Objectives:

- pupils should be able to internalise the events of the set scenes
- they should respond thoughtfully and truthfully to the emotions of the characters
- they will understand the language more fully, including prosody
- pupils should explore their creativity and imaginations.

Teacher notes:

Clear room by putting chairs and tables to the side. Before each activity, explain what pupils are expected to do as they might not have used these conventions before. Also, explain to the class that when you raise your hand and say freeze, they must freeze. The first few activities are short and aim to get them thinking and responding in a reflective way.

Starter/warm up:

Pupils stand in a circle and clap out the iambic pentameter of the following lines, with the teacher’s help.

Upon the instant that she was accused,
Shall be lamented, pitied and excused
Of every hearer. For it so falls out
That what we have we prize not to the worth
Whiles we enjoy it, but being lacked and lost,
Why, then we rack the value, then we find
The virtue that possession would not show us

Once the class has mastered the rhythm, they should walk around the room to it.

Teacher could enhance this by asking pupils to adopt the body language of different characters while keeping the iambic rhythm going. For example, Friar, Beatrice, Leonato, Benedick, Hero – to suit this particular scene.

Task 1: whole class tableau

Teacher chooses pupils to play Hero, Leonato, Beatrice, Friar and Benedick. They should stand in the centre while the rest of the class form a circle. Teacher arranges the main characters to portray the moment after Claudio has refused Hero i.e. the start of the set scene. The rest of the class should then adopt positions to show their emotions. Teacher then touches selected pupils on the shoulder and they should speak their thoughts. This includes the congregation as well as the main characters. (Thought-tracking - 5 mins. Do not give them long to prepare.)

Task 2: conscience alley

Teacher divides the class into two groups by splitting the circle to form a line going the length of the room, with pupils facing inwards. The character chosen to be Benedick begins to walk down the centre of the line. Teacher reads out Beatrice’s line (or asks the pupil playing Beatrice to read it) as Benedick continues down the line. The people on the right should tell him, one at a time, why he should kill Claudio, and the ones on the left, why he should not. At the end of the line, Benedick should remain standing (or be placed on a chair) in the centre of the circle while the rest of the class sits on the floor. (5 mins)
Task 3: hot-seating Benedick

The class should ask him what was going through his mind when Beatrice asked him to kill Claudio, and any other questions they have. However, teacher should ensure that the focus is on the set scenes. If this exercise seems productive, you could bring in the other characters at this point. (10 mins)

Task 4:

Divide pupils into groups of 3 and give each group a line from the play. They should create a tableau of the line. Give them only a minute to prepare, the whole class freezes, then the rest relax while each group shows its tableau and delivers the given line as a caption in the correct order. The lines are:

- Maintain a mourning ostentation,
- she died upon his words
- Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?
- I do love nothing in the world so well as you
- I would eat his heart in the market place
- But manhood is melted into curtsies
- What’s the matter/ That you have such a February face
- So full of frost, of storm, of cloudiness?
- They swore that you were almost sick for me
- Here’s our own hearts against our hands

This copy is for teacher reference. Give pupils the larger copy attached. (10 mins)

Task 5:

Divide pupils into 4 groups of 6 or 7. They may need to refer to the set scenes for this activity.

Two groups should prepare an improvised conversation gossiping about the outcome of Hero’s first wedding ceremony.

The other two groups should do the same for Hero and Beatrice’s double wedding to Claudio and Benedick.

Give pupils the task sheets attached. They can only have 3 minutes maximum to prepare. Depending on how each activity has gone, there may not be time to hear each group perform, so choose one of each to finish the session if pushed for time.

This last activity acts as a plenary as it tests pupils’ knowledge of the scenes.

Pupils will need some time to rearrange the room.

Notes:

I have tried to arrange progressively challenging tasks which elicit calm and thoughtful responses. Any of these tasks can be omitted or stopped if pupils are not responding appropriately. Do adapt the lesson to suit your class.

Task 4 student prompts follow on next page.
Maintain a mourning ostentation,

she died upon his words

Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

I do love nothing in the world so well as you

I would eat his heart in the market place

But manhood is melted into curtsies

What’s the matter /
that you have such a February face

So full of frost, of storm, of cloudiness?

They swore that you were almost sick for me

Here’s our own hearts against our hands
Task 5: student prompts

**Group 1**
Prepare an improvised conversation gossiping about the outcome of Hero’s first wedding ceremony. Include a range of views: some might be shocked, others angry with Claudio, some will blame Hero and think she is guilty, others defend her. You have 3 minutes to prepare.

**Group 2**
Prepare an improvised conversation gossiping about the outcome of Hero’s first wedding ceremony. Include a range of views: some might be shocked, others angry with Claudio, some will blame Hero and think she is guilty, others defend her. You have 3 minutes to prepare.

**Group 3**
Prepare an improvised conversation gossiping about the outcome of Hero and Beatrice’s double wedding to Claudio and Benedick respectively. Include a range of views. There will be disbelief that Benedick and Beatrice are marrying, especially in view of their earlier hatred for each other and their views of marriage, there will be amazement at Hero’s ‘revival’ or might you actually believe she has an identical cousin? You have 3 minutes to prepare.

**Group 4**
Prepare an improvised conversation gossiping about the outcome of Hero and Beatrice’s double wedding to Claudio and Benedick respectively. Include a range of views. There will be disbelief that Benedick and Beatrice are marrying, especially in view of their earlier hatred for each other and their views of marriage, there will be amazement at Hero’s ‘revival’ or might you actually believe she has an identical cousin? You have 3 minutes to prepare.