**Much Ado About Nothing**

**Act I, Scene i**

Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon, has defeated his half-brother, Don John who had staged a rebellion. Don Pedro returns from battle with Claudio and Benedick, who both performed well in the battle. They are guests of Governor of Messsina, Leonato. Beatrice, Leonato’s niece is there to meet them. This is when you get the first indication of the battle between Beatrice and Benedick. You also discover that Claudio is in love with Hero, Leonato’s daughter. Claudio is very shy, so Don Pedro agrees to woo Hero in his favor.

(Shakespeare shows the reader how he should ‘note’ how Beatrice and Benedick ‘note’ each other and how Claudio ‘notes’ Hero.)

**Act I, Scenes ii and iii**

Antonio reports that a servant overhears Claudio and the Prince, Don Pedro, talking and mistakenly thinks it is Don Pedro who wishes to woo Hero. Don John plans to interfere in the plan to get revenge on both Don Pedro and Claudio due to his defeat in battle. Conrade and Borachio pledge to help him.

**Act II, Scene i**

The characters all put on masks and attend a party. Beatrice goes as a man. Don John and Borachio corner Claudio pretending he is Benedick and plant the lie that Don Pedro swore he would marry Hero. Claudio believes the lie. Later Don Pedro enters to say he has won Hero for Claudio and Claudio is no longer angry. After Beatrice and Benedick fight some more, Don Pedro, Leonato, and the others decide to match Benedick and Beatrice.

**Act II, Scenes ii and iii**

Don John was unsuccessful in his first attempt to stop Claudio and Hero’s marriage, but he plans to try again. He agrees to go along with Borachio’s plan. He plans with Margaret, Hero’s gentlewoman, for them to pretend to be Hero and Claudio and speak at Hero’s window. Don Pedro and Claudio are to be witnesses of this and believe that Hero is false to Claudio. Meanwhile, Benedick eavesdrops on Claudio, Don Pedro, and Leonato and hears their plot to make him fall in love with Beatrice. Leonato tells that Hero told him that Beatrice is hopelessly in love with Benedick. Benedick immediately falls in love with Beatrice. Hero and Ursula allow Beatrice to overhear them speak of Benedick’s love for her. She then falls in love with Benedick.

**Act III, Scenes i and ii**

Don John tells Don Pedro and Claudio that Hero is untrue and he will prove this to them. They hear the conversation between “Hero” (Margaret) and “Claudio” (Borachio) and believe that Hero is untrue.

**Act III, Scene iii**

Meanwhile, Dogberry speaks to his guards and tells them not to stop any people to keep the peace by letting them go. They do not follow orders and arrest Conrade and Borachio.

**Act III, Scenes iv and v**

Hero is getting ready for her wedding. She has no clue Claudio thinks she has been untrue.

**Act IV, Scene i**

Claudio says he will not marry Hero because she has been with another man. Leonato agrees and both attack Hero; she faints. The Friar is convinced she is innocent. He begs Leonato to think reasonably. The Friar suggests that Hero pretend to be dead and Leonato agrees. (much like Juliet) This will prove Claudio’s love. Benedick goes to comfort Beatrice, and she asks him to kill Claudio.

**Act IV, Scene ii**

Dogberry accuses Conrade and Borachio of part of Hero’s shame.

**Act V, Scene i**

Claudio and Don Pedro go to see Leonato. Dogberry shows with his prisoners. Borachio soon confesses all. Claudio feels guilty for wrongly accusing Hero and causing her “death.” He agrees to marry Hero’s “cousin” to make him a gentleman again.

**Act V, Scenes ii and iii**

Claudio and Don Pedro go to visit Hero’s grave.

**Act V, Scene iv**

At the wedding, the “cousin” Claudio has agreed to marry proves to be Hero and they marry. Benedick and Beatrice become engaged.