

Multimedia essay on *Much Ado About Nothing*: instructions

Before you write:

-Carefully re-read and think about one of the scenes or speeches in *Much Ado About Nothing* that is of most interest to you, and consider why that is so. Choose one that you think is also important to a full understanding of the play: for instance, it may illuminate a turn in the plot, a key aspect of characterization, a theme, the social world or the humor of the play.

-Watch that scene on the VITAL site, if possible in both the Burges televised production and the Branagh film. (If it appears in neither version, does it still seem essential? Whether or not, it is a sign that *for this assignment* you will need to choose a different passage. You may, however, pick a speech or scene that is only *partially* represented, with lines missing.) Begin by making a “clip” of the whole.

-Think about the treatment of your passage. Did the directors include them verbatim? If not, why not? What choices of staging and interpretation did the filmmakers and actors make? Did they add aural or visual elements that you did not detect in the text? How did these contribute to the film’s overall vision and emphases? Give special attention to those aspects of the performance that added to your understanding of the text, either by calling attention to dimensions and possibilities you had not contemplated, or by making choices that did not accord with your own intuitions and therefore prompted you to reconsider the scene more carefully. Try breaking down your passage into smaller clips, making notes that highlight your observations. Pay attention to sound, gestures, and the camera’s perspective.

Now you are ready to write.

Please compose a 3-4 page essay in which you discuss how the screen version of this scene illuminates or modifies the meanings of the passage in Shakespeare’s text, as you interpret them. Be specific and focused, citing the text and screen version to support your assertions: the quotations and visual clips should be very short, so that they focus on your particular points of analysis. They should contribute evidence supporting your main *thesis*, your central assertion.

The idea is not to follow the scene line by line, as you did in the last assignment. Nor is it simply to describe or make observations for their own sake—interesting though these might be! Instead, your goal is to construct a persuasive argument, one that supports its claims.

Do try to reach a conclusion that might prompt an attentive reader to think further about this play. Edit your writing to make the sentences lucid, the connections between thoughts felicitous, and the paragraphs useful as indicators of the stages in your argument.

Due SES #8. Please bring a printed copy of your essay so that another student can read it, and help you improve it.

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