

# MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shakespeare's language can seem scary, but give it a try! *Go at your own pace, and have fun!*



SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S  
SIGNATURE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Benedick is a stubborn and clever guy who has vowed never to marry. He and Beatrice, who is also very clever, are engaged in a long running competition of "who's the most witty?" But their friends are sure that the two actually love each other. Two of these friends (knowing that Benedick is hiding nearby) stage a conversation in which they talk about how much Beatrice loves him. After they exit, Benedick pops out from his hiding place and says to the audience...

## The Shakespeare

### **Benedick**

Love me? why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censur'd; they say I will bear myself proudly, if I perceive the love come from her; they say too that she will rather die than give any sign of affection. I did never think to marry. I must not seem proud; happy are they that hear their detractions, and can put them to mending. They say the lady is fair; 'tis a truth, I can bear them witness; and virtuous; 'tis so, I cannot reprove it; and wise, but for loving me; by my troth, it is no addition to her wit, nor no great argument of her folly, for I will fall horribly in love with her. I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me, because I have rail'd so long against marriage, but doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humor? No, the world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married.

## The Translation

### **Benedick**

She loves me? Well, that love must be returned! I hear how I'm criticized. They say I'll be smug if I find out she loves me. They also say she'd rather die than give any sign of her feelings. I never thought I'd marry. I can't appear to be proud. People who discover their faults and can then change them are lucky indeed. They say the lady is beautiful; it's true, I've seen it myself. And virtuous; that's true, I can't disprove that. And smart, except that she loves me. That may not be any proof of her intelligence, but I swear it won't be evidence of her stupidity—for I'm going to be horribly in love with her! People might tease me here and there, since I attacked marriage for so long. But don't tastes change? A man can love a dish when he is young that he hates when he turns old. Will quips and clever remarks and scathing written words keep a man from getting what his heart desires? No! The world needs to be populated. When I said that I'd die as a bachelor, I just meant that I didn't think I'd live until I got married.

*\*Hint hint: this is supposed to be funny!*

- 1 Read the Shakespeare.
- 2 Read the translation.
- 3 Read the Shakespeare again!

Benedick says "Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humor?" Re-read the translation, then really sit with that line. He's really specific about how we talk ourselves out of things.

How would you put his line in your own words? Do you agree with him? Was there a time when "quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain" stood in your way?





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You can respond to these in any way  
you choose:

Write

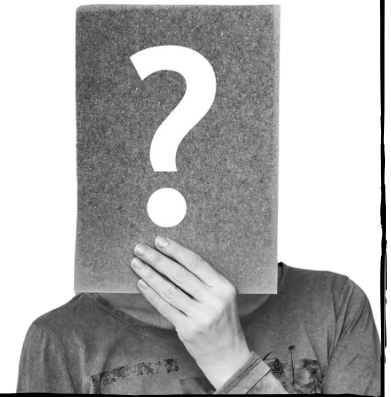
Talk about it

Act it out

Draw

Think about  
it

... up to you!



Benedick sure has a LOT to think through! And, as usual, Shakespeare gives the actor clues in the text to help figure out how to go from reading to performing.

Take a look at all that punctuation (commas, semicolons, periods, etc.). He doesn't get too far into a sentence before he stops and starts talking about something else.

A great way to figure out what's going on here is to act out Benedick's stream of consciousness *physically*. You don't need a lot of space, but you *do* need to stand up!

Start walking (even in place) in one direction while reading aloud. Whenever you get to a punctuation mark, change direction and move *that way*—until you get to *another* punctuation mark, and then (you guessed it!) change direction again. Do this for the entire speech.

Now try the monologue again (with feeling!), moving only when you feel like you *need* to move. How did the exercise affect your performance? Do you feel like you understand this guy any better? Why or why not?

In the play, Benedick actually is in love with Beatrice, but he needs to be tricked into admitting it to himself—and to doing something about it.

Why you do think that's necessary? Can you think of a similar situation in a movie, a book, or your own life? Does it ever work? If so, when and why do you think that is?

Benedick asks "doth not appetite alter?" He's talking about romantic interest, but this could go for anything.

What do you think?  
When do one's goals or desires change in life?  
When is that a good thing? When is that a bad thing?

Whether or not you give the "change direction" exercise a whirl... How do you see this happening on stage? Where was Benedick hiding? How, when, and where is he physically moving (or not moving)? What does he need to do to engage the audience and help them understand?

