

# Learning Organiser for Yr 8 Much Ado About Nothing



## What am I going to learn?

What was the role of women in Elizabethan times?

What was the theatre like in Shakespearean times?

How has the English language changed?

How are Shakespearean plays structured?

What techniques are used to create humour?

How does Shakespeare portray gender roles?

### Social and Historical Context

#### Source:

As with many of Shakespeare's plays, the basic plot outline is borrowed from pre-existing texts.

#### Shakespeare's time:

Shakespeare wrote his plays at the time of two monarchs: Queen Elizabeth I and King James I.

The MOV was written fairly early in Shakespeare's career, during the relatively optimistic years of Queen Elizabeth I: this is when Shakespeare wrote the majority of his comedies, before the darker tragedies that he created during the reign of James I such as "Macbeth"

#### Love and marriage:

Marriage was seen as property transaction: wealthy women would be much sought after as a means of ensuring financial stability for the sons of noble families

#### WOMEN in Elizabethan times:

Nobility generally had arranged marriages in Elizabethan times. Women could not go to school, but noble women had private tutors - Queen Elizabeth set a trend amongst noble families of well-educated daughters. Perhaps, Shakespeare had Queen Elizabeth in mind when he created Hero. She was a woman in a man's world and like many of Shakespeare's female characters, actually proves to be more intelligent and resourceful than the males!

#### Patriarchal Society:

Women were considered inferior to men in Elizabethan England, despite a powerful female on the throne defending her country against threats from the Spanish Armada and even courtiers within the English court. This patriarchal society was also the case in much of Europe



### Social and Historical Context

In Shakespearean times, the theatre was one of the only forms of entertainment but the experiences were very different from going to a modern theatre. The theatre had no roof and was open to the elements with the groundlings standing to watch the show.

#### Who was William Shakespeare?

**William Shakespeare** (26<sup>th</sup> April 1564 – 23 April 1616) was an English playwright, poet and actor. He is regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist.

### Analysis:

**WHAT:** What is the POINT you want to make?

**HOW:** How has the writer expressed their ideas? What words/ phrases/ techniques or structural features has the writer used to express this idea? Include a quotation from the text.

**WHY:** Why do you think the writer has expressed their ideas in this way? What is the writer's intention? What does the writer want the reader to think/feel/question?

### Female Tropes:

**The Heroine:** Women were expected to be subservient, quiet and homebound, with their primary ambitions entirely confined to marriage, childbirth and homemaking.

**The Shrew:** "Shrew" is a derogatory term for a woman with a sharp tongue and a bad temper. A shrew was a common character in commedia and in literature of Shakespeare's day. A "scold" was much worse than a shrew. A scold was a woman who offended public order through her speech. Unlike the shrew, who utters angry, nagging, mean-spirited words, a scold committed more slanderous acts that were punishable by law.

**The Witch:** Any woman who did not fulfil the traditional expectations of an Elizabethan woman might have been accused of being a witch.

### Shakespeare Key Terminology

**Verse/Prose:** Theatrical convention at the time was that unrhymed verse written in iambic pentameter (blank verse) was spoken by high status characters. It is used for scenes of high emotional intensity. Prose was used by low status or comic characters.

**Soliloquy/aside:** One character, alone on stage, sharing their inner thoughts and feelings, making an audience complicit, is a soliloquy. If other characters are present on stage, and the character still speaks directly to the audience, it is an aside.

**Dramatic Irony:** Audience knows more than characters.

**Motifs:** Recurrent images, ideas or symbols that develop or explain themes e.g Noting

**Rhyme:** Rhyming couplets emphasise key ideas, and signal an end  
**Foreshadowing:** Giving an advance hint of what is to come later in the story.

**Act:** A larger section of a play. Shakespeare wrote 5 act plays.

**Scene:** The smaller sections within the larger act that occur in different settings. Shakespeare often uses the structural device of changing scene at a moment of great tension.