MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
USA 2012, 108 min.

German certification: minimum age 0 recommended for 16 years and older
Language: English with English subtitles

Director: Joss Whedon
Script: Joss Whedon, based on William Shakespeare’s theatre piece of the same name
Cinematography: Jay Hunter
Editing: Daniel S. Kaminsky, Joss Whedon
Music: Joss Whedon
Cast: Amy Acker, Alexis Denisof, Nathan Fillion, Fran Kranz, Jillian Morgese, Sean Maher, Reed Diamond, Clark Gregg and others

About MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
After a successful battle against his brother Don John, Don Pedro visits his friend Leonato. Two officers, Benedick and Claudio, accompany him. Claudio falls immediately in love with Leonato’s daughter Hero and wants to marry her as soon as possible; this union kindles an old fight between Benedick and Leonato’s niece, who battle it out in words. The wedding is set to take place in one week and in that time Don Pedro, Claudio, Leonato and Hero decide to play cupid and conspire to bring Benedick and Beatrice together. Meanwhile Don John shows up and does his best to ruin Claudio and Hero’s wedding plans.

Joss Whedon’s modern retelling of a Shakespeare classic is elegantly shot in black and white with a few changes, such as the gender of one of the characters, masks, and intrigues. Despite the contemporary California setting, the script stays true to the original and in this way opens up an interesting mix of antiquated prose and modern references and innuendos.

The worksheets address the following
- The meaning or significance of the discrepancies between Shakespeare’s theatre piece and Whedon’s film adaptation
- The meaning of the opening scene that depicts the Beatrice and Benedick’s relationship in a different light
- The occasional film staging that is reminiscent of the theatre production

Publishing information
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Photo credits: Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment
(All the stills are from the DVD of MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, published in Great Britain by Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment. They serve as image quotations, to enable study of the film’s content, and not as illustrations.)
Compare the theatre piece to the film adaptation

Compare the differences between the theatre piece and the film:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shakespeare</th>
<th>Whedon’s adaptation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time and location</strong></td>
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<td><strong>The characters’ “professions”</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Conrade’s role</strong></td>
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Discuss how the changes to the film adaptation influence the piece.

**The relationship between Benedick and Beatrice**

Before the main action begins in MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, we see a silent one-minute scene with Benedick and Beatrice.
Compare this scene with the film’s main storyline. In what way does the main plot differ from this opening scene?

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What does this scene tell us about the relationship between Beatrice and Benedick? What is going on in this scene?

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What camera shots are used in pictures 2 to 4 – what information about the emotions or thoughts of the characters is conveyed in this way?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Camera shot</th>
<th>Information conveyed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Image 2</td>
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<td>Image 3</td>
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<td>Image 4</td>
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Describe how this scene sheds light on the behaviour of the two characters in later scenes.

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Does this scene foreshadow the film’s ending?

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Discuss the extent to which Beatrice can be considered a very modern woman, and thus her character comes as no surprise in today’s world.
**Film and theatre**

In a number of scenes Whedon uses image compositions and entrances and exits of characters that is reminiscent of a stage production.

Outline the similarities to the theatre using the following stills.

Scene 1: Claudio is mistaken for Benedick in Don John’s pool.

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Scene 2 and 3: The scheme is set into motion: Benedick and Beatrice are supposed to eavesdrop.

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**Compare the two film versions**

Compare Joss Whedon’s interpretation with the film adaptation of MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING by Kenneth Branagh in 1993.

Take a particular look at

- How close it stays to the original script
- The basic atmosphere created in each of the films
- The function of the different locations
- The differing effects of Whedon’s black and white aesthetic and the soft Italian light used by Branagh.

Discuss which filmic interpretation you prefer and, in your opinion, which film version is more entertaining.