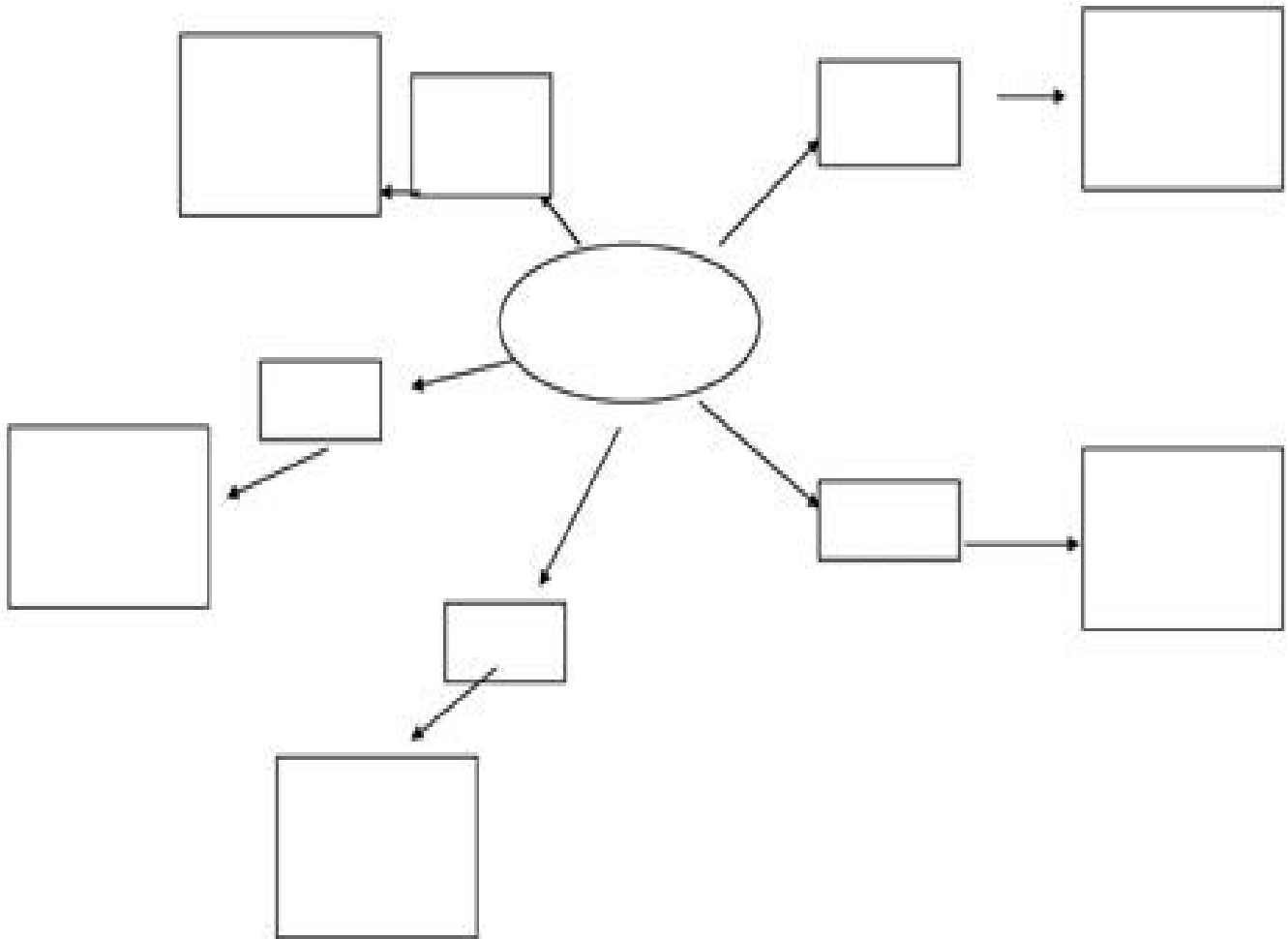


MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING MOVIE ACTIVITIES PACKET

AS WE BEGIN THE MOVIE: Fill in the chart below about the first 5-10 minutes of the movie. How do these elements create the mood and atmosphere of the scene?



Kenneth Branagh's Adaptation: Read the following statements by Kenneth Branagh who is the producer/director and leading actor in the film. Bear these statements in mind during your viewing in order to discuss whether or not you agree with Branagh's feeling about the film and his method of execution:

"The play is one of the greatest romantic comedies ever written. Like many of Shakespeare's comedies it's very earthy and lusty. People seem to fall in love through a fury of summer madness. My intention was to make explicit in the film what is only implicit in the play"

"I wanted this to be a fairy tale - beautifully dressed and lovingly photographed - that can also be very frightening at times. Like all good fairy tales, there's a strong dark undercurrent to the story. It's also very, very funny."

Answer the following questions as we watch the movie:

OPENING:

1. Look at the opening of the film. Beatrice's voice is heard speaking, "Sigh no more ladies," whilst we see the words writ large upon the screen underscored by music.
 - Consider the effect of this, bearing in mind that the language could pose a problem when adapting Shakespeare to the screen. How does the actress read the poem? How does it help the character establish a sympathy with the audience?

2. We then go to an artist's watercolour view of the villa. Describe this image in terms of an "idealised setting."

3. We then go to the real image of the villa which is even more stunning than the picture. In what ways does the image of the real villa correspond or conflict with the "fairy tale" setting of Mr. Branagh's statement?

4. The whole opening section - the soldier's arriving, the bathing and preparations for the returning army to meet the Governor's family and entourage - is invented by the filmmakers. Why do you think this is done?

SHAPING A CHARACTER: Whether or not you sympathize with a character depends on many factors. For example: do you recognise the type of person a character represents (good or evil), do you identify with a character (admire or identify with the character), or do you have inside information (inner thoughts or past experiences)?

When watching rather than reading a play, our sympathy for a character will partly be in response to directorial interpretation. How does a film director build up a character and shape the way an audience feels about her/him? Consider the following and **COMPLETE THE TABLE ON THE NEXT PAGE:**

- Who are the heroes/heroines, villains/villainesses in the film?
- What identifies them as 'goodies' or 'baddies'?
- Does everyone in your class agree, or do some like a baddie and dislike a goodie?
- Is it easy to classify every character, and label them in such simple terms?
- What do we risk by referring to characters as either 'good' or 'bad'?
- Given that a director can manipulate the way we feel towards a character, would it be possible for him/her to influence an audience's feelings so as to make them like the most evil villain or dislike the saintliest heroine?

Choose two characters from the film, one female and one male. Using the 'like'/'dislike' columns, list ways you could use the effects listed on the left to make the audience like/dislike each character.

Male: _____ Female: _____

Effect	Like	Dislike	Like	Dislike
Costume				
Music				
Lighting				
Set				
Entrance				
Make-up				
Hair				
Camera shot/angle				

FILM CHARACTER ANALYSIS: Answer these questions to focus on information unique to the movie.

CLAUDIO

A conscious decision was made to strengthen the character of Claudio in the film. How was this done?

1. Consider the use of camera on him, music which accompanies him, and his 'framing' in the film.

2. His character was made less arrogant than in the play and more sympathetic in the film. Having considered the problems above, why and how was this done?

HERO AND CLAUDIO

Some of the smaller complications and byways of the plot concerning Hero and Claudio are ironed out. For example, in the Masked Ball Sequence, Claudio is led to believe (by Don John) that Don Pedro is wooing Hero on his own account, but this is not left to develop as it is in the play but tied up at that moment.

How does this affect the following:

1. The narrative drive of the film?

2. The portrayal of Don Pedro, Don John and Claudio?

MARGARET

The part of Margaret in the film is dramatically changed. We hardly see her except in the general household scenes. Likewise, we only see her in long-shot when Borrachio is pretending he is making love to Hero at the window. Keep in mind "talking" is a double entendre (word with a double meaning, often being derogatory).

1. Why do you think this scene was made so graphic while some plays only show them talking?

2. Elizabethan ideals of Honour and Courtly Love are very different to our own. How does this affect the feeling of the film?

3. Claudio and Don Pedro actually see the "talking" scene and react to it. Why do you think this is done?

DON JOHN

The character of Don John speaks very little in the piece, yet he is often focused upon, and we see him at his most malevolent in the interior settings of the villa.

1. Why do you think we see him massaged in the firelight?

2. What effect on the audience is meant to be achieved by seeing him striding through dark corridors?

THE WATCH

1. How would you describe the portrayal of Dogberry and Verges in the film?

2. How effective was it for you? Did you find it funny?

3. In the play, the Watch scenes happen all together. Why do you think they were split up in the movie?

ANTONIO

The play creates confusion about the relationships between Leonato, Antonio, Hero, and Beatrice. In the play, Antonio is Leonato's best friend, and Beatrice is an orphan who they care for as a legitimate family member. In the movie, Antonio is Leonato's brother, and Beatrice is Antonio's daughter (an actual cousin of Hero).

1. Why do you think the movie made these assumptions?

2. How might this information change an audience's perception of Beatrice and her "worth"?

3. How do these changes clear up ambiguities in the play?

THE LOOK

USING SETTINGS

Compare the tone of the scenes set inside the villa with those outside the villa. Compare the tone of the scenes set in daylight with those set at night. Consider specifically the masked ball, the wedding in the open air, the veiled women, the capture and unmasking of the villains.

1. How do these link with the themes of deceit (intent), deception (accomplishment), revelation and resolution in the film?

2. The movie's set is exaggerated almost to the point of ridiculousness. Why do you think Branagh chose this set?

DEALING WITH THE AUDIENCE

There are sections in the film in which certain characters are fooling other characters (the trick set for Beatrice and Benedick). The audience has to know the actors are pretending, and the characters they are duping must not. This is more easily established in the conventions of the theatre.

1. How well do you think it succeeds in the film?

2. Soliloquy ("self-talk") is very difficult to do on film. When Benedict and Beatrice are addressing the audience in the cinema how well do you think this works?

THE USE OF CAMERA

There is a spectacular shot at the end of the film: the last section of the dance from the archway to the garden to a huge shot of the landscape is done in one take. This was done by a cameraman travelling with the actors.

1. How do you think the whole sequence was done (what did the cameraman have to do)?

2. When the song is sung in the garden at the fountain, there is another "steadycam" shot mainly around the fountain. How effective was this?

3. How did you react to the montage of the happy Benedict in the fountain with Beatrice on the swing?

4. What did you think in general to the 'look' of the film?

MOVIE POSTER

Draft a movie poster in the space below. **INCLUDE** the title, main characters (images and names), director, and any other information you find pertinent (quotations/reviews). You will then have a chance to create a final copy on computers (**cite** sources of pictures and quotations on the back).