

Love's Labour's Lost

by William Shakespeare
a National Arts Centre English Theatre production

Study Guide

**THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ENGLISH THEATRE
PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENT AUDIENCES
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About This Guide

Portions of this study guide are formatted in easy-to-copy single pages. They may be used separately or in any combination that works for your classes. Here is an outline of the contents of each page with suggestions as to its use.

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6-7	Character Sketches	Introduce the characters
8	Theme & Setting	Introduce theme and setting
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Plot Synopsis (page 1 of 4)

Act 1, scene 1

The youthful King of Navarre, infatuated with the self-denying discipline and otherworldly purity of scholarship, decides to win fame for himself and his kingdom by transforming his court into a little academy. To this end he requires that his three gentlemen-in-waiting -- Longaville, Dumaine, and Berowne -- sign an oath that they will give up drinking, feasting, and female company for three years to devote themselves utterly to their studies. Women will be banned from the court entirely during this time. All the male inhabitants of the King's household are strictly forbidden to have any contact with the fair sex. Almost immediately the King's impractical plan begins to unravel.

Berowne points out that the Princess of France is due to arrive soon and must be received. The King agrees that, in this instance, he'll have to go against his own proclamation and grant her an audience. Then constable Dull enters to tell the King about the 'villainy' of Costard, the clown, who has been seen speaking with the country wench Jaquenetta. The evidence against Costard is delivered in the letter Dull presents to the King. Written by the fantastical Don Adriano de Armado, a visiting Spaniard of high birth but small means, the letter's overly elaborate and pretentious verbal style is the source of much satirical mocking as it is read aloud. Costard confesses to his 'crime' and is sentenced to a diet of only bran and water for a week, to be overseen by Armado who, unbeknownst to the King, is Costard's rival for Jaquenetta's love. Despite this less than stellar beginning, the King and his lords go off to uphold the oath they've pledged to each other.

Act 1, scene 2

In characteristically overblown style, Don Armado exchanges witticisms with his page Moth, a precocious and saucy lad who never misses an occasion to mock his obtuse master. He confesses the shameful fact that he has fallen in love with low-born Jaquenetta and is planning to tell her so in a love letter, despite the King's rule forbidding contact with women. Costard, Dull, and Jaquenetta then appear and Dull announces Costard's punishment. Don Armado woos Jaquenetta but she rebuffs him before she leaves with Dull. Don Armado orders Moth to lead Costard to prison for the very crime he himself has committed. Alone on stage, he delivers a pedantic soliloquy on the power of love.

Act 2, scene 1

The beautiful Princess of France arrives with her fair ladies-in-waiting -- Maria, Katherine, and Rosaline. As rumour has it that the King of Navarre has vowed to exclude women from his court, the Princess sends her adviser, Boyet, ahead to announce her approach. The Princess and her waiting-women talk excitedly about the King of Navarre's courtiers, whom they have met before. Maria expresses her admiration for Longaville, Katherine for Dumaine, and Rosaline for Berowne. Boyet returns with news of the King's outrageous plan to bar the regal entourage from the court of Navarre, in keeping with the oath, housing them instead in tents outside the castle walls.

Plot Synopsis (page 2 of 4)

Act 2, scene 1 (continued)

The King and his courtiers arrive to formally welcome the ladies. The indignant Princess criticizes the King for his poor hospitality while she delivers a written message from her father. Berowne and Rosaline trade barbed witticisms. The King apologizes for the accommodations he must provide because of his oath, and he and his retinue depart. Succumbing to the ladies' charms, Dumaine, Longaville, and Berowne each re-enter in turn to ask Boyet the name of the gentlewoman he has been conversing with. Boyet assures the Princess that the King displayed the telltale signs of love at first sight during his conversation with her. The Princess encourages her entourage to wage a "*civil war of wits.../ On Navarre and his book-men...*" (2.1.225-226).

Act 3, scene 1

Don Armado needs Costard to deliver a love letter to Jaquenetta and sends Moth to free him from prison. The page ridicules his master's infatuation with the wench and then fetches Costard, who sets off with the letter. Berowne intercepts him with a love letter of his own to be delivered to Rosaline and Costard leaves. In a soliloquy, Berowne laments his failure to hold out against the "*almighty dreadful little might*" (3.1.198) of Cupid the conqueror.

Act 4, scene 1

The Princess and her ladies take advantage of their outdoor accommodations and form a deer-hunting party. Costard arrives and announces that he has a letter for Rosaline from Berowne, which the Princess asks Boyet to read aloud. Of course, Costard has messed things up; Boyet reads Don Armado's letter instead and, once again, the Spaniard's absurdly ornate style is the occasion for much mirth.

Act 4, scene 2

Holofernes, a schoolmaster in love with his own vast knowledge, shows off his immense vocabulary to his follower Nathaniel, a curate, and Dull in a ludicrously learned discussion of the deer hunt. Jaquenetta and Costard enter. Jaquenetta cannot read the letter Costard has given her and asks Nathaniel to do it for her, which turns out to be a love sonnet Berowne has composed for Rosaline. Holofernes instructs Jaquenetta and Costard to take the letter to the King.

Plot Synopsis (page 3 of 4)

Act 4, scene 3

Alone on stage Berowne again despairs about his lovelorn state, hiding as the King approaches. The King reads a poem he has written and openly speaks of his love for the Princess, his much vaunted oath notwithstanding. He, too, hides away as Longaville arrives and essentially repeats the action we've just seen with Berowne and the King, until he is interrupted by Dumaine and also goes into hiding. Not surprisingly, Dumaine commences to recite his love poem to Katherine when Longaville comes forward to let him know he's not alone in loving. Then the King re-appears and takes them both to task for breaking their oaths. Seizing his opportunity, Berowne at last comes forward and berates the King for his hypocrisy, proudly holding himself up as the only one among them strong enough to resist the power of feminine beauty.

His posturing is short lived, however. Berowne's own love letter to Rosaline is delivered to the King by Jaquenetta, prompting a monologue in which he rationalizes that love itself is the most appropriate subject for young men to study. The King and the other courtiers agree with Berowne's elegant sophistry and strategize together to devise an entertainment with which to woo their ladies.

Act 5, scene 1

At the King's behest, Don Armado consults with Holofernes and Nathaniel on an entertainment for the ladies, bragging grandiloquently all the while of the privileged status he enjoys among the King's intimates. Moth and Costard offer running commentary on the high-flying linguistic nonsense the Spaniard, the schoolmaster and the curate indulge in, while plain-spoken Dull looks on uncomprehendingly. Holofernes suggests a tableau presentation inspired by the great men of antiquity called "*The Nine Worthies*" and the group set off to prepare.

Act 5, scene 2

The King and his men decide to test the true affections of their ladies by approaching them in disguise as visiting Russians. Boyet overhears the plan and forewarns the women, who have been mockingly comparing the gifts and poems they have received from them. Not to be outdone, the Princess orchestrates a counter-deception: the ladies will receive the "Russians" with masks of their own on, swapping the jewels their admirers have sent as favours to further confuse them.

When the men arrive in their outlandish garb the ladies teasingly refuse to dance with them. Each lovesick suitor finds a moment to ardently profess his love to the wrong woman and suffers under her humiliating criticism. Defeated, the King and his courtiers exit; the ladies exult in their victory.

Plot Synopsis (page 4 of 4)

Act 5, scene 2 (continued)

The gentlemen soon return undisguised and are subjected to their ladies jests about the foolish characters posing as Russians they'd just encountered. It dawns on the men that the ladies had known them all along. Berowne confesses the fact of his love for Rosaline and promises henceforth to speak plainly in love. Having had their fun, the ladies confess their deception and accuse the men of being as false in their declarations of love as they were to their original vow.

Costard enters to announce that the pageant of *The Nine Worthies* is ready to start, featuring himself as Pompey the Great, Nathaniel as Alexander the Conqueror, Moth as Hercules, Holofernes as Judas Maccabaeus, and Armado as Hector, the Trojan Champion. The frustrated noblemen take their ill humour out on the players, heckling them mercilessly, eventually driving Nathaniel, and then Holofernes, from the stage. Misconstruing the meaning of Don Armado's lines, Costard breaks in to reveal on stage that Jaquenetta is two months pregnant by the Spaniard. The courtiers flippantly incite Don Armado and Costard to a duel but the action is abruptly halted when Marcade appears with news of the death of the King of France, the Princess' father. In an instant the play's tone is transformed.

The pageant players are sent off as the Princess prepares to depart. A new mood of seriousness and sadness dominates and the Princess apologizes to the King and his men for the unkindness she and her ladies have demonstrated in ridiculing them so. The King, aided by Berowne, persists in courtship, but the Princess insists that she will marry him only after he has lived a severely monastic life in a hermitage for one full year. Katherine and Maria tell Dumaine and Longaville the same. Rosaline tells Berowne that she will have him only if spends the next year using his wit to cheer the terminally ill in a hospital. Don Armado returns and informs all that he will finish his three years of study before marrying Jaquenetta. He asks the nobles to allow the players to sing the closing song they have prepared. The assembled players then conclude the play with a song "*in praise of the owl and the cuckoo*" (5.2.878-879).

Character Sketches (page 1 of 2)

Love's Labour's Lost is unique in the Shakespeare canon because so much of its action relies on formal groupings of characters. In the main plot the courtly groups of men and women function very much as gender-defined units in a battle of the sexes that ultimately exposes the immaturity and pretentiousness of the young men. Many of the characters in the comic subplot are drawn from ancient comic traditions. They too function as a unit that provides the lords with a target for their clever but cruel heckling during the pageant of *The Nine Worthies*.

The King and His Lords

Ferdinand, the King of Navarre, is a would-be philosopher king infatuated with the idea of winning everlasting fame for himself and his kingdom by transforming his court into a "little academe". He and three of his closest followers vow to turn their backs on mirth, banqueting, and female company and devote themselves exclusively to higher learning for three years. Self-centered and serious, the young King lacks real insight into his own nature, setting himself and his followers up for certain defeat in the "*war against their own affections / And the army of the world's desires*" (1.1.8-10). The ridiculous vow of Ferdinand and his lords and their subsequent silly attempts at courting are contrasted with the more balanced and mature behaviour of the princess and her attending ladies.

Berowne is most humanly believable character in the play and the most outspoken of the three lords attending the King. Berowne's gift for rhetoric, quick wit and superior intellect meet their match in Rosaline. Cynical and quick-witted, he does not delude himself about the power of love, offering, in Act IV, a kind of manifesto of love. His merciless taunting during a performance of *The Nine Worthies*, however, reveals that he still has much to learn about gentleness, and he is sent off by his beloved Rosaline to spend a year visiting hospitals.

Longaville is one of the lords attending the King. He is a conventional character in the play's group of courtly lovers. He falls in love with Maria and writes her a sonnet.

Dumaine is a stock courtly character, another of the lords in the King's inner circle. Dumaine enhances the light-hearted romance of the play by his pursuit of Katherine, for whom he writes an ode.

The Princess and Her Ladies

The Princess of France is sent by her father the king on a diplomatic mission to Navarre, where she quickly shows herself to be a truly noble and intelligent young woman. The King of Navarre is smitten by her instantly but the Princess, wise beyond her years, insists that the worth of his love must be proven over time before she will agree to be his wife.

Rosaline is the most fully realized character in the group of ladies attending the Princess. She possesses the same caustic wit and lightning-quick mind as the ironic Berowne. Her constant jibes at Berowne eventually pierce his conceited personae, forcing him to distinguish between the shallowness of his lovesick posturing and the depth of a mature, committed love.

Maria is one of the ladies attending the Princess. She is a conventional courtly character romantically paired with Longaville.

Katherine is another lady attending the Princess and the object of Dumaine's affections. Her brief moment of sadness in Act 5 over the death of her sister, a victim of unrequited love, foreshadows the play's eventual shift in tone.

Character Sketches (page 2 of 2)

Fantastic, Exaggerated, and/or Stock Characters

Don Adriano de Armado is a fantastical Spaniard who is at the centre of the play's comic subplot, the courtship of Jaquenetta. Pompous and given to overblown verbal displays, he is often the target of jokes from characters of high and low rank. The character of Armado is borrowed from the braggart soldier (*miles gloriosus*) figure of ancient comedy. His name would have been understood in Shakespeare's day as a mocking reference to the failure of the Spanish Armada to conquer England in 1588.

Moth (pronounced 'mote') is Don Armado's slight and quick-witted page boy. He never misses an opportunity to ridicule his master's pretentiousness and stupidity, recalling the acrobatic and irreverent servant characters of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*.

Costard is one of Shakespeare's clowns, an unsophisticated country bumpkin with an underlying shrewdness. He vies with Don Armado for Jaquenetta and mixes up the love letters he is asked to deliver by Armado and Berowne. He holds his own when exchanging puns with the King and offers a sincere defense for his cruelly abused fellow performers in the pageant of *The Nine Worthies*. His name means 'apple' or 'head', which sets off a series of jokes in the play. This character is derived from the comic slave figures in ancient Roman comedy.

Anthony Dull, as his name suggests, is a slow-witted country constable whose uncomprehending presence acts as a foil for the verbal excesses of the other characters.

Jaquenetta is a conventional country wench. She cannot read the letter Costard delivers to her and seeks the help of the schoolmaster. She is loved by both Armado and Costard, the latter of whom reveals during the pageant of *The Nine Worthies* that she is pregnant by Armado.

Holofernes is the stereotypical pedantic schoolmaster. His speech is so excessively learned he can hardly be understood. Conceited and quick to dismiss those he perceives as intellectually inferior, Holofernes does manage to gain the sympathy of the ladies when he is mercilessly ridiculed by the gentlemen during the pageant. This character recalls the *commedia dell'arte* figure of the Doctor.

Sir Nathaniel is an elderly curate. A fawning admirer of Holofernes, Sir Nathaniel is given to the same sort of verbosity. He plays the role of Alexander in the performance of *The Nine Worthies* and is devastated by Berowne's taunts.

Minor Characters

Boyet is an elderly French lord attending the Princess. He acts as an advisor to her and a messenger between the King's court and the ladies' camp.

Marcadé is another French lord attending the Princess. His announcement in Act 5 of the death of the King of France dramatically reverses the tone of the play.

Theme & Setting (page 1 of 1)

Theme

Love's Labour's Lost has a special place in the heart of director Marti Maraden. She made her Stratford debut in 1974 playing Katherine, one of the ladies-in-waiting to the Princess, and directed it at the Stratford Festival in 1992. As she sees it, *Love's Labour's Lost* is about “*what is natural in human behaviour, and what is unnatural or affected. Imagine a King and three young lords in the prime of their lives deciding to lock themselves away, not eating, not sleeping, not seeing women -- it's completely implausible, and of course the play gets very giddy as a result! On a more serious note, though, Shakespeare is making a comment about how we often don't understand our hearts, and about the true nature of learning.*”

Director Michael Langham also loves the play and has directed it no less than six times. For him, *Love's Labour's Lost* “*seems to capture the high summer of irresponsible adolescence suddenly brought to a measured pace by an awareness that time is running out. The play is about growing up -- about choosing to say things that have meaning rather than saying things that are clever.*”

Setting

Place: The action in *Love's Labour's Lost* takes place in a park on the estate of the King of Navarre.

Period: Marti Maraden has chosen to set her production in the early eighteenth century during the Age of Reason. This was a time in history when cultural life in Europe and America was dominated by faith in human reason. A series of recent discoveries in the sciences fostered a new optimism about the power of the rational mind and the scientific method to improve society as a whole. The play's satirical comment on the foolishness of pursuing learning at the expense of truly living make this period a particularly appropriate one in which to set *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Historical Context (page 1 of 1)

Love's Labour's Lost appears to have been written for private performance in court circles -- perhaps at a private house at Christmas time in 1593, when the regular theatres were closed because of the plague. The evidence suggests that the play was originally a battle in a private war between different aristocratic factions. Around Sir Walter Raleigh had gathered an "academy" of scholars, nobles, and poets (including the dramatists Chapman, Marlowe, and Kyd) to study philosophy and the stars. The group was branded by a pamphleteer in 1592 as "Sir Walter Raleigh's School of Atheism" and in 1594, after Raleigh's disgrace, was investigated for heresy. This group seems to have been the model for Navarre's "little academe", and Shakespeare, in mocking the futility of the experiment, appears to be taking the part of his patron the Earl of Southampton, who was Raleigh's chief rival at Court.

Uniquely in the Shakespeare canon, the plot of *Love's Labour's Lost* has no known antecedents. But scholars have for two hundred years enjoyed the game of tracing the topical allusions in which the play abounds. As for the setting in Navarre, there was of course a real King of Navarre, who as a Protestant was a valuable ally of Queen Elizabeth against Catholic Spain until he himself became a Catholic in 1593. Navarre was a tiny mountain state set between France and Spain, and was described ruefully by its King Henry II (who lost his kingdom to Ferdinand of Spain and spent his life vainly negotiating with France and Spain to regain it) as 'a flea between two monkeys'. It has been noted that the Duc de Biron and the Duc de Longueville were members of Navarre's actual court, and that the name of the Duc du Mayenne was constantly linked with that of the King. Shakespeare seems to have made use of these names for Berowne, Longaville, and Dumaine; and the names Boyet, Marcadé, and de la Mothe all appear in contemporary court records.

Thus though there is no known story from which Shakespeare took his theme, *Love's Labour's Lost* shows better than almost any of Shakespeare's plays his capacity for taking material and shaping it to his needs.

excerpted from materials prepared for the Stratford Festival

“A Great Feast of Words” (page 1 of 2)

Word-Coining Genius

While the personalities of Hamlet or Cleopatra dominate our recollections of the plays in which they appear, the most dominant element in the world Shakespeare creates in *Love's Labour's Lost* is the infinite variety of its language. Sometimes elegant, sometimes simple, sometimes outrageously contorted, the verbal virtuosity in *Love's Labour's Lost* reflects the Elizabethans' “*sensual and extravagant preoccupation with words*,” as John Barton has observed:

“*Every character in the play...exults in 'high words' -- or low words, or odd words, or new words, or old words, or, most of all, punning words ... Everyone relishes the game, and bangs words to and fro like tennis-balls.*”

Written for a sophisticated, style-conscious courtly audience that included Queen Elizabeth I herself, the plays' preoccupation with language games reflects the fashion of the time for quick and witty conversation, like the fast-paced verbal fencing matches that occur between Berowne and Rosaline. It also captures the aura of immense excitement and creativity that surrounded the development of English in this period, what Virginia Woolf described as the “*word-coining genius* (of the Elizabethans), *as if thought plunged into a sea of words and came up dripping.*”

The Oxford English Dictionary credits Shakespeare with the introduction of nearly 3,000 words into the language. Indeed, the Bard had one of the largest vocabularies of any English writer, upwards of 17,000 words (quadruple that of an average, well-educated conversationalist in the language). A *neologism* is a recently-coined word or phrase, or the use of an old word in a way that adds a new meaning to it -- the following words, well-accepted today but neologisms for the Elizabethans, are used for the first time in *Love's Labour's Lost*: *academe, courtship, critic, ode, zany, manager, design* (nouns); *domineering, generous, heartburning, obscene* (adjectives); *humour, jig* (verbs).

Fancy, Foreign and Pretentious versus Plain, Native, and Straightforward

The use and abuse of the English language, a major theme of *Love's Labour's Lost*, was an issue of concern to well-educated Elizabethans. During the Renaissance (roughly from 1300 to 1600), the English language added 10,000 to 12,000 new words to its lexicon, but a great many of these were drawn from foreign languages, especially Latin and Greek. The Renaissance began with a renewal of interest in classical texts written in Latin and Greek, the accepted languages of all scholarly studies in Europe at this time. Influenced by this deep respect for the classics and a long-standing tradition that linked written communication in Latin and Greek with great learning and noble ideas, English men of letters often found the vocabulary of their mother tongue too plain on its own. They habitually imported words from Greek and Latin to embellish their English prose. *Agile, capsule, and habitual* (from Latin), and *catastrophe, lexicon, and thermometer* (from Greek) are examples of classical borrowings that entered the English language this way.

“A Great Feast of Words” (page 2 of 2)

Fancy, Foreign and Pretentious versus Plain, Native, and Straightforward (continued)

But other learned folk feared that the wholesale importation of words from Latin and Greek, if left unchecked, would drown the more straightforward English mother tongue in a sea of ornate and unnecessarily complicated terms. Sir John Cheke spoke for this camp when he said that English “*should be written clean and pure, unmixed and unmangled with borrowing of other tongues.*” Latinate words were viewed by some as fashionable affectations whose primary purpose was to show off the intellectual prowess and high social status of their users. Ben Jonson satirized the pretentiousness of the new Latinate vocabulary in his 1601 play *Poetaster*. In it a character is forced to vomit up such newfangled coinages as “*turgidious*”, “*ventositous*”, “*furibund*”, and “*oblatrant*”. As for *Love's Labour's Lost*, Scholar Patricia Winston points out that “*the word ‘labour,’ which means ‘a case or argument,’ establishes at once Shakespeare’s intent to argue the case of Latinate versus the vernacular.*”

Despite his own remarkable gift for rhetoric and poetry, Shakespeare takes great delight in lampooning the vanity, arrogance and foolishness of those who, like Holofernes and Don Armado, take the game of verbal embellishment to such ridiculous extremes that they stop making sense, or those who, like Berowne, become so enchanted with their own witty manipulations of meaning that their capacity for honest and direct self-expression is all but lost. Ironically, Shakespeare suggests in *Love's Labour's Lost* that the rapid growth in Latinate vocabulary -- a phenomenon to which much of his work contributed -- needs to be approached with healthy English skepticism. As Berowne, thought by some critics to be a self-caricature by the playwright, declares:

*Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
Three pil'd hyperboles, spruce affectation;
Figures pedantical, these summer flies
Have blown me full of maggot ostentation* (5.2.406-409)

The “*russet yeas and honest kersey noes*” (5.2.413) this character later promises to adopt in future communications about matters as important as love suggest the Bard's ultimate preference for a straightforward verbal style designed to foster clearer understanding and genuine connection between people. The breathtaking simplicity of the final line in the play -- “*You that way, we this way.*” (5.2.919) -- literally gives the final word to the power of the mother tongue.

Translation Please:
A Few Samples of Verbal Excess in *Love's Labour's Lost*

(page 1 of 1)

Love's Labour's Lost both parodies and exalts in excesses in language, from the Latinate pompousness of school teachers to the lovelorn Petrarchan sonnets of the young lords. But when the usual difficulties the Bard's language presents to modern audiences are compounded by the inclusion of characters whose speech is written to be hard to understand, the result can be rather daunting. Here are a few samples of some of the play's numerous verbal challenges:

1. Costard the clown speaking to Don Armado's page Moth:

*I marvel thy master hath not eaten thee for a word, for thou art not so long by the head as **honorificabilitudinitatibus**. Thou art easier swallowed than a **flap-dragon**.* (5.1.38-41)
honorificabilitudinitatibus a Latin tongue twister word that means "the state of being loaded with honours"; **flap-dragon** burning raisin or plum floating in liquor, and so drunk.

2. Berowne pointing out the unnaturalness of too much study to the King of Navarre:

Light, seeking light, doth light of light beguile. (1.1.77)

This fourfold quibble plays on the many meanings of the word "light". Scholar Harry Levin offers one possible interpretation for this line: "**intellect, seeking wisdom, cheats eyesight out of daylight.**"

3. Don Armado addressing the King of Navarre in a letter:

*"Great deputy, the **welkin's viceregent**, and sole dominator of Navarre, my soul's earth's god and body's fostering patron . . . so it is, besieged with **sable-coloured** melancholy, I did commend the **black oppressing humour** to the most wholesome **physic** of thy health-giving air. . . "* (1.1.215-218)

welkin's viceregent deputy-ruler of heaven; **sable-coloured** black; **black-oppressing humour** fluid in the body that causes melancholy; **physic** treatment

(Essentially, Don Armado tells his King and patron here that he was sad and went for a walk.)

4. Holofernes criticizing Don Armado to Nathaniel:

***Novi hominem tanquam te.** His **humour** is lofty, his discourse **peremptory**, his tongue **filed**, his eye ambitious, his gait majestic and his general behaviour vain, ridiculous and **thrasonical**. He is too **picked**, too **spruce**, too affected, too odd, as it were, too **peregrinate**, as I may call it.* (5.1.9-14)

Novi hominem tanquam te Phrase from a popular Latin grammar of the day that means "I know the man as well as I know you"; **humour** mood; **peremptory** determined; **filed** polished; **thrasonical** boastful, from Thraso, the braggart soldier in a play by the classical Roman playwright Terence; **picked** refined; **spruce** over-elegant, affected; **peregrinate** travelled or foreign

What to Watch For in This Production (page 1 of 1)

1. *Love's Labour's Lost* was very popular in its day because of its topical references and high style, but soon fell out of favour, largely for the same reasons. It was lost to the stage for more than two hundred years, dismissed by literary scholars like Samuel Johnson and William Hazlitt as Shakespeare's most insignificant and self-indulgent work. But *Love's Labour's Lost* in performance possesses a rich theatricality that has made it popular with modern directors and theatregoers alike. Elements to be on the lookout for include:

the musical, operatic quality of the language throughout. The distinctive voices and verbal styles of the characters work in concert and separately like musical instruments in an orchestra;

the formal, emblematic quality of the stage pictures. Many opportunities exist for the creation of pleasing and subtly evocative still images in the blocking of the actors, e.g., the battle of the sexes, the hunting party, regal processions, etc.;

the spectacle provided by the numerous entertainments. The ladies put on and take off masks, the gentlemen perform a dance disguised as Russians, and the pageant of *The Nine Worthies* layers costumes on costumes and concludes with a choral song, *The Owl and the Cuckoo*;

the remarkable ending. The sudden shift in tone in the final scene from giddy playfulness to somber reflection creates a memorable moment with great dramatic impact.

2. Several of the more exaggerated comic characters in *Love's Labour's Lost* can trace their ancestry back to classic Roman comedy and the Italian *commedia dell'arte* tradition. Don Armado is a version of the braggart soldier or *miles gloriosus*; Costard, the earthy slave; Holofernes, the pedantic doctor; and Moth, the quick-witted servant who always gets the best of his master. As the action on stage unfolds, the behaviour of these characters may seem oddly familiar. Can you think of any other characters in books, movies, or television -- particularly in cartoons -- with similar traits?

Suggested Classroom Activities (page 1 of 2)

Preparing for *Love's Labour's Lost*

1. Several characters in *Love's Labour's Lost* speak mainly to impress others with their extensive vocabularies rather than to communicate. To help your students get a feel for just how ridiculous and unnecessary this verbal vanity can be, try the following activity: divide the class into several teams, making sure each one has ready access to a good dictionary. Choose one of the puzzling proverbs from the page in this guide titled **Pedantic Proverbs**, write it on the blackboard, and give the teams 10 seconds to write down its plain English version. Try several from the list; the team with the highest number of correct “translations” at the end of the game is the winner. Follow up this activity with a look at the **Great Feast of Words** and **Translation Please** pages of this guide.

2. *Love's Labour's Lost* makes great sport of the courtly love convention that made it fashionable for a lover to write and recite poetry to his lady love. To introduce this aspect of the play in a lighthearted way, have one student play the “lady” and one the “lover”. Establish a playing area in your classroom and have the lady/lover pair take their places, the lady sitting in a chair, the lover down on one knee in the “marriage proposal” position. The lover must recite the love poem from *Love's Labour's Lost* given below directly to the lady, pausing meaningfully after each line to gaze into “her” eyes. The first member of the pair to laugh or let their role drop before the entire poem is read is out, and a new person must take their place. Extra points may be given for dramatic flair and conviction.

*So sweet a kiss the golden sun gives not
To those fresh morning drops upon the rose,
As thy eye-beams when their fresh rays have smote
The night of dew that on my cheeks down flows.
Nor shines the silver moon one half so bright
Through the transparent bosom of the deep,
As doth thy face, through tears of mine, give light.
Thou shin'st in every tear that I do weep,
No drop but as a coach doth carry thee:
So ridest thou triumphing in my woe.
Do but behold the tears that swell in me,
And they thy glory through my grief will show.
But do not love thyself: then thou will keep
My tears for glasses, and still make me weep.
O Queen of queens, how far dost thou excel,
No thought can think, nor tongue of mortal tell.'* (4.3.24-40)

Suggested Classroom Activities (page 2 of 2)

Preparing for *Love's Labour's Lost* (continued)

3. Let students working in small groups explore the **soliloquies** from *Love's Labour's Lost* provided in this guide. Shakespeare gives both Don Armado and Berowne a moment alone on stage to wax philosophical about love, but each does so in his own unique style. Distribute copies of both pieces and have students work together to do the following:

Read the passages aloud to get the sense of them. Don't get bogged down by unfamiliar words. Take brief pauses where the punctuation suggests. Read verse lines as full sentences instead of stopping at the end of each line.

Re-write them in plain English. What kind of mood is each character in? What is his attitude towards Cupid? To his lady love? To his own predicament?

Identify and list the images in each. For each passage, pick three of the strongest mental pictures created by the language. Create a tableau to illustrate each one.

Look at how the line lengths differ between passages. What might this suggest about the speed with which the lines should be delivered? Play with shifts in volume levels and rhythms.

Agree on one or two props/costume pieces for each character that he/she can use for dramatic emphasis when speaking lines.

Give each group time to cast and rehearse an Armado and Berowne of its own and share the final performance with the class.

Reflecting on *Love's Labour's Lost*

4. Kenneth Branagh's movie of *Love's Labour's Lost* (2000) pared down the text considerably and presented the story as a grand musical from the 1930s complete with top hats, tap-dancing, and the music of Cole Porter. Compare and contrast key scenes from the NAC production and the Branagh film with your class.

5. Discuss the issue of nontraditional casting with your class. Nontraditional casting involves casting actors in roles for which in the past they would not have been considered because of their gender, race, or ethnicity. The casting of Nigel Shawn Williams (the King) and Yanna McIntosh (Rosaline) in this production of *Love's Labour's Lost* is an example of nontraditional casting. The acclaimed Joseph Papp New York Shakespeare Festival routinely casts along nontraditional lines. Are there qualities particular to Shakespeare's plays that make them more readily adaptable to this approach?

Pedantic Proverbs (page 1 of 1)

1. Pulchritude possesses solely cutaneous profundity.
 2. Scintillate, scintillate asteroid minific.
 3. Members of an avian species of identical plumage congregate.
 4. Surveillance should precede saltitation.
 5. It is fruitless to become lachrymose over precipitately departed lacteal fluid.
 6. Freedom from incrustrations of grime is contiguous to divinity.
 7. The stylus is more potent than the claymore.
 8. It is fruitless to indoctrinate a super-annuated canine with innovative maneuvers.
 9. Eschew the implement of corrections and vitiate the scion.
 10. The temperature of the aqueous content of an unremittingly ogled cooking container does not reach 212 degrees Fahrenheit.
 11. Neophyte's serendipity.
 12. Male cadavers are incapable of yielding testimony.
 13. Individuals who make their abode in vitreous edifices would be advised to refrain from catapulting petrous projectiles.
 14. All articles that coruscate with resplendence are not truly auriferous.
 15. Where there are visible vapors having their province in ignited carbonaceous material, there is conflagration.
 16. Sorting on the part of mendicants must be interdicted.
 17. A plethora of individuals with expertise in culinary techniques vitiates the potable concoction produced by steeping comestibles.
 18. Exclusive dedication to necessary chores without interludes of hedonistic diversion renders John a heptudinous fellow.
 19. A revolving lathic conglomerate accumulates no diminutive claucous bryphitic plants.
 20. The person presenting the ultimate cachinnation possesses, thereby, the optimal cachinnation.
 21. Missiles of ligneous or porous consistency have the potential of fracturing my osseous structure, but appellations will eternally be benign.
- 1. Beauty is only skin deep. 2. Twinkle, twinkle little star. 3. Birds of a feather flock together. 4. Look before you leap. 5. Don't cry over spilt milk. 6. Cleanliness is next to godliness. 7. The pen is mightier than the sword. 8. You can't teach an old dog new tricks. 9. Spare the rod and spoil the child. 10. A watched pot never boils. 11. Beginner's luck.. 12. Dead men tell no tales. 13. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. 14. All that glitters is not gold. 15. Where there's smoke, there's fire. 16. Beggars can't be choosers. 17. Too many cooks spoil the broth. 18. All work and no play make John a dull boy. 19. A rolling stone gathers no moss. 20. He who laughs last laughs best. 21. Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.*

Two Soliloquies from *Love's Labour's Lost*

(page 1 of 2)

1. Don Armado's soliloquy (Act 1, scene 2)

*I do **affect** the very ground, which is base, where her shoe, which is baser, guided by her foot, which is basest, doth tread. I shall be forsworn, which is a great argument of falsehood, if I love. And how can that be true love which is falsely attempted? Love is a **familiar**; Love is a devil. There is no evil angel but Love. Yet was Samson so tempted, and he had an excellent strength. Yet was Solomon so seduced, and he had a very good wit. Cupid's **butt-shaft** is too hard for Hercules' club, and therefore too much odds for a Spaniard's rapier. The **first and second cause** will not serve my turn. The **passado** he respects not; the **duello** he regards not. His disgrace is to be called boy, but his glory is to subdue men. Adieu, valor; rust, rapier; be still, drum; for your manager is in love. Yea, he loveth. Assist me, some **extemporal god of rhyme**, for I am sure I shall **turn sonnet**. Devise, wit; write, pen; for I am for whole volumes in folio.*
(1.2.160-177)

affect love; **familiar** attendant spirit; **butt-shaft** a light arrow for shooting at a target; **first and second cause** a reference to rules governing the conduct of a duel; **passado** forward thrust in a duel; **duello** the correct way of dueling; **rhyme** god of rhymes written on the spur of the moment; **turn sonnet** compose a sonnet.

Two Soliloquies from *Love's Labour's Lost*

(page 2 of 2)

2. Berowne's soliloquy (Act 3, scene 1)

And I, forsooth, in love! I, that have been love's whip,
A very **beadle** to a humorous sigh,
A critic, nay, a night-watch constable,
A domineering pedant o'er the boy,
Than whom no mortal so magnificent!
This **wimpled**, whining, **purblind**, wayward boy,
This Signor Junior, giant-dwarf, **Dan** Cupid,
Regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms,
Th'anointed sovereign of sighs and groans,
Liege of all loiterers and malcontents,
Dread prince of **plackets**, king of **codpieces**,
Sole imperator and great general
Of trotting **paritors** -- O my little heart!
And I to be a corporal of his **field**
And wear his colors like a **tumbler's** hoop!
What? I love, I sue, I seek a wife?
A woman that is like a German clock,
Still a-repairing, ever out of **frame**
And never going aright, being a watch,
But being watched that it may still go right!
Nay, to be perjured, which is worst of all;
And among three to love the worst of all,
A **whitely** wanton with a velvet brow,
With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes;
Ay, and by heaven, one that will do the **deed**
Though **Argus** were her eunuch and her guard.
And I to sigh for her, to watch for her,
To pray for her! Go to, it is a plague
That Cupid will impose for my neglect
Of his almighty dreadful little might.
Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue and groan.
Some men must love my lady, and some Joan. (3.1.169-200)

beadle a parish constable; **wimpled** covered with a scarf; **purblind** completely blind; **Dan** "don", a shortened form of *dominus*, Latin for lord; **Liege** lord; **plackets** slits in petticoats (vulgar term for women); **codpieces** cloth covering the opening in men's breeches; **paritors** officers of the church courts who served summonses for certain, often sexual, offenses; **corporal of his field** Berowne is the aide to Cupid's general; **tumbler** acrobat; **frame** order; **whitely** pale; **do the deed** have sexual intercourse; **Argus** ancient mythological being with a hundred eyes.

A Production Who's Who

A production of a play in the professional theatre represents the collaborative efforts of many, many people, each with a specific job to do. The combined talents of the following people made this production of *Love's Labour's Lost* possible:

CREATIVE TEAM

Director	Marti Maraden
Set & Costume Designer	John Pennoyer
Lighting Designer	Louise Guinand
Composer & Sound Designer	Marc Desormeaux
Choreographer & Movement Coach	Jo Leslie
Assistant Director	Ken Godmere

CAST

Moth	David Bernstein
Attendant/As Cast	Ric Brown
1st Player/Grave Digger	Douglas Campbell
Berowne	Ben Carlson
Don Adriano de Armado	Juan Chioran
Attendant/As Cast	David Coomber
Costard	Todd Duckworth
Princess of France	Kelli Fox
Nathaniel	Peter Froehlich
Katherine	Adrienne Gould
Forester/As Cast	Chuck Herriott
Monsieur Marcadé	John Koensgen
Jaquenetta	Trish Lindström
Rosaline	Yanna McIntosh
Longaville	Patrick McManus
Dumaine	Brendan Murray
Anthony Dull	Paul Rainville
Holofernes	David Schurmann
Maria	Kristina Watt
Boyet	David William
King of Navarre	Nigel Shawn Williams

STAGE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Stage Manager	Laurie Champagne
Assistant Stage Manager	Stéfanie Séguin
Apprentice Stage Manager	Dana Uzarevic

NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ENGLISH THEATRE

Artistic Director, English Theatre	Marti Maraden
Managing Director, English Theatre	Victoria Steele
Production Director	Alex Gazalé
Publicist & Media Relations Coordinator	Laura Denker

Focus on Costumes (page 1 of 1)

In Shakespeare's day, neither those who worked in the theatre nor those who went to see the plays were at all concerned with the historical accuracy of the action represented on stage. Modern directors often set their productions of the Bard's works in historical periods other than those given in the texts to add a new dimension to our understanding of the action. Contemporary theatre convention usually requires that the costumes on stage reflect fairly accurately the period in which the production is set.

Marti Maraden has chosen to re-locate the action in this production of *Love's Labour's Lost* to the early 18th century during the Age of Reason, a movement that advocated the use of reason in the reappraisal of accepted ideas and social institutions. John Pennoyer's sumptuous costume designs will reflect the fashions in England and France during this period. Aristocratic men in this period wore coloured silk or velvet suits with lace ruffles, jeweled shoe buckles, and powdered wigs. Ladies had their hair elaborately dressed to imitate wigs and wore brocaded silk gowns trimmed with gold and silver lace.

Costumes on the Elizabethan Stage

Because scenery and props were kept to a minimum on the Elizabethan stage, the costumes worn by the actors were probably the most important visual element in the performance. In general the actors wore Elizabethan garments that suited the occupation and social status of the characters they played, regardless of the historical period in which the play was set. Exceptions to this rule fell into five categories:

- 1)** "ancient", or out-of-style clothing, used to indicate unfashionableness, or, very rarely, to suggest another period;
- 2)** "antique", which consisted of drapery or pieces of armour for the shins, used for certain classical figures;
- 3)** fanciful garments used for ghosts, witches, fairies, gods, and allegorical characters;
- 4)** traditional costumes, associated with a few specific characters such as Robin Hood, Falstaff, and Richard III; and
- 5)** national or racial costumes, used to set off Turks, Indians, Jews, and Spaniards.

The clothes worn on stage were often those of real lords, bishops, judges, etc., left to a servant who had then sold them to a theatre company or donated by wealthy patrons. Until 1604 there were strict legal restrictions in England on the types of fabrics and the colours people could wear based on their social class and income. These so-called "sumptuary laws" were constantly being broken by actors, who were able to display themselves in public in clothes befitting persons of a much higher social class provided they stayed within the bounds of the theatre.

Because they were seen at close range, the companies used authentic materials and fashions insofar as their finances permitted. Contemporary accounts mention the costliness and elegance of the players' costumes, and the papers of one company manager record numerous loans for the purchase of costumes, such as seven pounds for "a doublet of white satin laid thick with gold lace" and nineteen pounds for a cloak. Since the actors relied heavily upon costumes, the acquisition and maintenance of a sizeable wardrobe was important. Each company probably employed a tailor to keep the garments in good repair and to make new ones.

(Elizabethan costume information excerpted from *History of the Theatre*, Oscar G. Brockett)

Resources

Print Resources

- Adams, Richard and Gerard Gould. *Into Shakespeare: an introduction to Shakespeare through drama*. London: Wardlock Educational Publishers, 1977.
- Boyce, Charles. *Shakespeare A to Z: An Essential Reference to His Plays, His Poems, His Life and Times, and More*. New York: Roundtable Press, 1990.
- Gibson, Rex. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- McEvoy, Sean. *Shakespeare: The Basics*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

-For a nominal fee, **The Stratford Festival** offers information packages to teachers on all of Shakespeare's plays, including background information on plays and playwrights, supplementary material based on each play's production history at the Stratford Festival and, in many cases, practical teaching strategies. Teachers may also borrow slide packages for many of Shakespeare's plays for a period of 30 days. For more information, visit <http://www.stratfordfestival.ca/season/forschools.cfm>

On the Web

- Amy Ulen's *Shakespeare High* site is an excellent place to visit for practical teaching ideas, chat rooms, and great links. <http://www.shakespearemag.com/fall96/hamlet.asp>
- In Search of Shakespeare, a PBS web site with tons of information and ideas for teachers. <http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/elementary/quicktips.html>
- Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet. <http://www.edu/Library/shake.htm>
- Shakespeare's Life and Times. <http://web.uvic.ca/shakespeare/Library/SLTnoframes/intro/introsubj.html>
- ArtsAlive.Theatre.ca. <http://www.artsalive.ca/en/eth/index.html>

Programming

The NAC offers several programs of interest to teachers and students:-

- The Skills Shop** — puts theatre professionals and students together for hands-on, in-school, group workshops.
- Workshops Plus!** — offers pre-student matinee workshops that allow for a full-day visit to the NAC.
- Teachers Play!** — offers one- and two-day workshops for teachers in areas like: Lighting, Voice, Movement, Acting Technique, and Design. See the *ArtsAlive* publication, available through the NAC, for more information, or contact NAC Outreach Coordinator Janet Irwin at (613) 236-2502 or jirwin2502@rogers.com.
- The Playwrights in Schools** program offered by the Playwrights Guild of Canada (<http://www.playwrightsguild.ca>) makes it possible, for a nominal fee, for playwrights to visit your class to do a reading, a workshop, or a chat about their background. A brochure on the program is available from PGC, 2nd floor - 54 Wolsley Street, Toronto ON, M5A 1A5 (416) 703-0201.



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