

# Much Ado Blockbusters

Developed by Liz Haslam and Zoe Taylor at the Rochdale Shakespeare workshop in December 2006.

The webaddress for this activity is:

<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/muchadoblockbusters.pdf>

Last updated 2nd February 2007

## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT

Project Director: Stuart Scott

Supporting a cooperative network of teaching professionals throughout the European Union to develop and disseminate accessible teaching materials in all subject areas and for all ages.

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## BRIEF SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES BEHIND OUR TEACHING ACTIVITIES:

The project is a teacher network, and a non-profit making educational trust. Our main aim is to develop and disseminate classroom tested examples of effective group strategies across all phases and subjects. We hope they will inspire you to develop and use similar strategies in other topics and curriculum areas. We run teacher workshops, swapshops and conferences throughout the European Union. The project publishes a catalogue of activities plus lists in selected subject areas, and a newsletter available on the internet: "PAPERCLIP".

\*These activities were influenced by current thinking about the role of language in learning. They are designed to help children learn through talk and active learning in small groups. They work best in mixed classes where children in need of language or learning support are integrated. They are well suited for the development of speaking and listening. They provide teachers opportunities for assessment of speaking and listening and other formative assessment.

\*They support differentiation by placing a high value on what children can offer to each other on a particular topic, and also give children the chance to respect each other's views and formulate shared opinions which they can disseminate to peers. By helping them to take ideas and abstract concepts, discuss, paraphrase and move them about physically, they help to develop thinking skills.

\*They give children the opportunity to participate in their own words and language in their own time without pressure. Many activities can be tried out in mother tongue and afterwards in English. A growing number of activities are available in more than one language, not translated, but mixed, so that you may need more than one language to complete the activity.

\*They encourage study skills in context, and should therefore be used with a range of appropriate information books which are preferably within reach in the classroom.

\*They are generally adaptable over a wide age range because children can bring their own knowledge to an activity and refer to books at an appropriate level. The activities work like catalysts.

\*All project activities were planned and developed by teachers working together, and the main reason they are disseminated is to encourage teachers to work effectively with each other inside and outside the classroom. They have made it possible for mainstream and language and learning support teachers to share an equal role in curriculum delivery. They should be adapted to local conditions. In order to help us keep pace with curriculum changes, please send any new or revised activities back to the project, so that we can add them to our lists of materials.

# Much Ado Blockbusters

## *Teachers' Notes*

*This is an introduction to some of the ideas which are important to the play. It is designed so that it can be played when the pupils know little or nothing about the play, but it could be used at any time. It can be played in different ways, but here is the way Liz and Zoe chose to do it:*

Three people play together, one of them is the asks the questions. Players can take turns for this role

There are four kinds of questions on shown on the shapes by different capital letters :

- \*About women's status (W)
- \* About Shakespeare's language (L)
- About comedy (C)
- \* About masks. (M)

Liz and Zoe colour coloured the shapes, but we have gone for a black and white version to make it easier for you to produce multiple copies.

All the information needed to answer the questions is provided here. Either use the large information sheets and stick these onto a game board with the blockbuster shapes in the middle or enlarge the small version to A3 or just use the answer sheets if you want to make it more difficult. This will need to be laminated. The questions should be cut out and put in 4 piles. You will need counters in four different colours. Alternatively, and this works better in the longer game, players can mark the shapes with initials in dry wiper pens. In this case of course you will need to laminate the board which isn't a bad idea anyway since A3 card is hard to come by.

There are answer sheets for the questions which can be left at the front in case anyone gets stuck.

# How to Play Much Ado Blockbusters

This game is for three players and one extra person to ask the questions.

You are going to cross the board from left to right.

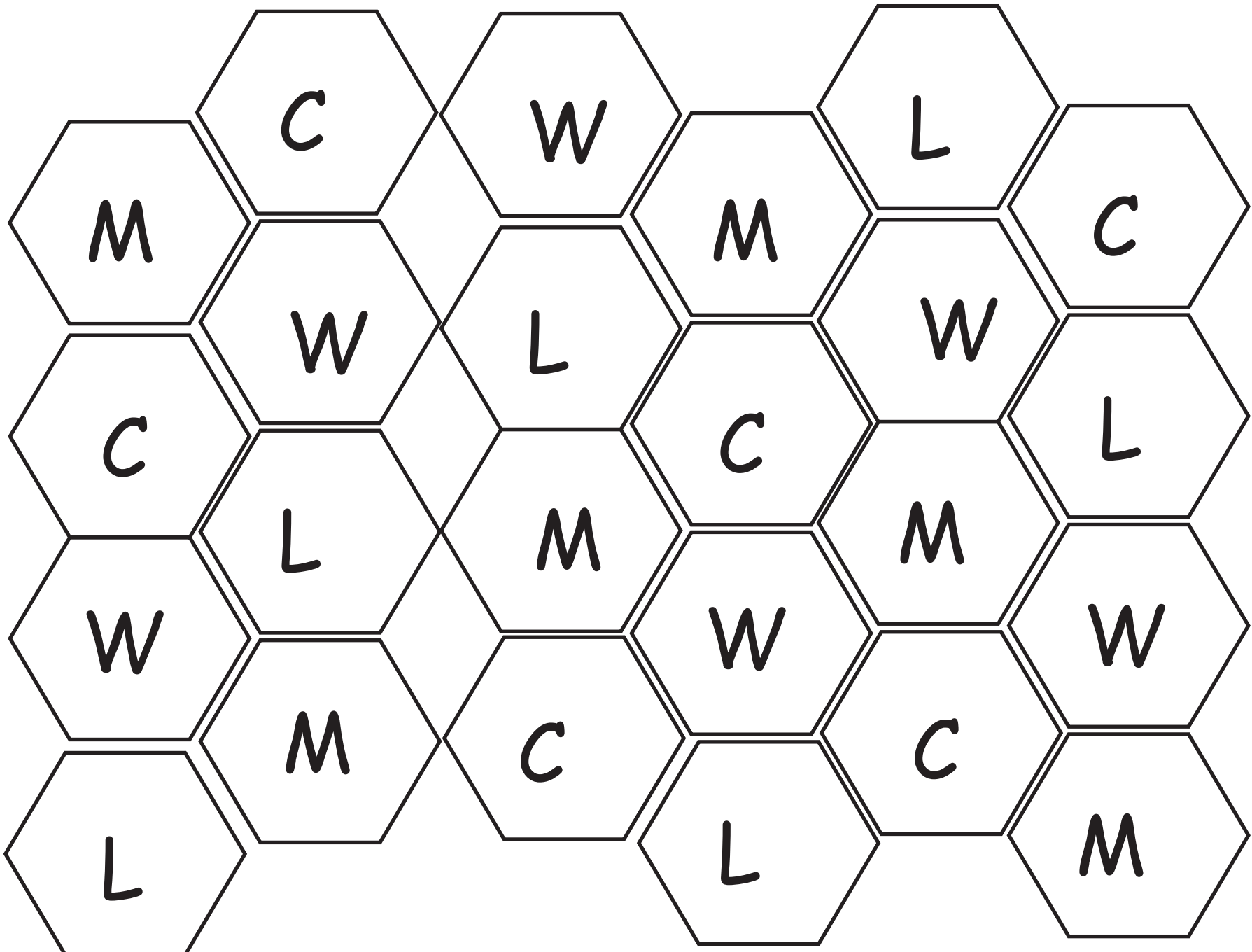
Take it in turns to choose a letter from the first row. The person who asks picks a question from the pile that matches the letter

If you answer the question correctly, you can put your coloured counter on the hexagon. Choose any hexagon which touches this one when it is your turn again. If you cannot find the answer, try a different letter on the first row when it is your next turn.

For a short game, the winner can be the first person to cross the board.

## A MORE DIFFICULT GAME

The longer game is better. For this one, the players double back and keep crossing the board until they have covered all the shapes. The first two to manage this are joint winners.



## Women

In Elizabethan times women were seen legally as property. Fathers owned daughters until they married. Fathers gave or received money (dowry) for their daughters, so it was important that they married as rich a husband as possible. A woman had to keep her good reputation and virginity. It was important that she did not have sex before marriage. If she did she would risk being dishonoured, unable to marry and shunned by her family.

As a result, people often married very young and very quickly. They did not always marry for love. They sometimes married a person that their family chose for them. It would be almost unheard of for rich to marry poor.

In this play, Hero should marry Claudio, but Don John's secret plan stops this from happening. Claudio believes that Hero has had sex and he doesn't want to marry her any more.

## Comedy

In Shakespeare's time it was the fashion to talk very cleverly and make clever jokes. This was called wit. Some characters in the plays show how clever they are by teasing each other. The audience thought this was funny. Beatrice and Benedick have a love hate relationship. They show this by teasing each other but sometimes they hurt each other too much. They use their wit to hide their true feelings and protect their pride.

The audience would have found the misunderstandings in the play very funny. For example Benedick overhears some people saying that Beatrice is in love with him. He believes this and decides to fall in love with her. Beatrice is an excellent example of Shakespeare using clever language to entertain the audience. For example, she makes fun of the messenger because he is very serious. She asks how many people Benedick has killed at war because she has promised to eat all he has killed.

## Language

Shakespeare wrote his plays four hundred years ago when the English language was different. For example, 'an' meant 'if', 'meet' meant 'right' and 'hath' meant 'has'.

The theatre would not have had modern lighting or special effects so Shakespeare had to set his scenes with his words. We have special effects and we have film, so we can look at scenery, costumes and lighting as well as listen to the actors. In Shakespeare's time the special effects were the words the actors spoke.

Shakespeare uses language full of images. These are word pictures, e.g. 'I had rather hear a dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.' Many of these are metaphors. e.g. 'Is it possible Disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it, as Signor Benedick. In this example, Beatrice pretends that Benedick is good food for disliking men.

There are also similes, e.g. 'O Lord, he will hang upon him like a disease.' In this example, Beatrice says people can catch Benedick like they catch a disease.

Oxymorons are words which cannot go together, e.g. 'a hot January'.

There are many examples of double meanings as well.

Beatrice and Benedick spend much of the day quarrelling and their merry war uses many jokes. These jokes would keep the audience entertained.

For example Benedick teases Beatrice with the line 'I would that my horse had the speed of your tongue.'

## Women

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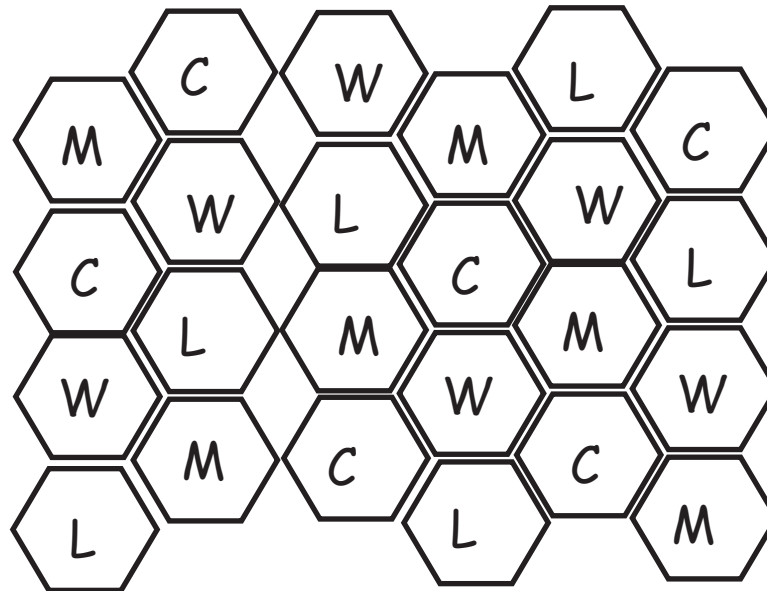
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Oxymorons are words which cannot go together, e.g. 'a hot January'.

There are many examples of double meanings as well.

Beatrice and Benedick spend much of the day quarrelling and their merry war uses many jokes. These jokes would keep the audience entertained. For example Benedick teases Beatrice with the line 'I would that my horse had the speed of your tongue.'

## Masks

This happened at parties. People covered their faces with masks. Men chose women to dance with. Masks allowed people to keep their identities secret. This meant people could make mistakes or behave badly. They could hide what they had done. They could pretend to be someone else. Don Pedro pretended to be Claudio. Beatrice pretended not to recognise Benedick.

In this play people are confused just like a masked ball confuses people. There are secret plans. Don Pedro had a secret plan to make Beatrice and Benedick fall in love. Don John had a secret plan to make Claudio hate Hero. Characters make mistakes. They believe lies. Characters listen to each other in secret, and they are tricked by what they hear. Beatrice heard Hero and Ursula telling lies about Benedick, and she believed them.

Women

In Shakespeare's time, what was the legal position of women?

Women

What was a dowry?

Women

Why were there so many rules about what women could or could not do in Elizabethan times?

Women

What happened to women who were discovered to have had sex before they were married

Women

Why did Claudio decide not to marry Hero?

Women

Who invented the plot to stop Claudio and Hero from getting married?

Comedy

Which two characters tease each other a lot in the play?

Comedy

Who overhears people saying that Beatrice is in love with him?

Comedy

What kind of relationship do Benedick and Beatrice have at the start of the play

Comedy

What does Beatrice say about Benedick in the war?

Comedy

What does 'wit' mean in Shakespeare's plays?

Comedy

Give one example of something the Elizabethan audience would have found funny.

Masks

What was a masked ball?

Masks

Who made a secret plan so that Beatrice and Benedick would fall in love?

Masks

Who pretended to be Claudio

Masks

Why did people enjoy going to masked balls?



Masks  
Who pretended  
not to recognise  
Benedick?

Masks  
Why is the masked ball  
an important image of  
this play?

Language  
Say this in simple modern  
English: 'He that hath a  
beard is more than a youth  
and he that hath no beard  
is less than a man.'

Language  
Give one important  
difference between  
Shakespeare's theatres  
and our theatres today.

Language  
What kind of imagery is in  
this quote: 'Is it possible  
Disdain should die when  
she hath such meet food  
to feed it?'

Language  
Is 'He will hang upon  
him like a disease' a  
simile or a metaphor?

Language  
What kind of imagery  
is in 'a merry war'?

Language  
Translate this into  
simple modern English: 'I  
would my horse had the  
speed of your tongue.'



## Language Answers

Write this in simple modern English: 'He that hath a beard is more than a youth and he that hath no beard is less than a man.'  
Answer: 'If he has a beard, he is more than a boy and if he has no beard he is less than a man.' There are other ways of putting it, so any sentence which means the same as this one would be right.

Give one important difference between Shakespeare's theatres and our theatres today.

Answer: All 3 of these are right: they did not have lighting effects or special effects as we know them today.  
Boys played the female roles.

What kind of imagery is in 'a merry war'?

Answer: This is an oxymoron because these two words do not belong together - war is associated with misery.

Is 'He will hang upon him like a disease' a simile or a metaphor?

Answer: It is a simile, because it uses the word 'like'.

What kind of imagery is in this quote: 'Is it possible Disdain should die when she hath such meet food to feed it?'

Answer: It is a metaphor, because Shakespeare was pretending that disdain was a person who could be fed - meaning that nobody could like Benedick so he made disdain grow strong.

Translate this into simple modern English: 'I would my horse had the speed of your tongue.'

Answer: Anything that means nearly the same as:  
'I wish my horse could run as fast as you can give clever comebacks'

## Comedy Answers

### Comedy

What kind of relationship do Benedick and Beatrice have at the start of the play?

Answer: They have a love-hate relationship. They tease each other too much and sometimes their feelings are hurt. They hide their true feelings. They are too proud to be honest.

### Comedy

Give one example of something the Elizabethan audience would have found funny.

Answer: any of these would be right- the jokes and teasing, the misunderstandings, the characters pretending to be other people.

### Comedy

What does Beatrice say about Benedick in the war?

Answer: She asks how many men he has killed, and says she has promised to eat every one.

### Comedy

What does 'wit' mean in Shakespeare's plays?

Answer: It means talking cleverly and making clever jokes

### Comedy

Which two characters tease each other a lot in the play?

Answer: It is Beatrice and Benedick

### Comedy

Who overhears people saying that Beatrice is in love with him?

Answer: It is Benedick. Don Pedro made a secret plan so that Benedick would overhear people saying how much Beatrice loved him

## Masks Answers

### Masks

Who pretended to be Claudio?  
Answer: It was Don Pedro. He pretended to be Claudio so that he could help Claudio to impress Hero.

### Masks

Who made a secret plan so that Beatrice and Benedick would fall in love?

Answer: It was Don Pedro.

### Masks

Who pretended not to recognise Benedick?

Answer: It was Beatrice. She pretended not to know that she was talking to Benedick so that she could say a lot of unkind things about him. This hurt his feelings

### Masks

Why did people enjoy going to masked balls?

Answer: Any of these would be right - They could make mistakes without getting into trouble. They could behave badly and nobody would know. They could pretend to be someone else.

### Masks

Why is the masked ball an important image of this play?

Answer: Any of these would be right- In the play, people are confused, just like a masked ball confused people. There are secret plans and a masked ball keeps people's names secret. People are tricked by secrets in the play, and a masked ball is like a big trick.

### Masks

What was a masked ball?

Answer: Everyone covered their faces so nobody could tell who they were, then the men chose women to dance with.

## Women Answers

### Women

In Shakespeare's time, what was the legal position of women?

Answer: Women were property. They were owned by their fathers until they got married.

### Women

Why did Claudio decide not to marry Hero?

Answer: Because he thought she had had sex with somebody

### Women

What was a dowry?

Answer: This was the money a new husband gave to his wife's father. Fathers wanted their daughters to marry rich husbands so that they could get a lot of money.

### Women

Why were there so many rules about what women could or could not do in Elizabethan times?

Answer: Either of these would be correct - Because the woman's behaviour affected how much money the family would get when she got married. Because they believed it was against their religion for women to do some things.

### Women

Who invented the plot to stop Claudio and Hero from getting married?

Answer: It was Don John.

### Women

What happened to women who were discovered to have had sex before they were married?  
Answer: They would lose their honour and nobody would want to marry them. They would probably be thrown out of the family.