

William Shakespeare's

Much Ado About Nothing

STUDY GUIDE

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

SCRIPT ADAPTED AND DIRECTED FOR STUDENTS BY BART SIMPSON

JUST THIRTY MINUTES

Thirty minutes of fun, laughter, Shakespeare's poetry, and a few life lessons—each of these elements makes **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING** a perfect introduction to the magic of Shakespeare and professional theatre for younger elementary students.

A GIRL AND A BOY

For our younger students, Indy Shakes' Traveling Troupe's production of **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING** offers a joyful, accessible, and eminently watchable performance.

Our story begins with a Girl and a Boy who introduce us to the play. The Girl and the Boy also play the roles of Hero and Claudio, who love each other, but have some difficulties. As the play progresses, the Girl and the Boy help us to understand what is happening on stage and introduce us to the other characters in the play, including two grown-ups named Beatrice and Benedick, who behave outrageously and are very silly. There is also the bumbling constable, Dogberry, whose name and behavior readily produces giggles.

MUCH ADO contains a great deal of fun—outlandish matchmaking, eavesdropping, and tricksters—that will make this young audience smile and laugh aloud in delight—and easily and happily learn about Shakespeare along the way.

JUNE 2019 PERFORMANCES

Various Indy Parks Day Camps and Public Sites, including East Washington Branch Library.

CONTENTS

Page 2	Synopsis
Page 3	Executive Artistic Director's Note
Page 4	Director's Note
Page 5	Vocabulary Words
Page 6	Did You Know?
Page 2	After-Show Questions

Traveling Troupe 2019
Title Sponsor



Traveling Troupe 2019
Silver Sponsor



William Shakespeare's

Much Ado About Nothing

STUDY GUIDE

SYNOPSIS

Our play begins with two actors, a Girl and a Boy. The Girl is reading a script and giggling; the Boy asks her, "What book are you reading?" She answers, "It's not a book. It's a play—to be acted on stage."

And so our play begins, with a little information about Shakespeare, some quotes from his plays—and a clever zinger—and the story of MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

MUCH ADO takes place in Messina, a town on the island of Sicily in Italy, mostly in the home and on the grounds belonging to the Governor of Messina, Leonato. Hero is Leonato's beautiful daughter, and Claudio is a young nobleman from Florence and a brave soldier in Don Pedro's victorious army who has fallen in love with Hero. Ursula is Hero's maidservant. Beatrice is Leonato's niece, a clever young woman who engages in "a merry war" of words with Benedick, a nobleman of Padua and "a good soldier," who vows never to fall in love (because MUCH ADO is a comedy with a happy ending, you can already tell what will happen with Beatrice and Benedick!).

Dogberry is a bumbling Constable, who provides much of the comedy in the play; and Verges is Dogberry's hapless assistant. Don Pedro is the Prince of Aragon, who has recently won a battle against his half-brother Don John, who is definitely not one of the good guys in the play; in fact, he describes himself as "a plain-dealing villain." Borachio and Conrade are 2 of Don John's tricky henchmen. The remaining 4 of our 18 characters are Friar Francis; 2 watchmen; and a sexton, who looks after the church grounds.

Leonato holds a dance, a masquerade, where all the guests wear masks. Don Pedro tells Claudio that he will disguise himself and woo Hero for Claudio at the

dance. His plan works, and Leonato says that Claudio and Hero can be married in a week's time. Pleased with what he has achieved for Hero and Claudio, Don Pedro decides to try and match up Beatrice and Benedick and asks his friends to help him with his plan.

Meanwhile, just to be mean, Don John and Borachio have decided to try and stop Hero and Claudio's wedding and arrange for Claudio to see a man (Borachio) climb into Hero's bedroom window so that Claudio will think that Hero has another boyfriend. At the wedding, Claudio accuses Hero of being unfaithful, and Hero faints. Claudio leaves with Don Pedro. Friar Francis says that he will hide Hero, and if Claudio believes that she really has died, he will be sorry and wish that he had not accused her of wrongdoing.

Then, Benedick and Beatrice, who have been tricked by their friends, meet again; and Benedick tells Beatrice, "I do love nothing in the world so well as you; is not that strange?" Beatrice asks him to punch Claudio, and Benedick says that he will. Next, Dogberry exposes Don Pedro, and Leonato confronts Claudio and asks him to become his nephew by marrying his niece who looks just like Hero. And then Hero reveals herself to Claudio and forgives him.

These young elementary students can learn quite a bit from seeing MUCH ADO about the consequences of rumors, lies, and being mean and—most importantly—how to avoid these consequences:

Leonato: The way to beat rumors is to respond to them, *not!*

Boy: Yeah, because they lead to a whole lot of mess up and misunderstandings, and hurt feelings!

Girl: And you may end up saying things you don't really mean.

William Shakespeare's

Much Ado About Nothing

STUDY GUIDE

“TO BE MERRY”

WE GIVE YOU THIS PLAY TO HAVE FUN

A note from Diane Timmerman, Executive Artistic Director

Indy Shakes chose MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING for our first production for younger students because we wanted to present a comedy so our audiences would have fun! We knew the two younger characters in the MUCH ADO story—Hero and Claudio—would be relatable figures for younger students. We even cast two very young-looking actors in the roles so that the children who see this production can readily relate to them! Our director, Bart Simpson, created a script that is composed of approximately two-thirds Shakespeare's words and one-third contemporary language so that the children can follow the characters and the story more easily.

MUCH ADO is not only an enjoyable and satisfying play; it also contains everyday concepts that children can easily relate to, such as what happens when people talk about each other behind their backs. The play is fun and contains a meaningful message for all of us.

We would like the children who see MUCH ADO to feel an inner pride that they, too, can understand Shakespeare. Many people feel that Shakespeare is too difficult to understand. But our Traveling Troupe's performance will show children that Shakespeare is not only understandable, but also loads of fun!

We hope that the children in our Traveling Troupe audiences are entertained, laugh often, and go away empowered by having understood a Shakespeare play. We hope that our production of MUCH ADO plants seeds of arts appreciation in children so that they will want to see—and even do!—more theatre.

In short, Indy Shakes' MUCH ADO is an ever-growing, plentiful garden where Indianapolis' children and the art of theatre can grow together in delight!

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WITH THE CAST AFTER SEEING MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

- 1) WHAT PART OF THE PLAY DID YOU LIKE BEST?
WHY?
- 2) WHAT CHARACTER IN THE PLAY DID YOU LIKE BEST?
WHY?
- 3) IS IT OKAY TO PRETEND TO BE SOMEONE ELSE TO GET SOMEONE TO LIKE YOU?
WHY OR WHY NOT?
- 4) IS IT OKAY TO TELL SOMEONE SOMETHING THAT ISN'T TRUE TO GET THEM TO LIKE OR DISLIKE SOMEONE ELSE?
WHY OR WHY NOT?

William Shakespeare's

Much Ado About Nothing

STUDY GUIDE

THE CONSEQUENCES OF WORDS, TRUE AND FALSE

By Bart Simpson, Director

The plays of Shakespeare are by far my favorite plays with which to work. When I hear his verse spoken with practiced understanding, and I put his words together in my mind, I feel as if Shakespeare makes my brain bigger. Through his words, I have learned that great conflicts are solved with words. I also gain humor and compassion for how various characters express their kernel of truth, be they king, soldier, peasant, fairy, player, or fool.

In taking short versions of Shakespeare to elementary and high schools, it became apparent to me that the older and younger students approached the experience quite differently. The older students had concerns that they wouldn't get it, that they wouldn't understand the unfamiliar expressions. However, the younger audience let go of the things they didn't get and looked to the parts that made sense at their level to understand the story. So with this production of MUCH ADO, as we introduce Shakespeare to younger children, we want to help them understand and most importantly—enjoy the story at their level.

In choosing a play to adapt for younger children, several things drew me to MUCH ADO. Chief among these are the consequences of words, as caused by falsehoods, misunderstandings, and freshly exposed truths. Also, the simplicity of the intrigue in the play

keeps it accessible even in this short adaptation. Then there are the brightly drawn characters, each with a story to tell.

In choosing the parts of the script that compose this thirty-minute adaptation, I focused on the moments where the characters are not telling the truth and the conflicts that ensue. My hope is that the children in the audience will tune into how playing false and making up stories is the cause of much trouble. By opening the play with the Boy and the Girl, who later play Claudio and Hero, as friends reading a play, the children can immediately connect with these characters, begin to care about what happens between them, and want wrongs to be made right and lies to be found out.

And I especially want the children to laugh, to find the humor in Shakespeare, where things are funny not because of a joke that is told, but because of how a character expresses their thoughts and feelings. For example, be sure to have the children look for amusing, bumbling Constable Dogberry.

There are life lessons to be learned in MUCH ADO; and fun to be had; and the delightful, amazing confidence-building affirmation that happens when a child realizes that "I can understand this—I know what Shakespeare means!"

William Shakespeare's

Much Ado About Nothing

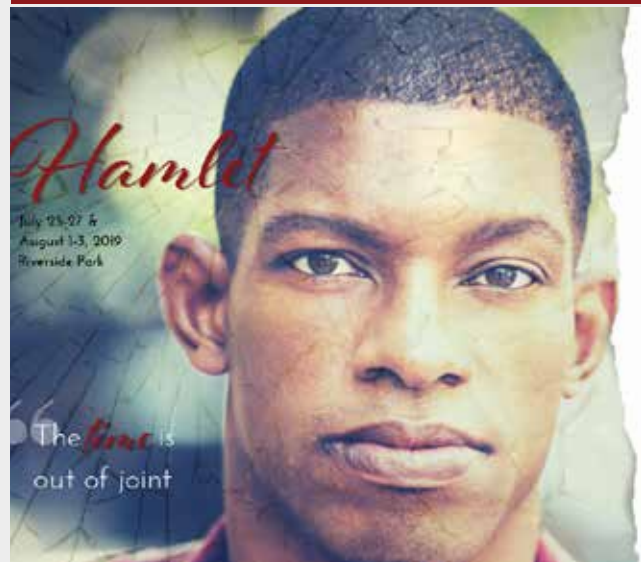
STUDY GUIDE

MUCH ADO VOCABULARY WORDS

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Hath -	has or have	Impediment -	a barrier or restriction
Virtues -	goodness	Counterpoise -	an equal power or balance
Pestilence -	very serious contagious disease	Betwixt -	between
Disdain -	disrespect	Smother -	overcome or suffocate
Constrain -	restrict	Remorse -	be sorry for; regret
Allegiance -	loyalty	Hypocrite -	an imposter or pretender
Reveling -	celebrating	Epitaph -	something written in memory of someone who has died
Disguise -	impersonate or camouflage (wearing something to hide your identity)	Knave -	a dishonest person; a villain
Amorous -	inclined to love	Malingering -	not doing what you should by pretending to be sick; someone who goofs around to get out of doing something
Solicit -	ask for something		
Masquerade -	make-believe (often a fancy dance where the guests wear masks)		
Condolence -	sympathy; an offer of support		
Herald -	messenger or signal		
Villain -	wrongdoer; a person who wants to harm or hurt other people		
Discontent -	unsatisfied, unhappy		
Betroths -	agrees to marry someone		
Arbor -	a shady garden place formed by over-hanging tree branches		
Counterfeit -	fake		
Censured -	disapprove		
Slanders -	making false, hurtful, damaging statements about someone		
Empoison -	act dishonestly; hide or misrepresent the truth		
Contempt -	disrespect (like disdain); treating someone as if they do not matter		
Require -	need		

**COME SEE INDY SHAKES THIS
SUMMER PERFORMING A
FULL-LENGTH PRODUCTION!**



William Shakespeare's

Much Ado About Nothing

STUDY GUIDE

DID YOU KNOW?

DOUBLING (OR TRIPLING)

In Indy Shakes' production of MUCH ADO, 18 characters are played by 6 actors! Each character that an actor plays will have a slightly different costume so that your children can tell who is who, but the actors also have to depend upon their talent, lots of rehearsals, and each other to make each character different and believable.

Look for the costume differences when you see each character.

ONCE UPON A TIME

Shakespeare often got his ideas for his plays from other stories, though the amazing characters he created are very much his own. MUCH ADO was probably written around 1600 and first performed in 1613, and Shakespeare may have been influenced in writing the play by two Italian stories, as well as an English poem, THE FAERIE QUEENE, written by Edmund Spenser.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-on-Avon, a market town in England, on April 23, 1564. He is sometimes called the Bard of Avon—Bard is another word for poet, and Avon is the name of the river that runs through his hometown of Stratford. Shakespeare had 7 brothers and sisters, and he was an actor as well as a playwright and poet. He wrote 38 plays; 2 epic poems (long poems about a hero); and 154 sonnets (14-line poems). Shakespeare introduced almost 3,000 words into the English language, such as "friending" in HAMLET (you know, just like today when we can "friend" someone on Facebook)!

30-MINUTE SHAKES

Bart Simpson, Indy Shakes Company member and MUCH ADO director, has condensed Shakespeare's play into a 30-minute adaptation suitable for younger elementary children. The script (the words that the actors say) for this production of MUCH ADO tells the story, preserves Shakespeare's poetry, and illustrates what happens when lies are told.

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY

Two couples get married in MUCH ADO, and the play was performed at an actual wedding, when England's Princess Elizabeth married Frederick V on February 14, 1613.

NO GIRLS ALLOWED

In Shakespeare's time, female roles were played on stage by young men. It was against the law for women and girls to appear on stage.

HONORIFI- CABILITUDI- NITATIBUS

Honorificabilitudinitatibus, the longest word in Shakespeare's plays, is from his play LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST. How many letters are in honorificabilitudinitatibus? How many words can you make from honorificabilitudinitatibus?

"THOU ART LIKE A TOAD"

Shakespeare wrote beautiful poetry and some mean insults, too: "Thou art like a toad; ugly and venomous." (AS YOU LIKE IT); "You scullion! You rampallian! You fustilarian! I'll tickle your catastrophe!" (HENRY IV); "Out of my sight! Thou dost infect my eyes." (RICHARD III).