A drama-based summary activity

KS3 > Drama > Much Ado About Nothing (KS3)

How it works
This is an excellent resource because it allows the teacher to introduce the SATs Shakespeare play scenes without having to laboriously contextualise them in the whole play: the activity supports students in working out the context for themselves. This keeps their encounter with the play very alive.

Try this!
The resource suggests that teachers either read out a plot summary, pausing for individuals to read out their allocated quotation at the appropriate moment, or they give out the summary and all the quotations to groups who simply paste the quotations onto appropriate moments in the summary.

I would suggest that this is not an either/or option; instead all students should work in groups, reading through the summary finding best-fit quotations at each ‘pause’ point. They should then use the summary and quotations to prepare a sort of fast, drastically cut-down performance of the whole play, presenting it to the rest of the class or to another group. Bits of costume and props could be worked in as well. This would force students to keep their inquiring minds switched on, and would also satisfy creative and kinaesthetic urges.

This intelligent speculative approach could be applied to every year’s SATs scenes: don’t tell them what happens before the first of the scenes. Instead, allocate parts of the scene to different groups and get them to wring every bit of inferred information they can out of the lines you have given them. I tried it with the 2006 Act 2 scenes with really fascinating results that gave students an immediate personal engagement with the script. For example, one group decided that Banquo was trying to intimidate and unnerve Macbeth when he talks to him about their previous encounter with the witches - an encounter that the students actually knew nothing about!

Richard Durant
This summary of the story has gaps to allow for the placing of key quotes.

There are several ways in which this exercise may be done, depending on your classes. There are enough quotes for every pupil [in most classes] to get one and perhaps a few more able / eager pupils to get two each. Teachers can keep some of the quotes back to read dramatically themselves.

**Suggested activities:**

- Hand out – pupils pulling from a hat/bag/envelope is more fun – a quote to each pupil. Give them time to read it through and to practise saying it dramatically. When you read through the story summary, they listen to see when their quote seems appropriate and when it does they say it dramatically.

- Place pupils in groups [you can either mix ability and hand out random quotes, or set groups and give them a set of quotes to suit their ability] and let them discuss all their quotes first to work out meaning. Let them decide who will say which lines and help each other speak them with meaning. Then continue as above.

- Place pupils in groups and give each group the summary and all the quotes. Let them read the quotes, decide where they go and then paste the sections of summary with the relevant quotes on backing paper for display.

As a follow up to all these options, pupils can enact the story using the quotes to pin down key moments and filling in the gaps in their own words.

**Resources included:**

- Resource 1: Quotes in strips to cut and hand out.
- Resource 2: A summary of the play to read out with quotes in place for teacher reference.
- Resource 3: A summary without quotes, either for reading out [stops you reading the quote] or for handing out to groups.
### Much Ado About Nothing: A drama based summary activity

#### QUOTES:

<table>
<thead>
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   than to joy at weeping! | |
| You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signor Benedick and her. They never meet but there’s a skirmish of wit between them. | |
| A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours. | |
| Can the world buy such a jewel? | |
| I will live a bachelor. | |
| If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,  
  And I will break with her and with her father,  
  And thou shalt have her. | |
| No, no. We will hold it as a dream till it appear itself; but  
  I will acquaint my daughter withal, that she may be the better  
  prepared for an answer, if peradventure this be true. | |
| If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do my liking. In the meantime let me be  
  that I am, and seek not to alter me. | |
| Will it serve for any model to build mischief on? | |
| Daughter, remember what I told you. If the Prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer. | |
| Why, he is the Prince’s jester, a very dull fool. Only his gift is in devising impossible slanders. None  
  but libertines delight in him; and the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villainy; for he both  
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| The Prince woos for himself.  
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But know that I have to-night wooed Margaret, the Lady Hero’s gentlewoman, by the name of Hero. She leans me out at her mistress’ chamber window, bids me a thousand times good night—I tell this tale vilely; I should first tell thee how the Prince, Claudio and my master, planted and placed and possessed by my master Don John, saw afar off in the orchard this amiable encounter.

God give me joy to wear it! for my heart is exceeding heavy

Take their examination yourself and bring it me. I am now in great haste, as it may appear unto you.

There, Leonato, take her back again.
   Give not this rotten orange to your friend.
   She’s but the sign and semblance of her honour.

O Fate, take not away thy heavy hand!
   Death is the fairest cover for her shame
   That may be wish’d for.

Two of them have the very bent of honour;
   And if their wisdoms be misled in this,
   The practice of it lives in John the bastard,
   Whose spirits toil in frame of villanies.

Don John your brother incensed me to slander the Lady Hero;

To-morrow morning come you to my house,
   And since you could not be my son-in-law,
   Be yet my nephew. My brother hath a daughter,
   Almost the copy of my child that’s dead,
   And she alone is heir to both of us.
   Give her the right you should have giv’n her cousin,
   And so dies my revenge.

I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried thy eyes; and moreover, I will go with thee to thy uncle’s.

Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,
   And when I send for you, come hither mask’d.

Think not on him till to-morrow. I’ll devise thee brave punishments for him. Strike up, pipers!
Leonato, the governor of Messina is at home with his daughter Hero and his niece Beatrice when a messenger brings news that Don Pedro of Arragon is coming to Messina to celebrate his recent victory in battle. With him comes a young Florentine, Claudio, who has fought particularly well. Claudio has an uncle in Messina and the messenger says that when he got letters telling of his nephew’s bravery, he burst into tears.

LEONATO REPLIES:

How much better is it to weep at joy than to joy at weeping!

Beatrice asks the messenger whether Benedick will also be returning, but calls him by a mocking nickname, Signor Mountanto, so at first he says he knows of no one by that name. Both Hero and Leonarto gently scold Beatrice for the nasty things she says about Benedick and Leonato explains to the messenger that there is an on-going feud between the two.

LEONATO SAYS:

You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her. They never meet but there’s a skirmish of wit between them.

While they are discussing Beatrice’s apparent dislike of Benedick, Don Pedro and his companions arrive and introductions take place. The two ‘enemies’ also meet and, continuing her mocking of him,

BEATRICE SAYS TO BENEDICK:

A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

The others go out, leaving Claudio and Benedick to chat. Claudio admits that he thinks Hero is the most beautiful girl he’s ever seen.

CLAUDIO SAYS:

Can the world buy such a jewel?

Meanwhile Don Pedro returns to find out what they are discussing. They tell him and he encourages Claudio, because he thinks they’ll make a good match, but Benedick says he’s not interested in women and will never marry.

BENEDICK DECLARES:

I will live a bachelor.
He leaves and Don Pedro promises to help Claudio win Hero by talking to her and her father about how much Claudio loves her.

DON PEDRO PROMISES:

If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it,
And I will break with her and with her father,
And thou shalt have her.

Unbeknownst to them – and the audience – they have been overheard by a servant who has reported their conversation to Leonato's brother, Antonio, who in turn tells his brother. Antonio asks whether he'd like to question the servant but Leonato thinks the best strategy to follow is to pretend they know nothing of Don Pedro's plan, but to warn Hero, so that she can have her response ready prepared.

LEONATO SAYS:

No, no. We will hold it as a dream till it appear itself; but
I will acquaint my daughter withal, that she may be the better
prepared for an answer, if peradventure this be true.

Don Pedro has a half brother, Don John, who hates his brother. His companion Conrade warns him he should pretend not to, in order to be able to do more mischief secretly, but Don John would rather show his feelings openly.

DON JOHN SAYS:

If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do my liking. In
the meantime let me be that I am, and seek not to alter me.

While they are chatting, their friend Borachio arrives with the news that Don Pedro is going to woo Hero on Claudio’s behalf and Don John’s immediate thought is whether or not this is an opportunity to spoil things for his brother and Claudio.

DON JOHN ASKS:

Will it serve for any model to build mischief on?

At supper in the great chamber of Leonato’s house, the family are jokingly comparing Benedick and Don John, with Beatrice showing off her caustic wit, when Leonato reminds Hero of their decision.

LEONATO SAYS:

Daughter, remember what I told you. If the Prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer.
The party begins with the men wearing masks, sure the women don’t know who they really are. The women use the opportunity for teasing the men and Beatrice is no exception. She taunts Benedick as they dance together by gossiping about him to the supposedly unrecognised man in the mask [who is actually Benedick, as she well knows], knowing that he can’t defend himself without giving away his identity.

**BEATRICE CONFIDES:**

> Why, he is the Prince’s jester, a very dull fool. Only his gift is in devising impossible slanders. None but libertines delight in him; and the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villainy; for he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him and beat him. I am sure he is in the fleet. I would he had boarded me.

Meanwhile, Don John and Borachio are making mischief by telling Claudio, whom they pretend to mistake for Benedick, that they have overheard Don Pedro, far from wooing on Claudio’s behalf, asking Hero to marry *him*. Claudio is shocked and feels betrayed.

**CLAUDIO SAYS:**

> The Prince woos for himself.  
> Friendship is constant in all other things  
> Save in the office and affairs of love.  
> Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues

Just then Benedick enters and tells Claudio that he has seen the prince – Don Pedro – wooing Hero. To Claudio this confirms what Don John has told him and as Benedick seems pleased it’s all over between him and Hero, he stomps off. Benedick is swearing revenge on Beatrice when Don Pedro himself walks in, so Benedick tells him what happened with Beatrice, describing how frustrated he was.

**BENEDICK SAYS:**

> I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs.

While they are chatting, Beatrice herself enters with Leonato and Hero, bringing Claudio to Don Pedro. He can see that Claudio is unhappy and reassures him that Hero’s love has been won on his behalf as arranged.

**DON PEDRO SAYS :**

> Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name, and fair Hero is won. I have broke with her father, and his good will obtained. Name the day of marriage, and God give thee joy!
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This gives Beatrice the opportunity of teasing both Hero and Claudio. Don Pedro teases Beatrice and when she jokes about crying for a husband he asks if she’d like him to find her one and even proposes to her himself, but she declines the offer.

BEATRICE SAYS:

No, my lord, unless I might have another for working days: your Grace is too costly to wear every day. But I beseech your Grace pardon me. I was born to speak all mirth and no matter.

When she leaves, the men get down to discussing when the wedding will be. Claudio wants to marry at once, but the older men suggest he waits for ten days so that they may get Beatrice and Benedick together and have a double wedding. Hero agrees to help.

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To-morrow, my lord. Time goes on crutches till love have all his rites.

And HERO SAYS:

I will do any modest office, my lord, to help my cousin to a good husband.

However, mischief is being made as Don John and Borachio hatch another plot to spoil things for Claudio and prevent the wedding.

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The plan to get Benedick to realise that he is actually in love with Beatrice continues. Claudio, Leonato and Don Pedro pretend not to see Benedick and, so that he can overhear their conversation, discuss how stubborn and unkind he is, especially to poor Beatrice who loves him so. Leonato tells them she has sworn never to tell Benedick of her love because he would make sport of it. When they leave, Benedick is amazed and resolves to learn from what he has overheard.

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The second phase of the plot is to get Beatrice to realise that she actually loves Benedick, so Hero and her gentlewomen Margaret and Ursula play a similar trick on
her. In the Orchard, near where she can overhear them, they discuss how much
Benedick loves Beatrice, but how impossible it is for him to confess it to her because of
her scornful wit.

HERO SAYS:

They did entreat me to acquaint her of it;
But I persuaded them, if they lov’d Benedick,
To wish him wrestle with affection
And never to let Beatrice know of it.

Like Benedick, Beatrice is amazed by what she hears, but believes it and decides to
change her ways, return his love and marry him.

BEATRICE VOWS:

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?
Stand I condemn’d for pride and scorn so much?
Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!
No glory lives behind the back of such.
And, Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,
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accompany him, but Don Pedro says he’d rather take Benedick, because Claudio will be
newly wed and so have his mind on other things, whereas Cupid dare not shoot at
Benedick. Benedick knows that this has already happened and tries to tell them.

BENEDICK PROTESTS:

Gallants, I am not as I have been.

Although they know exactly what he means they pretend to think he has toothache and
joke about the impossibility of his being in love. Benedick asks Leonato if he can have
a word in private, to ask for Beatrice’s hand in marriage, and while they are away Don
John enters to make his accusation about Hero’s disloyalty.

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DOGGERY EXPLAINS:

I pray you watch about Signor Leonato’s door; for the wedding being there tomorrow, there is a great coil to-night.

One of these watchmen, Seacoal, overhears Borachio confessing his trickery to Conrade and arrests him.

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The following morning Hero is preparing for the wedding, but a sense of foreboding prevents her from taking any pleasure in dressing up.

HERO SAYS:

God give me joy to wear it! for my heart is exceeding heavy.

The watchmen arrive to tell Leonato what they have discovered, but are so long-winded that he tells them to wait until he returns from the wedding, because he is in a hurry.

LEONATO SAYS:

Take their examination yourself and bring it me. I am now in great haste, as it may appear unto you.

At the wedding, when Claudio should agree to wed Hero, he rejects her, claiming that she is dishonoured. He does this because he believes he saw her with another man in her bedroom, though the audience knows it was Borachio and Margaret he actually saw.

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Give not this rotten orange to your friend.
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Hero denies Claudio’s accusations, but as the prince also saw what he thought was Hero being unfaithful, he backs Claudio and so Leonato believes it too. He calls for a
dagger so that he can kill his disgraced daughter and when Hero faints he says he hopes that she will die.

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But Benedick supports Hero, saying he suspects a trick, because Claudio and Don Pedro are honourable, but Don John is a villain.

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Two of them have the very bent of honour;
And if their wisdoms be misled in this,
The practice of it lives in John the bastard,
Whose spirits toil in frame of villainies.

The priest, Friar Francis persuades Leonato to pretend that Hero is dead in order to give them time to clear her name. He agrees and they hide Hero, leaving Beatrice and Benedick alone together. Beatrice asks Benedick to prove his love by killing Claudio, a thing he doesn’t really want to have to do, but he promises to challenge him. He finds Claudio with Don Pedro outside Leonato’s house, and confronts him with the challenge. As he exits, Dogberry brings the guilty Borachio to explain his trickery and the truth is revealed about Hero’s innocence.

BORACHIO CONFESSES:

Don John your brother incensed me to slander the Lady Hero;

Claudio promises to build a monument to Hero where he will honour her memory and Leonato pretends to have a niece exactly like Hero whom he offers to Claudio as a wife.

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To-morrow morning come you to my house,
And since you could not be my son-in-law,
Be yet my nephew. My brother hath a daughter,
Almost the copy of my child that’s dead,
And she alone is heir to both of us.
Give her the right you should have giv’n her cousin,
And so dies my revenge.
Benedick, meanwhile tells Beatrice that he has challenged Claudio and they make peace, confessing their love for each other. At that point Ursula brings the happy news that Hero's name has been cleared. They rush home to hear the full story.

**BENEDICK SAYS:**

> I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried thy eyes; and moreover, I will go with thee to thy uncle's.

At Leonato's house preparations are being made for the wedding. Hero will pretend to be his niece, Antonio's daughter, and then reveal herself to Claudio once he agrees to marry her.

**LEONATO INSTRUCTS:**

> Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves, and when I send for you, come hither mask'd.

This happens and all are reconciled. Benedick is so happy he wants to dance. However, before the wedding can take place news arrives that Don John, the villain, has been captured. Benedick says they should deal with all that tomorrow, meanwhile, dance to celebrate their weddings.

**BENEDICK SAYS:**

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This gives Beatrice the opportunity of teasing both Hero and Claudio. Don Pedro teases Beatrice and when she jokes about crying for a husband he asks if she’d like him to find her one and even proposes to her himself, but she declines the offer.

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And HERO SAYS:

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The second phase of the plot is to get Beatrice to realise that she actually loves Benedick, so Hero and her gentlewomen Margaret and Ursula play a similar trick on her. In the Orchard, near where she can overhear them, they discuss how much Benedick loves Beatrice, but how impossible it is for him to confess it to her because of her scornful wit.

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Although they know exactly what he means they pretend to think he has toothache and joke about the impossibility of his being in love. Benedick asks Leonato if he can have a word in private, to ask for Beatrice’s hand in marriage, and while they are away Don John enters to make his accusation about Hero’s disloyalty.

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But Benedick supports Hero, saying he suspects a trick, because Claudio and Don Pedro are honourable, but Don John is a villain.
**BENEDICK EXPLAINS:**

The priest, Friar Francis persuades Leonato to pretend that Hero is dead in order to give them time to clear her name. He agrees and they hide Hero, leaving Beatrice and Benedick alone together. Beatrice asks Benedick to prove his love by killing Claudio, a thing he doesn’t really want to have to do, but he promises to challenge him. He finds Claudio with Don Pedro outside Leonato’s house, and confronts him with the challenge. As he exits, Dogberry brings the guilty Borachio to explain his trickery and the truth is revealed about Hero’s innocence.

**BORACHIO CONFESSES:**

Claudio promises to build a monument to Hero where he will honour her memory and Leonato pretends to have a niece exactly like Hero whom he offers to Claudio as a wife.

**LEONATO SAYS:**

Benedick, meanwhile tells Beatrice that he has challenged Claudio and they make peace, confessing their love for each other. At that point Ursula brings the happy news that Hero’s name has been cleared. They rush home to hear the full story.

**BENEDICK SAYS:**

At Leonato’s house preparations are being made for the wedding. Hero will pretend to be his niece, Antonio’s daughter, and then reveal herself to Claudio once he agrees to marry her.

**LEONATO INSTRUCTS:**

This happens and all are reconciled. Benedick is so happy he wants to dance. However, before the wedding can take place news arrives that Don John, the villain, has been captured. Benedick says they should deal with all that tomorrow, meanwhile, dance to celebrate their weddings.

**BENEDICK SAYS:**