

Much Ado About Nothing

The action of *Much Ado About Nothing* occurs during several days of a visit by Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon, at the large estate of Leonato, Governor of Messina. Don Pedro has been victorious in a small war against his own half-brother, Don John, who has now reluctantly joined him.

From the beginning to the end of the play, two love stories are intertwined. One story follows the formal, romantic relationship between Leonato's daughter, Hero (a young woman), and Claudio (a young officer). Claudio realizes, after returning from war, that he is deeply in love with Hero and wants to ask her father for permission to marry her.

The other couple, Beatrice (Hero's cousin) and Benedick (another officer), work hard to give the impression that neither is the least bit interested in the other. However, the audience can tell almost immediately that they don't entirely believe their own disclaimers. Their friends arrange for them to overhear conversations revealing how much each is loved by the other.

Meanwhile, the defeated Don John, a self-proclaimed villain, is eager to carry out serious mischief against his brother and Claudio, who helped defeat him. One of John's men enacts a scene at Hero's window in which a woman who appears to be Hero succumbs to the amorous attentions of a man other than Claudio. John further arranges for Claudio and Don Pedro to observe this scene. As a result of seeing this apparent deception, Claudio angrily denounces Hero during their wedding ceremony and, with Don Pedro, storms off as the deceived husband-to-be. The friar performing the ceremony comforts Hero, her father, and the other couple (Benedick and Beatrice), and arranges for Hero to be hidden as though dead, until Claudio regains his senses. Beatrice's defense of Hero after her denouncement unites Beatrice and Benedick in the cause of Hero's revenge, and they declare their love for one another.

In the meantime, Dogberry (a comically bumbling constable) and his men on night watch stumble on the conspiracy against Don Pedro and arrest John's men, who confess their guilt under questioning.

Soon Claudio is forced to admit his error in thinking that Hero would deceive him and, believing her dead, mourns for her and agrees to marry one of Hero's cousins. The cousin turns out to be a disguised and forgiving Hero. Beatrice and Benedick are also to be married. Don John tries to run off but is recaptured.

(Courtesy of Cliff's Notes)

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Arnold Spirit Jr. ("Junior") tells about his early life on the Spokane Indian reservation: How doctors predicted he would die from complications of hydrocephalus – his being born with excess spinal fluid on the brain. But, of course, Junior survived. Other Indians on the reservation or, as Junior calls it, the "rez," bully him and call him names like "hydrohead." Junior's best friend, Rowdy, often promises to protect him, but Rowdy's own violent tendencies sometimes prevent him from being all that helpful. Junior's parents are alcoholics and his sister, Mary, spends all her time in the family basement.

In the summer before their freshman year of high school, Rowdy convinces Junior to go with him to the Spokane powwow. Junior is fourteen. Rowdy promises to protect Junior from any bullies. Junior runs away into a set of mean, drunk, thirty-year-old triplets. They push him around and beat him up. Later, to make up for having let Junior down, Rowdy sneaks into the triplets' camp at night and cuts off their long braids.

Soon thereafter, Junior and Rowdy begin their first year at Wellpinit High. Junior is excited to get started and is especially looking forward to his geometry class. But his geometry teacher, Mr. P, gives Junior a textbook that Junior sees was signed by his mother thirty years previously. He throws the textbook in a fit of rage. It hits Mr. P in the face, breaking his nose.

After the textbook incident, Junior is suspended from school. Much to Junior's surprise, Mr. P comes to Junior's house to apologize to Junior. Mr. P tells Junior that there is no hope on the reservation and that the best thing Junior can do for himself is get off the reservation as quickly as possible. Junior's parents agree to send Junior to high school in the all-white town of Reardan, some twenty-two miles from home. On his first day, Junior meets his future girlfriend, Penelope. A few days later, the toughest jock, Roger, insults Junior with a racist joke, and Junior punches him in the face. Junior is surprised to find that his action earns him Roger's respect.

Back on the reservation, Rowdy and the other Indians feel betrayed. Most react by ignoring Junior, but some are angrier than that. Around Thanksgiving, Mary gets married to a Montana poker player and she moves with him to

Montana without saying goodbye to her family. Junior wonders if Mary is competing with him because he managed to get off the reservation. Junior hears from Mary occasionally thereafter by email and letter.

Later that fall, Junior tries out for the Reardan basketball team and has to play one-on-one against Roger, who is 6'6" and can dunk. It's a tough match up, but Junior holds his own and is rewarded with a spot on the varsity team. Junior's team plays a game against Wellpinit on the reservation where the entire crowd turns its back on Junior when his team enters the gym. Just after he checks into the game, Rowdy fouls Junior so badly that he gives Junior a concussion. Reardan loses badly, but weeks later, in the teams' next match up at Reardan, Junior's strong defense leads Reardan to a decisive victory. Wellpinit's season is ruined, and Reardan loses, later, early in the state playoffs.

Then the tragedies begin. Junior's grandmother, whom Junior admires for her tolerance and generosity, is struck and killed by a drunk driver. Then Eugene's friend, Bobby, shoots Eugene in the face over the last sip of a bottle of wine. Later, just when Junior thinks things can't get any worse, the school guidance counselor calls him into the hall to tell him that Mary has died while she and her husband were in their trailer. Rowdy blames Junior for Mary's death, but Junior somehow manages to finish the school year and got a decent report card. He and his family begin to heal and he promises his Mom that he will never drink. That summer, Rowdy comes to Junior's house to see if Junior wants to hang out. The book ends with the two playing a game of one-on-one in the summer heat.

(Courtesy of Spark Notes)

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes

After curvaceous show girls Lorelei Lee and Dorothy Shaw finish their nightclub act, blonde gold-digger Lorelei receives an engagement ring from wealthy Gus Esmond Jr., much to the amusement of cynical brunette Dorothy. Gus's father, who is opposed to the marriage, has prevented Gus from marrying Lorelei in the past, and he again intervenes. Gus had planned to marry Lorelei in Paris, and so sends her and Dorothy ahead on the ocean liner *Isle de Paris*, cautioning Lorelei to avoid any scandal.

As the buxom beauties board the ship, the American men's Olympic team comments that neither would drown if the ship sank. Dorothy, who does not share her chum's preference for rich men, is thrilled by the handsome athletes, while Lorelei searches the passenger list for suitable men to escort Dorothy.

Unknown to the women, Gus's father has hired handsome private detective Ernie Malone to spy on Lorelei. Malone develops a crush on Dorothy and is one of several men who bribe the headwaiter for a seat at Lorelei and Dorothy's dining room table. That afternoon, after Malone engineers a meeting with Dorothy to question her about Lorelei, Lorelei is introduced to Sir Francis "Piggy" Beekman, who owns a diamond mine in South Africa. Lorelei is dazzled when Piggy's wife, Lady Beekman, shows off her tiara, for she loves to find new places to wear diamonds.

That night, the companion that Lorelei chooses for Dorothy, Henry Spofford III, turns out to be a six-year-old boy. After dinner, Malone tells Lorelei that he "clips coupons," and, mistakenly believing that he is well-off, Lorelei endorses his romance with Dorothy. As the days pass, Dorothy falls for Malone, although she reprimands him for criticizing Lorelei's passion for riches.

One afternoon, Dorothy sees Malone taking pictures through the porthole of her and Lorelei's cabin and, after rushing inside, discovers that Lorelei was pretending to be a goat while Piggy, pretending to be a python, was demonstrating how pythons encircle their prey.

Deducing that Malone is a detective, Dorothy schemes to retrieve his film. While Dorothy occupies Malone in the bar, Lorelei searches his cabin but cannot find the film. Forced to escape through the porthole, Lorelei gets stuck, but Spofford helps her wiggle out of her predicament. With the aid of some strong drinks and knockout drops, Dorothy and Lorelei then succeed in getting Malone's clothes and the film. After developing the pictures, Lorelei shows them to Piggy, who is so grateful for her "honesty" that she convinces him to give her Lady Beekman's tiara.

After they leave the cabin, Malone is retrieving the tape recorder he had planted when Dorothy catches him. Malone assures Dorothy that his feelings for her are real, but she refuses to forgive him. Upon their arrival in Paris, Dorothy and Lorelei go on a buying spree, and when they try to check into their hotel, they discover that Gus, who has received Malone's damning report, has cancelled their reservations and letter of credit.

Left on their own, the women obtain jobs at a local nightclub and soon after, Gus visits in an attempt to reconcile with Lorelei. Although Lorelei loves Gus, she brushes him off and outrages him with her tuneful declaration that "diamonds are a girl's best friend." After Lorelei's number, French police arrive to retrieve Lady Beekman's tiara, but the jewelry

has been stolen from the women's dressing room. Dorothy, wearing a blond wig, then impersonates Lorelei in court while her friend tries to wheedle the price of a tiara out of Gus.

Meanwhile, Malone, who has come to Paris to meet Esmond, Sr., deduces that Piggy has stolen the tiara and successfully retrieves it. Back at the nightclub, Lorelei convinces Esmond, Sr. that a man being rich is like a woman being pretty and he finally consents to her marriage to Gus. Dorothy and Malone, who have also resolved their romantic difficulties, join Gus and Lorelei for a double wedding ceremony, and Dorothy advises Lorelei, "Remember, honey, on your wedding day, it's alright to say yes."

(Courtesy of Turner Classic Movies)