

# Much Ado About Nothing

William Shakespeare (about 1598-1599)



A play also known as 'tragicomedy' =  
**tragic** + **comic** elements



# Main source (1) and setting (2)

1. A short story (*novella*) by **Bandello**, an Italian author (for more info, click here: <https://liberliber.it/autori/autori-b/matteo-bandello/>), translated into French by **François de Belleforest**.
2. Messina, Sicily - idyllic place for its climate and its strategic position.



Matteo Bandello



XVI - XVII century

Messina's

'Porta Reale'

# Plot (1) \*

## Act 1

**Don Pedro**, Prince of Aragon, visits the Governor of Messina, **Leonato**. He's coming back from war with two young noblemen: **Claudio** and **Benedick**.

**Claudio** falls in love with **Hero**, Leonato's daughter.

**Benedick** meets **Beatrice**, Leonato's niece, and they constantly interact showing a certain 'hostility' toward each other. Their dialogues are full of wit and clever exchanges.

## Act 2

A party or 'masquerade' is organized to honour the guests. On that occasion, Hero is promised to Claudio by her father.

At the same time, believing there might be something between Benedick and Beatrice, **their mutual friends** decide to plot against (or in favour?) of them.

First part of the **plan**: Benedick is made to overhear that Beatrice is in love with him.

\*2 sub-plots (main + secondary one)

# Plot (2)

## Act 3

Beatrice is told that Benedick loves her. The two begin to feel tenderness one for the other.

**Don John**, Don Pedro's 'bastard' brother, decides to plot against Claudio and Hero.

He makes everyone believe that Hero has a secret lover. **Borachio and a maid** help him to lay the evil plot.

The deception will be discovered by **two watchmen, Dogberry and Verges**, later on.

## Act 4

During the wedding ceremony, Claudio repudiates Hero, who faints and is said to be dead by **Friar Francis**.

Beatrice doesn't believe her cousin was guilty and asks Benedick to defend her respectability by defying Claudio.

# Plot (3)

## Act 5

Before the duel starts (firstly, Leonato VS Claudio, and secondly, Benedick VS Claudio), the two watchmen reveal the truth about Don John's evil plan.

Leonato forgives Claudio, but he has to marry one of his nieces (who's said to look just like Hero). Even though he's not allowed to see the girl before the wedding, the young nobleman accepts.

Finally, the wedding is celebrated and the lady proves to be Hero herself.

Also Beatrice and Benedick end their arguments sharing a kiss.







## A film adaptation - 1993 English Trailer

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbSN4Lv\\_N4g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbSN4Lv_N4g)



# Key aspects and themes

- Much ado about nothing (the title meaning + allusions > chaos, manipulations, 'eavesdropping')
- NOTHING (NO-THING) VS NOTING
- **Men VS Women** (it's 'nothing' that generates 'confusion' and 'trouble' > see Elizabethan slang + witty dialogues bt B. and B.)
- **Evil characters** (Don John, a *kill-joy*) VS **Good characters** (*the lovers*)  
> *dynamic representation of varied social classes*
- *Jealousy and possession, Claudio's weaknesses as a man*

**“Shakespeare lascia sfogare nei suoi drammi  
la paranoia di maschi violenti.**

**[...]**

**Il desiderio di possedere si distorce nella  
paura di perdere”.**



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- Nadia Fusini, Scholar and Translator

**“Da che mondo è mondo, l'uomo ha sempre avuto l'ansia del controllo del corpo femminile e come conseguenza l'angoscia del suo possesso, del suo godimento. Gelosia, invidia, rabbia, paura ne derivano e si mescolano con effetti che possono in certi casi essere distruttivi. Come per Otello”.**

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- Nadia Fusini, Scholar and Translator

**FIGHT**

**SEXISM**

