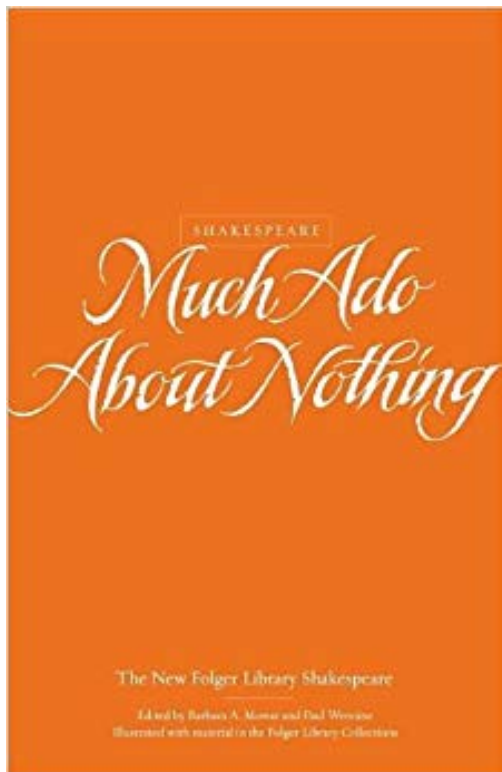


Much Ado About Nothing (The New Folger Library Shakespeare) by Dr. Barbara A. Mowat,Paul Werstine,William Shakespeare



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Reviews of the Much Ado About Nothing (The New Folger Library Shakespeare) by Dr. Barbara A. Mowat,Paul Werstine,William Shakespeare

Prinna

I am a college adjunct faculty English teacher and I wanted a simple edition with notes for my class to read in the fall. I was going to order 20 of these for the class, but I am so glad I first bought one for myself. The paper edition doesn't have any spaces between the speakers, either, so it is difficult to read, even if it were written in language my students, mostly college freshmen, could easily understand. They would give up on this edition. Also, there are absolutely NO NOTES for students that define and explain some of the more obscure vocabulary and written expressions. The text underneath this edition on Amazon did NOT say that there were no notes. It is not helpful AT ALL for a new reader of Shakespeare or a reader who only read it in high school unwillingly. I am going to order something else for my class.

Rose Of Winds

As noted by other reviewers, this edition provides but a fraction of what it promises. There are no annotations, no photographs — a historical impossibility of monumental absurdity — of the author, nor any of the other promised features. Beyond that, it does not even include a dramatis personae, a hallowed standard for any dramatic work. Even the ratings provided by Kindle were for other Shakespeare plays. ... Is there no quality control for works published by Kindle? This was such a sham that it makes me very leery about future purchases from Kindle, especially for editions with which I am not familiar.

Tygolar

As an English teacher, teaching Shakespeare can be quite a challenge. For modern students, trying to connect the concepts, theme, and setting of Romeo and Juliet can be quite a challenge. Keeping them engaged in the struggle of Shakespearean language is even more so. This version of the play is accurate and most importantly, entertaining. We, as a class, will read a portion of the play and then I will show this film to help cement ideas, dialogue, and characters. The students love the film, laugh, and respond better to the play than without!

Nargas

I did not want to see this movie for years after its release. I consider myself a purist where the Bard of Avon is concerned. I adored the films Henry V & Much Ado About Nothing, both directed and starring Kenneth Branagh, Richard III starring and directed by Olivier. Period costumes, true to Shakespeare's lines, etc. I began to change when I realized (fairly early on in watching it) that 10 Things I Hate About You, was a delightful retelling of The Taming Of The Shrew. Eventually I watched this and found a gem. From the factions portrayed as rival gangs, to the outstanding delivery of the lines. The true crowning jewel is the over the top performance by the inimitable John Leguizamo. As Tibalt, John is amazing.

Sorryyy

Written amidst Shakespeare's tragedies, "Measure For Measure" is the Bard's last comedy and perhaps his darkest. In all Shakespearean comedy, conflict, villainy, or immorality disrupt the moral order, but harmony ultimately prevails. Not so with this comedy. As one critic has it, "Measure" leaves playgoers with many questions and few answers. Or does it? More about that in a moment. First, about the title. It's from the Bible. In the Old Testament there's "breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Leviticus 24). And, from the New Testament, "what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Mathew 5). It's the theme of the play, but, as we shall see, it never gets the results hoped for, until the very end, when, to quote from another of Shakespeare's plays, "mercy seasons justice."

The good Duke of Vienna, Vincentio, is concerned with the morals of his city. He enacts a number of reforms, then takes a sabbatical, and tells his deputy governor, Angelo, to see that the reforms are enforced. But Angelo goes too far: he enforces the law to the letter and shows no mercy for violators. Claudio is a victim of Angelo's strict enforcement policy. He's betrothed to Juliet, who is pregnant with his child. Because they are not yet married, he's arrested for fornication and sentenced to death by decapitation. Enter Isabella, Claudio's sister and the play's heroine. She's a young novice preparing to become a nun on the very day of his execution, and makes an appeal to Angelo for leniency. Her plea is reminiscent of Portia's words to Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice." "Merciful heaven, / Thou rather with thy sharp and sulfurous bolt / Splits the unwedgeable and gnarled oak / Than the soft myrtle; but man, proud man, / Dressed in a little brief authority, / Most ignorant of what he's most assured / His glassy essence, like an angry ape / Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven / As makes the angels weep." As with Shylock, Angelo is unmoved. Rather, he offers to release Claudio in exchange for sex. Isabella refuses, even though it means her brother's death. "Better it were a brother died at once, than that a sister, by redeeming him, should die forever."

The good Duke, meanwhile, has not taken a sabbatical after all, but has been masquerading as a friar. But for what purpose? To determine if Angelo will do the right thing? Shakespeare doesn't say. He advises Isabella to trick Angelo by agreeing to meet with him and then sending another woman in her place. Enter Mariana. She was once betrothed to Angelo, until Angelo learned her dowry was lost at sea, at which point he called off the engagement. Mariana agrees to assume Isabella's identity and sleep with Angelo to secure Claudio's release. The bed trick goes as planned, but Angelo reneges on his promise and orders the immediate execution of Claudio. The Duke intervenes and Claudio is spared, but neither Angelo nor Isabella know this; they think Claudio is dead. The Duke then informs the deputy that he is returning home.

Angelo and court officials greet the Duke at the city gates. Isabella and Mariana are also there, and call upon the Duke to redress their wrongs. Instead, the Duke has Isabella arrested and orders Angelo to marry Mariana. Once they are married, he sentences Angelo to death for the murder of Claudio. At this point, Shakespeare takes some liberties that many think makes for an implausible and unsatisfactory ending. In his succinct and compelling book, "Shakespeare and Forgiveness," Professor William H. Matchett makes sense of the play's incongruities, as we shall see in a moment.

Isabella is released. Upon hearing of Angelo's death sentence, she goes before the Duke to plea for mercy. But instead of telling Isabella her brother is alive, the Duke proposes marriage. Nothing has prepared the audience for this. Matchett suggests: "The point is that Isabella must consider Claudio dead if Shakespeare is not to lose his big scene: her true saintliness is only shown in her forgiving Angelo despite her thinking he has killed Claudio. The Duke must remain an almost inhuman manipulator to keep her in this position. And so he does."

Isabella (kneeling): "Most bounteous sir, / Look, if it please you, on this man condemned, / As if my brother lived. I partly think / A due sincerity governed his deeds, / Till he did look on me. Since this is so, / Let him not die. My brother had but justice, / In that he did the thing for which he died. / For Angelo, / His act did not overtake his bad intent, / And must be buried but as an intent / That perished by the way. Thoughts are not subjects, / Intents but merely thoughts." The Duke pardons Angelo, and once again proposes marriage. Isabella answers with silence. Comments Matchett: "Shakespeare has staged a most dramatic forgiveness scene at the climax of his play, but at the cost of establishing Isabella's moral integrity by damaging the Duke's. It throws the whole mutuality of their marriage into doubt."

He adds: "Perhaps we should accept the created image without worrying about the Duke's character. . . . One has to admit, however, that the Duke's proposal--`I have a motion much imports your good'--is about as arrogantly self-centered as they come, while the silence with which Isabella meets it, Shakespeare having provided her with no response, has allowed many modern productions to substitute denial for consent. This no doubt violates the assumption of Shakespeare's play, but it allows recognition of the discomfort created by the forgiveness scene." The play ends with Isabella learning her brother is alive and well, but the question of her marrying the Duke is a matter of interpretation. However, in the final analysis, the full measure of forgiveness outweighs Angelo's measure of misdeeds, and trumps the play's defects.

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