

***Much Ado about Nothing* Cast List**

A short madrigal for 5 Male, 4 Female, 3 M/F, Extras

JESTER (M/F) Comic and master of ceremonies

TOWN CRIER (M/F) Professional announcer; also in charge of the entertainment for the Court

KING (M) the Lord of the castle

QUEEN (F) the Lady of the castle

DUCHESS DELIGHTFUL (F) just lost husband number six. Seven is her lucky number.

DON JOHN (M) an evil, disgruntled, scheming aristocrat.

LACKEY (M) the name pretty much says it all.

DOGBERRY (M/F) the name pretty much—Oh. Wait. Justice of the Peace misrepresented by William Shakespeare.

HERO (F) falls head-over-heels in love with Claudio at the drop of a hat.

CLAUDIO (M) ditto for him, except, you know, for Hero.

BEATRICE (F) tremendously witty and secretly in love with Benedick.

BENEDICK (M) ditto for him, except, you know, for Beatrice.

EXTRAS (M/F) courtiers, pages, guards, etc.

Sample Pages

SHORT FANFARE

(The action begins outside the hall where the guests have gathered. Following a short BRASS FANFARE, the TOWN CRIER appears and announces the beginning of the meal.)

TOWN CRIER:

Welcome good nobles, ladies fair!

Welcome to this night's affair:

Music, laughter—wassail for all!

Welcome to our banquet hall!

The king is coming, let's do proceed,
So enter now with all good speed!

(Doors are opened and the guests are announced by the GUARDS. For example, Lord and Lady Thomas, or the family of Lord Brown, or Lord Johnson and his party of six, etc. PAGES escort guests to their tables. Ambient entertainers such as beggars, minstrels, or poets should mix with the guests. Background music is also appropriate.)

FANFARE AND WELCOME

(Lights up as JESTER enters.)

JESTER:

Welcome good lords and nobles and dukes and . . . *(Points to audience member.)* Count Cornelius! I didn't know you were coming tonight! I have a letter for you. *(Pats himself as he searches for the letter.)* I have it here somewhere. You see, I sorta stole it from the Town Crier. *(Recovers letter.)* Ah, here it is. *(Crosses to audience member and hands him the letter.)* I hope you don't mind, but I took the liberty of reading it. *(Looks out at the audience.)* It's a love note! *(Leads the audience with a "wooooo.")* From Duchess Delightful! *(Leads the audience with a "wooooo.")* And she's a widow again! *(Leads the audience with a "wooooo.")* Here's crayons and paper. The Town Crier awaits your response. You write the Duchess a note while I welcome our guests.

(Returns to stage. Says loudly.)

Welcome good lords and ladies fair!

Welcome to this night's affair!

The year is 1635!

Our noble king will soon arrive;

So, may the mirth that fills this hall

Amuse and delight you, one and all.

(To "COUNT.") Now, dear Count, let me see your response to Duchess Delightful. *(Takes the note and returns to stage. Reads note while moving lips. Finishes. To COUNT.)* You misspelled a word. You "definitely" want to meet her, not "defiantly." And you've made the classic grammar mistake. *(Quotes from note.)* "And then we'll go back to my place to look at my etchings"? *(Stares at COUNT.)* You never end a sentence with a proposition. Don't worry, I'll rewrite this note for you, and Duchess Delightful will simply swoon. And not just because her corset is too tight.

TOWN CRIER: *(Enters frantically.)* Jester! We have a problem!

JESTER: What's the matter, Town Crier?

TOWN CRIER: It's that romantic tragedy you had planned for the Queen tonight.

JESTER: You mean "The Scrollbook"? But it's perfect. Farm boy Noah comes back from the crusades to snatch Lady Hamilton from a fate worse than death.

TOWN CRIER: *(Confused.)* A vice-presidential debate?

JESTER: No. Marriage to a rich, handsome knight who is desperately in love with her.

TOWN CRIER: Horrible. *(Beat.)* Anyway, the play is a no-go.

JESTER: Why?

TOWN CRIER: The Queen is pre-diabetic and just bought new mascara.

JESTER: So?

TOWN CRIER: She can't have anything sappy or tear-jerky.

JESTER: Oh. How about a rom-com?

TOWN CRIER: Excuse me?

JESTER: A romantic comedy. This fellow Shakespeare just wrote one.

TOWN CRIER: William Shakespeare?

JESTER: No, Mr. W. Shakespeare.

TOWN CRIER: What's the difference?

JESTER: His plays are abbreviated. *(Looks to audience to see if they get it. Some may groan.)* It really helps for those with short attention spans.

TOWN CRIER: What's the name of the play?

JESTER: Much Ado about Nothing. I think it's about the damp grass around a hole in the morning.

TOWN CRIER: Huh?

JESTER: *(Laughs overly.)* Much dew about nothing? Get it?

TOWN CRIER: This is no time for joking.

JESTER: Nonsense. This is exactly the time for joking. The Queen will love it. *(BRASS FANFARE.)*
Besides, the Court has arrived. Just leave this in my capable hands. *(Exits quickly.)*

TOWN CRIER: That's what I'm afraid of.
(Another BRASS FANFARE. Loudly, to the back of the hall.)
Ready the meal and heat the wassail!
Bring forth the meat and finest of ale!
Blow the clarion! Singers appear!
The King and his court are drawing near! *(Beat.)* Oh, dear. *(Exits quickly.)*

The play is the same as Much Ado about Nothing, listed individually on the site. You can see sample pages under our Shakespeare's Shorts section.