

Disguise in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*

Lesson plan

Topic: The use of disguise in Shakespeare's play *Much Ado About Nothing*

Level: B1

Time: 85–95 minutes

Aims

- to give students practice in using adjectives of character
- to develop students' ability to read Shakespearean language alongside a modern translation
- to identify and discuss the theme of disguise in *Much Ado About Nothing*

Preparation

Photocopy one copy of the student worksheets per student. Open the PowerPoint, and be ready to project **slide 2** for discussion during Task 1.

Procedure**Warmer – Truth or lie? (10 mins)**

- Ask students to think of two statements about themselves that are true and one that isn't. Ask them to write sentences or make notes.
- Demonstrate what to do by telling them three statements about yourself (including one lie) and asking them to identify the lie.
- Put students into groups of three. Ask them to take it in turns to share their facts – but tell them not to reveal which is the lie. The other students in the group must guess which are true and which is not.

Task 1 – Discussion (5 mins)

This task is intended to introduce students to the theme of disguise and to the play *Much Ado About Nothing* through discussion. It's unlikely that students will know the precise answers to these questions unless they are familiar with the play. The task aims to activate their vocabulary by encouraging students to guess what might be happening in the picture, rather than to achieve a 'correct' answer.

- Show slide 2 of the PowerPoint file.** Ask students to look at the picture of a scene from the film of *Much Ado About Nothing* and to discuss the questions.
- You can encourage students to try to guess the relationship between the characters, to consider where they might be and to comment on what they are wearing.

Answers

You can accept students' predictions about the picture, before revealing the answers.

1. Best friends Beatrice (second from left) and her cousin Hero (far right), accompanied by other friends.
2. They are at a party.

Task 2 – Introducing *Much Ado About Nothing* (15 mins)

This task provides a summary of *Much Ado About Nothing* that focuses on the relationship between the main protagonists of the play (Beatrice and Benedick) and

describes a key scene that will be explored in **Task 5 – Act 2 Scene 1: Matching** and **Task 6 – Reading comprehension**.

- Tell students that they are going to read a short summary of Shakespeare's play *Much Ado About Nothing*. Ask them to work in pairs to answer the questions. Encourage them to use the glossary provided.
- Ask students to check in small groups before eliciting answers.

Answers

1. Accept any of the following ideas, including synonyms of: playful, clever, argumentative and rude.
2. They have disliked each other for many years. We know this because they spend their time arguing and insulting each other; Benedick tells Beatrice that no one thinks she's funny. Beatrice tells Benedick that everyone thinks he's an idiot.
3. They use masks to hide who they really are, to pretend to be someone else and to allow them to do or say whatever they like without being recognised.
4. Benedick

Task 3 – Adjectives: describing character (10 mins)

This task aims to introduce students to adjectives of character in preparation for reading the extract from the play in **Task 6 – Reading comprehension**.

- Ask students to work in pairs to match the adjectives of character to definitions a–e.
- Ask students to check in small groups before eliciting answers.

Answers

a. miserable, b. immoral, c. grumpy, d. furious, e. outrageous

Task 4 – Controlled practice: gap fill (5–10 mins)

- Ask students to work in pairs to select the correct adjective to insert in sentences 1–5.

Answers

1. grumpy, 2. miserable, 3. outrageous, 4. immoral, 5. furious

Task 5 – Act 2 Scene 1: Matching (10 mins)

This task is intended to introduce students to and pre-teach language in preparation for reading the extract of the play in **Task 6 – Reading comprehension**.

- Tell students that they are going to read some phrases from Act 2 Scene 1 of *Much Ado About Nothing*.
- Explain that this is the scene where Beatrice and Benedick are at the party. Benedick is wearing a mask but Beatrice is not. Beatrice begins to talk about Benedick, not realising that it is actually him under the mask, and she insults him.
- Ask students to read phrases a–d. Emphasise that these are modern translations of some of the things that Beatrice says about Benedick.
- Ask them to work in pairs to complete the table by matching modern translations a–d to phrases from Shakespeare's original text.
- Ask students to check their answers in small groups.

Note – do not check the answers yet. Students will have the opportunity to check answers in **Task 6 – Reading comprehension**.

Answers

1d, 2c, 3b, 4a

Task 6 – Reading comprehension (15 mins)

- Ask students to read the full extract from the play (in the left column of p.4) and the translation alongside it (on the right) and to check if their answers from **Task 5 – Act 2 Scene 1: Matching** are correct.
- You can elicit answers as a whole class if appropriate.
- Now ask students to work in pairs to answer questions **1–4**.

Answers

1. *Beatrice thinks that Benedick is a clown and an idiot; someone who's only clever when it comes to inventing stories to impress people.*
2. *Immoral people like him.*
3. *He makes people laugh and at the same time he makes them furious – furious enough to beat him up!*
4. *He's grumpy and miserable, and doesn't want to eat anything.*

Task 7 – Free practice: describing a person (10-15 mins)

- Put students into small groups of 3–4. Ask them to describe a person that they know, or a character from a film or book using any of the adjectives from **Task 3 – Adjectives: describing character**. Ask students to explain why they have used those particular adjectives and to give examples.
- You could encourage more confident students to use further language from the extract in **Task 6 – Reading comprehension**.

Cooler – Discussion (5 mins)

- Explain that in *Much Ado About Nothing* Beatrice and Benedick don't continue to hate each other. Their friends make a plan to help them fall in love, and they do! They both realise that they were wrong about each other.
- Ask students to discuss the questions in small groups.