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Dramatic Publishing

SIXTY-MINUTE SHAKESPEARE



MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

by Cass Foster

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SIXTY-MINUTE SHAKESPEARE



MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

by Cass Foster



from MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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SIXTY MINUTE SHAKESPEARE
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

by
Cass Foster

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*To
Linda and Lowell*

Welcome to
THE SIXTY-MINUTE SHAKESPEARE

Thanks to the progressive thinking of so many curriculum developers, Language Arts people and the splendid film work being done by directors such as Kenneth Branagh and Franco Zeffrelli, there has been a phenomenal growth in interest in Shakespeare.

No playwright, past or present, approaches the brilliance and magnitude of William Shakespeare. What other individual has even come close to understanding and then dramatizing the human condition? Just for the fun of it, I am listing (following these introductory remarks) a sample of themes and images so richly developed in the canon of his plays.

Shakespeare's characters are so well-rounded and beautifully constructed that it is common to see them as actual historical figures. When someone mentions Hamlet, Iago, Ophelia, or Puck, we immediately experience images and emotions that come from memories of people we know. We may feel compassion, frustration, sorrow, or pleasure.

As one of the wealthiest people of his times, Shakespeare earned his living as a playwright, theatre manager, actor, and shareholder in the Globe Theatre. He worked tirelessly to entertain. (Theatres presented a new play every day and the average new play had a total of only ten performances over an entire season.) He rebelled against the contemporary theatrical standards (the neo-classical principles that limited dramatic structure throughout France and Italy), he took plots from other published works (making them uniquely his own), and he created a spectacle (without the use of elaborate scenery) to captivate audiences of all social levels.

Imagine the challenge in quieting a crowd of three thousand in a theatre where vendors sell wine, beer, ale, nuts, and cards; where there is no intermission; where birds fly overhead; and where audience members stand near performers. Such was the setting in which Shakespeare's plays were originally staged.

The world's most familiar and successful wordsmith used language to skillfully create images, plot, and a sense of music and rhythm. The purpose behind this series is to reduce (not contemporize) the language. The unabridged Shakespeare simply isn't practical in all situations. Not all educators or directors have the luxury of time to explore the entire text. This is not intended to be a substitute for a thorough study of Shakespeare. It is merely a stepping stone.

I challenge each of you to go beyond the *Sixty-Minute* versions. Use the comfort, appreciation, and self-confidence you will gain to go further. Be proud of the insights and knowledge you acquire but do not be satisfied. The more you read, the more you gain.

May each of you be blessed with an abundance of good health and happiness. I thank you for your interest in our work and hope you are pleased with what we have done.

May the Verse Be With You!

A COUPLE OF STAGING CONSIDERATIONS

Scenery

There are two excellent reasons theatres rarely use much scenery when staging Shakespeare. The first is related to the number of changes required. If we have to wait every five to ten minutes to watch scenery struck and set up, we end up watching a play about moving lumber. The second is because the audience will lose sight of what the play is about. Audiences need a couple minutes to adjust to the new scenic look of a dazzling waterfall and lush forest. By the time they take it all in and start paying attention to what the actors are saying, it is time to set up the next scene and the audience will be lost.

Location is normally established through dialogue and the use of a few simple props: a throne-like chair for the king's court, a long table with benches for an inn, or a bed for the queen's bed chamber. The key is to keep it simple.

Pacing

You will want to keep things moving all the time. That doesn't mean actors should talk and move quickly; it simply means one scene should flow smoothly to the next without delay or interruption.

As Scene One ends, the actors pick up their props and walk off. Actors for Scene Two enter from a different direction with their props and begin dialogue as soon as they enter the acting area, putting their props in place as they speak. Yes, the audience will still have view of the actors in the first scene, but they will gladly accept this convention if it means taking fifteen minutes off performance time.

TWO HIGHLY RECOMMENDED WEB SITES

www.ShakeSpirit.com

A revolutionary site offering Shakespeare gifts,
Teaching assistance, resources and quotes.



www.ShakespeareLRC.com

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and the Performing and Visual Arts.



IMAGES AND THEMES TO LOOK FOR IN THE VARIOUS PLAYS

Mistaken identity	Foils or opposites
Wisdom of fools	Spying
Insanity	Paranoia
Greed and corruption	Play-acting
Religious persecution	Justice
The elements	Heavenly retribution
The supernatural	Forgiveness
Darkness and light	Witchcraft
Loneliness or isolation	Mortality
Anti-Semitism	Self-destruction
Conspiracy	Black or white magic
Revenge	Animals
Hypocrisy	Nature
Abandonment	Reality vs. illusion
Pride	Astrological influence
Honor	Characters reforming
Violence	Old age
Bravery	Freedom
Rebellion	Usurping of power
Savagery	Fertility suppression
Seduction	Sexual misadventure
Disease or physical decay	Melancholy
Loyalty	Corrupt society
War	Love and/or friendship
Marriage	Multiple meanings of words
False accusations	Thought vs. action
Irresponsible power	Impetuous love
Destiny or fate	Role of women
Real or pretended madness	Human frailty
Ambition	Preparing for leadership
Tyranny	Charity/Betrayal

**THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

1589 - 1591	Henry VI, Part 1, 2 and 3
1592 - 1593	Richard III
1593 - 1594	Titus Andronicus
1592 - 1594	Comedy of Errors
1593 - 1594	Taming of the Shrew
1594	The Two Gentlemen of Verona
1594 - 1595	Love's Labor's Lost
1594 - 1596	King John
1595	Richard II
1595 - 1596	A Midsummer Night's Dream
1595 - 1596	Romeo and Juliet
1596 - 1597	The Merchant of Venice
1597	The Merry Wives of Windsor
1597 - 1598	Henry IV, Part 1 and 2
1598 - 1599	Much Ado About Nothing
1599	Henry V
1599	Julius Caesar
1599	As You Like It
1600 - 1601	Hamlet
1601 - 1602	Twelfth Night
1601 - 1602	Troilus and Cressida
1602 - 1603	All's Well That Ends Well
1604	Measure for Measure
1604	Othello
1605	The Tragedy of King Lear
1606	Macbeth
1606 - 1607	Antony and Cleopatra
1607 - 1608	Timon of Athens
1607 - 1608	Pericles, Prince of Tyre
1607 - 1608	Coriolanus
1609- 1610	Cymbeline
1609 - 1610	The Winter's Tale
1611	The Tempest
1612 - 1613	Henry VIII
1613	Two Noble Kinsmen (Authorship in question)



23 April 1564 - 23 April 1616

*“If we wish to know the force of human genius,
we should read Shakespeare. If we wish to see the
insignificance of human learning, we may study
his commentators.”*

William Hazlitt (1778-1830) English Essayist. “On the Ignorance of the Learned,” in *Edinburgh Magazine* (July, 1818).

COMMON QUOTES FROM THE BARD*Romeo and Juliet*

Parting is such sweet sorrow.
A plague o' both your houses.
O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Lord, what fools these mortals be.
The course of true love never did run smooth.
To say the truth, reason and love keep little company
together now-a-days.

As You Like It

All that glisters is not gold.
Love is blind.
All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players.
For ever and a day.

Twelfth Night

Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some
have greatness thrust upon them.
Out of the jaws of death.
O, had I but followed the arts!
Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage.

Henry IV, Part 1

The better part of valor is discretion.
To give the devil his due.
He hath eaten me out of house and home.

Henry VI, Part 2

Let's kill all the lawyers.

The Merry Wives of Windsor

Better three hours too soon than a minute too late.

Casablanca

This could be the start of a beautiful friendship.

Macbeth

Out, damned spot. Out, I say!
Screw your courage to the sticking place.

Hamlet

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
To be or not to be. That is the question.
The lady doth protest too much, methinks.
Good night, sweet prince, And flights of
angels sing thee to thy rest!

The Merchant of Venice

The devil can cite scriptures for his purpose.

Pericles

Few love to hear the sins they love to act.

Richard III

Now is the winter of our discontent.
Off with his head!
A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse.

Julius Caesar

Beware the ides of March.
Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.
It was Greek to me.

Much Ado About Nothing

The world must be peopled. When I said I would die a
bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married.

Measure for Measure

The miserable have no other medicine but only hope.

Troilus and Cressida

To fear the worst oft cures the worse.

The Comedy of Errors

Unquiet meals make ill digestions.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon
Don John, his bastard brother
Claudio, a young lord of Florence
Benedick, a young lord of Padua
Leonato, Governor of Messina
Antonio, an old man, Leonato's brother
Balthasar, attendant to Don Pedro
Borachio, follower of Don John
Conrade, follower of Don John
Friar Francis
Dogberry, a constable
A Sexton
A Boy
Verges, a headborough [*parish officer with the same function as a petty constable*]

Hero, daughter to Leonato
Beatrice, niece to Leonato
Margaret, gentlewoman attending on Hero
Ursula, gentlewoman attending on Hero
Messengers, Two Watchmen, Attendant, etc. ..

Place
Messina

ACT I, SCENE I.
BEFORE LEONATO'S HOUSE.

Enter Leonato, Hero, Beatrice, and a Messenger.

Leonato. [*Holding a letter.*] I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Aragon comes this night to Messina.

Messenger. He is very near by this. He was not three leagues off when I left him.

Leonato. How many gentleman^o have you lost in this action?

Messenger. But few of any sort^o, and none of name^o.

Leonato. I find there that Don Pedro hath bestowed much honor on a young Florentine called Claudio.

Messenger. He hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing, in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion.

Beatrice. Is Signior Mountanto^o returned from the wars or no?

Messenger. I know none of that name, lady.

Hero. My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

Messenger. O, he's returned, and as pleasant^o as ever he was.

Beatrice. I pray you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed? For indeed, I promised to eat all of his killing.

Gentlemen: man of the upper class. *Sort:* rank. *Name:* distinguished family.
Mountanto: a fencing move. *Pleasant:* lively.

Messenger. He hath done good service. And a good soldier too, lady.

Beatrice. And a good soldier to^o a lady. But what is he to a lord?

Messenger. A lord to a lord, a man to a man, stuffed with all honorable virtues.

Beatrice. It is so, indeed; he is no less than a stuffed man^o.

Leonato. You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her. They never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them.

Beatrice. Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother.

Messenger. He is most in the company of the right noble Claudio.

Beatrice. O Lord, he will hang upon him like a disease. He is sooner caught than the pestilence, and the taker runs presently^o mad. G-d help the noble Claudio if he hath caught the Benedick^o; it will cost him a thousand pound ere he be cured.

Messenger. I will hold friends with you, lady.

To: in comparison with. *Stuffed man:* dummy. *Presently:* immediately.
Benedick: possibly a disease.

Beatrice. Do, good friend.

Leonato. You will never run mad^o, Niece.

Beatrice. No, not till a hot January.

Messenger. Don Pedro is approached.

Enter Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick, Balthasar, and Don John.

Don Pedro. Good Signior Leonato, are you come to meet your trouble? The fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.

Leonato. Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of our Grace.

Don Pedro. I think this is your daughter.

Leonato. Her mother hath many times told me so.

Benedick. Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked her?

Leonato. Signior Benedick, no.

Benedick. If Signior Leonato be her father, she would not have his head on her shoulders for all Messina, as like him as she is.

Run mad: catch the Benedict.

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Beatrice. I wonder that you will still^o be talking, Signior Benedick; nobody marks you.

Benedick. What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living?

Beatrice. Is it possible Disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to Disdain if you come in her presence.

Benedick. Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted; and I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart; for truly I love none.

Beatrice. A dear happiness to women! They would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank G-d and my cold blood, I am of your humor for that^o. I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

Benedick. G-d keep your ladyship still in that mind, so some gentleman or other shall escape a predestinate scratched face.

Beatrice. Scratching could not make it worse and 'twere such a face as yours were.

Benedick. Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher^o.

Beatrice. A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

Still: always. *Of...for that:* in agreement with you. *Parrot-teacher:* one who says the same thing over and over.

Benedick. I would my horse had the speed of your tongue.
But keep your way, i' G-d's name! I have done.

Beatrice. You always end with a jade's trick°. I know you of old.

Don Pedro. Signior Claudio and Signior Benedick, my dear friend Leonato had invited you all. I tell him we shall stay here, at least a month.

Leonato. [To Don John.] Let me bid you welcome, my lord; being reconciled to the Prince your brother, I owe you all duty.

Don John. I thank you. I am not of many words, but I thank you.

Leonato. Please it your Grace lead on?

Don Pedro. Your hand, Leonato. We will go together.

All but Benedick and Claudio exit.

Claudio. Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

Benedick. I noted° her not, but I looked on her.

Claudio. Is she not a modest young lady?

Jade's trick: a horse that drops out of a race before the finish, as Benedick drops out of a contest of wits. *Noted:* scrutinized.

Benedick. Do you question me as an honest man should do, for my simple true judgement? Or would you have me speak after my custom, as being a professed tyrant to their sex?

Claudio. No, I pray thee speak in sober judgement.

Benedick. Why, in faith, methinks she's too low for a high praise, too brown for a fair praise, and too little for a great praise. Only this commendation I can afford her, that were she other than she is, she were unhandsome, and being no other but as she is, I do not like her.

Claudio. Thou thinkest I am in sport. I pray thee tell me truly how thou lik'st her.

Benedick. Would you buy her, that you inquire after her?

Claudio. Can the world buy such a jewel? In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on.

Benedick. I can see yet without spectacle, and I see no such matter. There's her cousin, and she were not possessed of a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December. I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

Claudio. I would scarce trust myself, though I had sworn the contrary, if Hero would be my wife.

Benedick. Is't come to this? Shall I never see a bachelor of threescore again?

Enter Don Pedro.

Don Pedro. What secret hath held you here, that you followed not to Leonato's?

Benedick. He is in love. With who? Now that is your Grace's part—with Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

Don Pedro. The lady is very well worthy.

Claudio. You speak this to fetch me in, my lord.

Don Pedro. By my troth, I speak my thought.

Claudio. And, in faith, my lord, I spoke mine.

Benedick. And, by my two faiths and troths, my lord, I spoke mine.

Claudio. That I love her, I feel.

Don Pedro. That she is worthy, I know.

Benedick. That I neither feel how she should be loved, nor how she should be worthy, is the opinion that fire cannot melt out of me. I will die in it at the stake.

Don Pedro. Thou wast ever an obstinate heretic in the despite of^e beauty.

Despise of: contempt of.

Benedick. That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks but I will live a bachelor.

Don Pedro. I shall see thee, ere I die, look pale with love.

Benedick. With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my lord, not with love.

Don Pedro. Well, as time shall try: "In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke."

Benedick. The savage bull may, but if ever the sensible Benedick bear it, pluck off the bull's horns and set them in my forehead, and let me be vilely painted, and in such great letters as they write "Here is good horse to hire," let them signify under my sign "Here you may see Benedick the married man."

Don Pedro. Good Signior Benedick, repair to Leonato's. Tell him I will not fail him at supper; for indeed he hath made great preparation.

Benedick. Examine your conscience. And so I leave you.
[*He exits.*]

Claudio. Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

Don Pedro. No child but Hero; she's his only heir.
Dost thou affect^o her, Claudio?

Affect: love.

Claudio.

O my lord,
When you went onward on this ended action°,
I looked upon her with a soldier's eye,
That liked, but had a rougher task in hand
Than to drive liking to the name of love.
But now I am returned and that° war-thoughts
Have left their places vacant, in their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
Saying I liked her ere I went to wars.

Borachio enters, unseen by Don Pedro and Claudio.

Don Pedro. If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,
And I will break° with her and with her father,
And thou shalt have her.
I know we shall have reveling tonight.
I will assume thy part in some disguise
And tell fair Hero I am Claudio,
And in her bosom I'll unclasp my heart
And take her hearing prisoner with the force
And strong encounter of my amorous tale,
Then after to her father will I break,
And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.
In practice let us put it presently.

[They exit, as does Borachio.]

Ended action: just concluded war. *That:* because. *Break:* begin negotiations.

ACT I, SCENE 2 IS CUT
ACT I, SCENE 3.
LEONATO'S HOUSE.

Enter Don John and Conrade.

Conrade. What the goodyear^o, my lord! Why are you thus out of measure sad^o?

Don John. There is no measure in the occasion that breeds; therefore the sadness is without limit.

Conrade. You should hear reason.

Don John. And when I have heard it, what blessing brings it? I cannot hide what I am. I must be sad when I have cause, and smile at no man's jests; eat when I have stomach, and wait for no man's leisure; sleep when I am drowsy, and tend on no man's business; laugh when I am merry, and claw no man in his humor^o.

Conrade. Yes, but you must not make the full show of this till you may do it without controlment. You have of late stood out against your brother, and he hath ta'en you newly into his grace, where it is impossible you should take true root but by the fair weather that you make yourself.

Don John. I had rather be a canker^o in a hedge than a rose in his grace. In this, I cannot be said to be a flattering honest

Goodyear: [expletive]. *Out of measure sad:* so morose. *Claw...humor:* flatter no one. *Canker:* wild rose.