and it is better to keep one's love away rather than confess it and get made fun of.

3. How does Hero respond to Ursula's insistence that they tell Beatrice?

Hero says that she will instead advise Benedick to stop loving Beatrice and fight his emotions. She says that she will also say very bad things about Beatrice to Benedick.

4. What does Ursula mean when she says Beatrice is "limed" (Hint: read footnotes.)

When Ursula says Beatrice is "limed", she means that Beatrice fell into their trap and believed them.

Act III Scene II

1. What is the historic meaning behind having a toothache?

The historic meaning behind having a toothache is relating to having a lover, or just anything associated to a lover.

2. a. What change does Benedick make to his appearance in the play?

Benedick has been dressing and grooming himself "neater", with noticeable changes to his appearance.

b. What changes do you note in his behavior?

Benedick has become more serious than before and does not act too goofy anymore, since he is in love with Beatrice.

3. a. Recount the news that Don Jon gives Claudio and Don Pedro in this scene.

Don John tells Claudio and Don Pedro that Hero is being unfaithful, and he says that a man enters and the man and Hero court every day.

b. How does he plan to prove what he says is true?

He plans to take Don Pedro and Claudio in view of Hero's bedroom chamber tonight, and show them the man that enters her bedroom chamber

4. Find the lines that clearly show Claudio is easily led. Copy them into your notebook and cite the act, scene, and line.

Claudio starts to believe Don John, since he is gullible, and he says “If I see anything tonight why I should not marry her, tomorrow in the congregation, where I should wed, there will I shame her.” (Act III, scene II, ln. 97). He is saying that if he sees proof that Hero is cheating on him, he will shame her in the wedding hall where they were supposed to get married.

Act III Scene III

1. Dogberry orders his guards to bid all men stop in the name of the Prince. Seacol asks him what they should do if someone refuses to stop.

a. What is Dogberry's response?

Dogberry's response, is to let the man go, and call the rest of the group together and be happy that they got rid of such a criminal.

b. Explain the humour.

Dogberry is supposed to stop the criminals from entering, but from his logic, criminals can enter, and they should be happy that criminals are gone

c. Why do you think Shakespeare has Dogberry make so many silly mistakes with words and orders?

There needs to be different types of comedy in a story, and this is a different type of comedy from the other characters. This more like “logic” comedy, while other comedy differs from this.

2. Borachio tells Conrade how he earned of Don Jon a thousand ducats (III, iii, 107/108).

a. What did he do to earn this money?

To earn the thousand ducats, Borachio committed the “crime”, which was to show Claudio that Hero was cheating on him with Borachio, which was untrue. The person who was really making love with Borachio was his girlfriend and Hero's servant, Margaret.

b. Describe what Don Pedro and Claudio think they saw.

Don Pedro and Claudio thought they saw Hero cheating on Claudio with Borachio.

c. Describe Don Pedro's and Claudio's reaction.

They started to doubt Hero, and when their suspicions were confirmed, Claudio went away angrily saying that he would embarrass Hero on the night of the wedding.

3. What happens to Borachio and Conrade at the end of this scene?

Borachio and Conrade get caught by the watchmen discussing how their plan went. The watchmen realize that they are up to no good, and take them away.

Act III Scene IV

1. Margaret's bawdy conversation is matched by Beatrice's wit.

a. How does Hero react to their lighthearted comments?

Hero just observes and sometimes plays along, such as when she says "There thou prick'st her with a thistle." (Act III, Scene III, Ln. 60), which means that Margaret has angered Beatrice.

b. Why do you think Shakespeare included Hero's reaction?

Shakespeare included Hero's reaction to show that she was acknowledging the situation and listening to it. Also, it was to foreshadow that Beatrice would get angry at Margaret and that Benedick and Beatrice would end up becoming soulmates.

2. Margaret notes that Beatrice is obviously in love with Benedick. Explain how she uses word play to tease Beatrice and Benedick.

Margaret uses word play multiple times to tease Beatrice about Benedick. The first time, she talks about a song that does not require a man to sing, and the man she is referring to is Benedick. After that, Beatrice says that she is stuffed,' referring to her cold, and Margaret makes a connection saying that she is just a young lady, and already stuffed, referring to an obscene and inappropriate thought. Another time Margaret uses word play to tease Beatrice is when she refers to a plant, *carduus benedictus*, to help fix her illness. This plant's name has Benedick's name in it, and she is hinting that Benedick will help Beatrice and they will become soulmates.

3. Does Beatrice deny loving Benedick?

Beatrice does deny loving Benedick, and calls Margaret out for lying and suggesting a double meaning.

Act III Scene V

1. Find two examples of word misuse by Dogberry in this scene which provide humour for the audience.

The first example is when Dogberry calls Leonato, and Dogberry says that he would like to tell news to Leonato that “decerns” him, which means something that would not concern him. Another example is when Leonato asks what the news is, and Dogberry responds by saying that Verges’s wits are not very blunt, while he meant to say not very sharp.

2. a. What does Dogberry tell Leonato?

Dogberry and Verges tell Leonato that they caught two criminals, and Leonato tells them to investigate and punish them since he is in a hurry, to which they respond in the positive.

b. More to the point, what doesn't Dogberry tell Leonato that could have changed the direction of the play?

Dogberry could have at least told Leonato the nature of the crime and the criminals involved, because later in the play, Leonato ends up suspecting his daughter for cheating and does not believe her.

Act IV

Act VI Scene I

| Find this information | Act, scene, lines | Paraphrased answer |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Claudio accuses Hero of | IV, I, 39-41 | ...being impure |
| Question Claudio asks Hero | IV, I, 81-84 | ...if she slept with another man |

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|--|
| Don Pedro tells Leonato | IV, I, 85-94 | ...he saw Hero cheating too |
| Hero's reaction is | IV, I, 109 | ...she faints |
| Leonato's reaction is | IV, I, 115-154 | ...is very angry at Hero, hopes for her to die |
| Beatrice defends Hero | IV, I, 147-149 | ...saying that Leonato was lied to |
| Friar defends Hero | IV, I, 154-164 | ...he observed and knew that Hero was innocent |
| Hero asks her father to | IV, I, 176-284 | ...prove she was cheating, and then punish her |
| Leonato declares | IV, I, 190-200 | ...whoever was lying will face severe punishment |
| Friar's plan is to | IV, I, 199-207 | ...pretend Hero has died |
| Benedick promises to | IV, I, 242-249 | ...help and give advice to Leonato |

Act VI Scene II

Comic relief - Sections of comedy in a play, book, or movie that ignores or offsets more serious sections and situations.

1. What information is revealed in this scene?

Dogberry and his fellow workers interrogate Borachio and Conrade, and they know that Don John is a criminal. It is revealed here that Don John has run away after committing the crime.

2. How is the weight of this scene lightened by Dogberry's stupidity? Find one example.

Once again, Dogberry makes blunders with his words and messes up many words with their opposites, sometimes changing the meaning of his entire phrase. For example, Dogberry says to Borachio regarding the crime that he will be condemned to redemption, which changes the meaning, showing that Borachio is a good man.

Act V

Act V Scene I

Leonato now accuses Claudio of wronging his daughter but the Prince and Claudio still believe Hero was the woman they saw in the window.

1. What does Leonato tell them has happened to Hero?

Leonato tells them that Hero has been falsely accused and that she has died.

2. Benedick tells the Prince and Claudio that Don Jon has fled. What else does he say to Claudio?

Benedick challenges Claudio to a fight, saying that he killed Hero and that he is a coward, and to prove that he is not a coward, he tells Claudio to fight him.

3. When Borachio confesses, Leonato tells him he alone is not to blame, nor he and Don John alone. Who does Leonato blame besides these two? Why?

Leonato also blames Don Pedro and Claudio for apparently killing Hero with shock after Claudio embarrassed her in the wedding.

4. What two things does Claudio promise Leonato he'll do?

Claudio promises Leonato that he will tell everyone that Hero was innocent when she died, and that he will marry Leonato's niece instead of Hero, who was apparently died.

Act V Scene II

1. Identify the line spoken by Benedick which best reveals his feelings for Beatrice.

The first place where Benedick hints to Beatrice that he likes her is when he says that he will kiss Beatrice with the foul words about Claudio, and Beatrice got that hint and responded with wit.

Act V Scene IV

1. Paraphrase lines 10-16.

Leonato tells the women to come out wearing masks and for his brother to pretend that he is his niece's father.

2. What does Benedick ask the Friar to do?

Benedick asks the Friar to bind him or undo him, since he actually loves Beatrice, and Beatrice loves Benedick back.

3. Why is Claudio instructed to marry first, and only then see his bride's face?

The bride is actually Hero, but Claudio does not know that, and he may react negatively and call off the marriage again if he sees her before marrying, but if he sees her after marrying, he will understand their plan, and cannot go back on the decision of marrying Hero.

4. How is Benedick's and Beatrice's love for one another revealed once and for all?

Claudio holds up a piece of paper that apparently has a poem that Beatrice wrote for Benedick. Benedick then admits his love, but only for pity, and Beatrice wants to stop him from talking by giving him a kiss, which shows that they now love each other.

5. All end's well. What is to become of Don Jon?

The messenger tells Don Pedro that Don John was found by soldiers when he tried running away, and that he was brought back to Messina. Benedick then tells Don Pedro that he will think of a punishment.