

At the beginning of class #5, I asked students to make three comments/questions on notecards: these could be comments comparing *Much Ado About Nothing* with the previous comedy we had discussed (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), questions about *Much Ado*, or thoughts about the film version directed by Kenneth Branagh. Here are some of their responses:

Discuss the title: pronounced “noting”? or nothing?

Unlike *Midsummer*, love comes from what is heard instead of what is seen, except they're still in some sense “shallow”—induced love instead of real love?

Same use of comic relief [as in MND], this time by Watchmen (and Verges, Dogberry).

Use of gossip (comparatively, vs. MND).

Setting in Italy: more romantic quality about the play.

Why is Don John so evil, if he has gotten back in his brother's good graces?

Does the fact that we know *nothing* about John influence his villainy?

Why so little action and so many words?

Use of misspeaking in relation to nothingness: interchangeability of words making something of nothing.

The one who has no mask is evil, and B[eatrice] & B[enedick] can't marry until they “mask” their true behaviors with love.

Do you think that Beatrice and Benedick loved each other in the beginning, and that is why they fight all the time?

What is the history between B&B? Is that the reason they are so concerned, interact, yet discount each other?

What is Leonato's feeling about Beatrice's determination not to be married? As her guardian, it seems this would somewhat shame him.

Beatrice: different from societal norms, strong opinionated female who speaks her mind.

Why are both Beatrice and Benedick so quick to change their own characteristics when told of the other's love?

The bawdy language is extremely common in Shakespeare, often with sexual innuendos (Margaret in MAAN, and the nurse in R&J, etc.)

Is wooing Margaret actually having sex with her or no?

When in love, one little sentence means so much more than it really means.

I feel that Hero should have defended herself more—why does she accept Claudio back so easily?

Why is Hero so strong when she talks but barely ever speaks and follows father's order so much?

I think it's interesting how easily this could have turned tragedy.

The friar's speech is sort of a turning point.

Why does Dogberry make such a big deal about being called an ass?

Timing is crucial--in relating Dogberry's evidence to Don John's, giving strength to both love plots, and saving us from tragedy.

The plots ((B&B, H&C, Dogberry) are quite different, yet all necessary and relate.

Margaret: Do people blame her? Does she ever admit it? In the movie there was some reconciliation I did not get when reading.

What is the role of class?

Why is there such a short point between the wedding of Claudius and the deceased Hero to the happiness between Benedick and Beatrice?

I'm still not really sure if Beatrice and Benedick love each other in the end, or if they just decide to get married for the sake of it.

I don't understand why Hero takes Claudio back. Is there a statement there or just a happy ending?

The play ends very abruptly—why is that?

Confusion still unresolved at the end between Beatrice and Benedick, while the original lovers are resolved, returned to normal.

Everything ends happily, except for Borachio and Conrade.

Is the main theme deception or gullibility?

When I read it, I didn't really like it, but I enjoyed the movie.

The movie makes everything SOOO dramatic.

The movie reminded me of a “hiss the villain” play—melodramatic.