CLAUDIO
(A young lord)

Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of
Signor Leonato?

BENEDICK
(Another young lord; Claudio’s friend)
I noted her not; but I looked on her.

CLAUDIO
Is she not a modest young lady?

BENEDICK
Do you question me, as an honest man should
do, for my simple true judgment; or would you
have me speak after my custom, as being a
professed tyrant to their sex?

CLAUDIO
No; I pray thee speak in sober judgment.

BENEDICK
Why, i’ faith, methinks she’s too low for a high
praise, too brown for a fair praise and too little
for a great praise: only this commendation I
can afford her, that were she other than she is,
she were unhandsome; and being no other but
as she is, I do not like her.

CLAUDIO
Thou thinkest I am in sport: I pray thee tell me
truly how thou likest her.

BENEDICK
Would you buy her, that you inquire after her?

CLAUDIO
Can the world buy such a jewel?

BENEDICK
Yea, and a case to put it into. But speak you
this with a sad brow? Or do you play the
flouting Jack, to tell us Cupid is a good hare-
finder and Vulcan a rare carpenter? Come, in
what key shall a man take you, to go in the
song?

CLAUDIO
In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I
looked on.

Benedick is playing with words here. Use a
thesaurus to look up the words “low”, “fair”
and “great”. What meanings might Benedick
be deliberately ‘packing up’ into these words?

What does the word “jewel” suggest about
what Claudio thinks of Hero?
BENEDICK
I can see yet without spectacles and I see no such matter: there's her cousin, an she were not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December. But I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

CLAUDIO
I would scarce trust myself, though I had sworn the contrary, if Hero would be my wife.

BENEDICK
Is't come to this? In faith, hath not the world one man but he will wear his cap with suspicion? Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again? Go to, i' faith; an thou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke, wear the print of it and sigh away Sundays. Look Don Pedro is returned to seek you.

PAUSE AT THIS POINT

What does Benedick think of marriage?
- Think of marriages that you know of. Do marriages often fit Benedick’s description?
- Work with a partner and draw up a list of essential rules for marriage partners to stick to. How are they similar or different to another pair’s list?

What do you make of Benedick? What is he like as a person? Look at the following list of words and work with a partner to rank order them according to how well they describe Benedick:
- Mocking, cautious, joking, cruel, suspicious, pessimistic, fair, lonely, selfish, lively, clever, irritating, cynical
- Now choose your top three words, write each onto a post-it note and stick it immediately under the bit of the text that shows the clearest evidence of the word.

Prediction: What do you think will happen (or deserves to happen) to Benedick by the end of the play?

Enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO (Prince of Arragon)
What secret hath held you here, that you followed not to Leonato's?
Much Ado About Nothing

by William Shakespeare

Act 1 Scene 1

BENEDICK
I would your grace would constrain me to tell.

DON PEDRO
I charge thee on thy allegiance.

40

BENEDICK
You hear, Count Claudio: I can be secret as a
dumb man; I would have you think so; but, on
my allegiance, mark you this, on my
allegiance. He is in love. With who? Now that
is your grace's part. Mark how short his answer
is;—With Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

CLAUDIO
If this were so, so were it uttered.

BENEDICK
Like the old tale, my lord: 'it is not so, nor 'twas
not so, but, indeed, God forbid it should be so.'

CLAUDIO
If my passion change not shortly, God forbid it
should be otherwise.

DON PEDRO
Amen, if you love her; for the lady is very well
worthy.

CLAUDIO
You speak this to fetch me in, my lord.

DON PEDRO
By my troth, I speak my thought.

CLAUDIO
And, in faith, my lord, I spoke mine.

BENEDICK
And, by my two faiths and troths, my lord, I
spoke mine.

CLAUDIO
That I love her, I feel.

DON PEDRO
That she is worthy, I know.

BENEDICK
That I neither feel how she should be loved nor
know how she should be worthy, is the opinion
that fire cannot melt out of me: I will die in it at
the stake.
DON PEDRO
Thou wast ever an obstinate heretic in the
despite of beauty.

CLAUDIO
And never could maintain his part but in the
force of his will.

BENEDICK
That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that
she brought me up, I likewise give her most
humble thanks: but that I will have a recheat
winded in my forehead, or hang my bugle in an
invisible baldrick, all women shall pardon me.

Because I will not do them the wrong to
mistrust any, I will do myself the right to trust
none; and the fine is, for the which I may go
the finer, I will live a bachelor.

DON PEDRO
I shall see thee, ere I die, look pale with love.

BENEDICK
With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my
lord, not with love: prove that ever I lose more
blood with love than I will get again with
drinking, pick out mine eyes with a ballad-
maker's pen and hang me up at the door of a
brothel-house for the sign of blind Cupid.

DON PEDRO
Well, if ever thou dost fall from this faith, thou
wilt prove a notable argument.

BENEDICK
If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat and shoot
at me; and he that hits me, let him be clapped
on the shoulder, and called Adam.

DON PEDRO
Well, as time shall try: 'In time the savage bull
doeth bear the yoke.'

BENEDICK
The savage bull may; but if ever the sensible
Benedick bear it, pluck off the bull's horns and
set them in my forehead: and let me be vilely
painted, and in such great letters as they write
'Here is good horse to hire,' let them signify
under my sign 'Here you may see Benedick
the married man.'
CLAUDIO
If this should ever happen, thou wouldst be horn-mad.

DON PEDRO
Nay, if Cupid have not spent all his quiver in Venice, thou wilt quake for this shortly.

BENEDICK
I look for an earthquake too, then.

DON PEDRO
Well, you temporize with the hours. In the meantime, good Signor Benedick, repair to Leonato’s: commend me to him and tell him I will not fail him at supper; for indeed he hath made great preparation.

BENEDICK
I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassage; and so I commit you –

CLAUDIO
To the tuition of God: From my house, if I had it,–

DON PEDRO
The sixth of July: Your loving friend, Benedick.

BENEDICK
Nay, mock not, mock not. The body of your discourse is sometime guarded with fragments, and the guards are but slightly basted on neither: ere you flout old ends any further, examine your conscience: and so I leave you.

Exit

Benedick likes teasing other people. How does he react when other people tease him?
The scene in performance

Go back to the start of the scene.

Think about what you have learnt about the personalities and attitudes of Claudio and Benedick. Now – with a partner – act out the conversation between Claudio and Benedick.

Each of you should try out one of the acting prompts below to help you to make your character clear for the audience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benedick</td>
<td>Bullying Claudio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teasing Claudio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretly loves women and wishes he had a girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very sarcastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wanting the best for your friend; you just don’t want him to make a mistake and be taken advantage of by a woman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudio</td>
<td>Gradually getting angry with Benedick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very nervous; you always need to have Benedick’s support in everything you do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deliberately trying to wind Benedick up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dreamy, in love, hardly aware of what Benedick is saying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very slow-witted; dim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Try out different ways of acting the scene, using different character prompts. Which prompts are the best ones to give actors playing the parts? Can you think of a better prompt for either actor?

Try acting out the scene for another pair. Can they guess correctly which prompt each of you were using? Get them to help you to improve your playing of this bit of the play.

Imagine you have been watching two actors rehearsing this scene. Write a letter to them, giving them advice about how to play the scene. Don’t forget to give advice about the following:

- Tone of voice
- Movement
- Gesture
- How they react to what each other say
- What they should emphasise about each character and their relationship
Go back through this scene and underline every place where someone says something that echoes what has just been said by someone else. In other words, mark where someone says the same word or a word that means nearly the same. For example:

Lines 1-2:

**CLAUDIO:** (A young lord) Benedick, didst thou **note** the daughter of Signor Leonato?

**BENEDICK:** (Another young lord; Claudio’s friend) I **noted** her not; but I looked on her.

Lines 21-22:

**CLAUDIO:** In mine **eye** she is the sweetest lady that ever I **looked on**.

**BENEDICK:** I can **see** yet without spectacles and I see no such matter:

How often does this ‘echoing’ happen? Who is most like likely to make it happen? Why?

**Character**

Imagine that Don Pedro and Claudio stay and talk about Benedick when he leaves them. Work with a partner and try to improvise the conversation they have. Try to work into the conversation the following things:

- What they think of Benedick
- Their feelings towards him
- What they would like to do

Don’t bother with trying to use Shakespeare-style language, but remember that the two men talking to each other are a lord and a prince.

What have you learnt about Benedick from this scene? Write down three important things you have discovered about Benedick. Use a chart like the one below to develop your ideas, using evidence from the text.

An example has been provided for you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POINT</th>
<th>EVIDENCE</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benedick is completely against marriage.</td>
<td>He tells Claudio that getting married means putting your “neck into a yoke.”</td>
<td>Yokes were put round the necks of oxen to make them pull ploughs, so Benedick is suggesting that when a man marries he loses his freedom and becomes a slave to his wife.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>