

Analysis of much ado
about nothing by
william shakespeare



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Much Ado About Nothing is a play set in c1598 in England. The author of this play, William Shakespeare has used various literary techniques to construct and develop its characters. This essay will analyse some of the techniques including tone, character-specific dialogue, dramatic irony, soliloquy, and symbolism that has been used by the author to construct the characters of the play including Benedick, Beatrice, and Don John.

Tone is one of the major techniques used by Shakespeare in this play, to show audience the type and behaviour of characters. In the introduction of the play, Beatrice asks the messenger who had come to deliver a message that stated that prince Pedro is coming to Messina, if “ Signior Montanto” (1. 1. 25) (mocking “ Signior Benedick”) had returned from the battle. The tone of Beatrice used in this introductory scene, gives audience an idea that she might be a witty character.

Beatrice, like in this scene, has a witty attitude in most of the scenes. An example of this is where Leonato is talking to Beatrice about her future husband, where she states that a one who has a beard is “ more than a youth” (2. . 27) and he is not for her, whereas one who has none is “ less than a man” (2.

1. 38) and she is not for him, concluding that there is no man that is able to become her husband. This shows that Beatrice is a very hard-hearted character and cannot be changed or pleased so easily. The tone of Beatrice is usually specific in most of the parts of the play.

However, this is also true for the other characters in the play. This shows how tone can be used to specifically recognise a character. Therefore, it can
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be concluded that the author has used Tone as one of the early techniques in constructing and developing the characters, to let the audience know about the characters' personality and behaviour. A technique that is used for most of the characters of the play is character-specific dialogue. Character-specific dialogue relates to tone; it makes audience familiar with the way a specific character speaks and expresses his thoughts.

Don John is the character in the play that never changes his way of speech. In the scene where Don John speaks for the first time, he has a very villainy dialogue where he states how "That young tart-up" (Don Pedro) "hath all the glory" of Don John's "overthrow", and if Don John can "cross him anyway", he blesses himself "every way" (1. 3. 48). This way of speech stays the same at all the parts of the play; "I am sick in displeasure to him, and whatsoever comes athwart his affection ranges evenly with mine" (2.

2. 5). This technique similar to tone, contrasts the dialogue of characters to differentiate between the ways different characters think and behave. It is used to make characters seem different or similar to other characters; otherwise known as stereotyping.

Read about "Nighttime fires" Thus, character specific dialogue makes audience familiar to the behaviour and thoughts of a character, and is therefore used for constructing characters. Dramatic irony is another technique used in this play that gives audience an overview of the way characters think in certain situations. Dramatic irony, is a technique that aids in developing characters mostly by showing the characters' feelings (that are not usually visible) towards something that they think is real, but only the

audience know if it is true (i. e. where at least one character doesn't know what the audience know).

An example of this is in a scene where Don Pedro, Leonato and the other men were discussing how Lady Beatrice “ was in love with Signior Benedick” (2. 3. 82). The dramatic irony here is that Signior Benedick in this scene was hiding and overhearing the conversation, but doesn't know that he was being deceived into believing that Lady Beatrice is madly in love with him.

Since benedick gets deceived into believing that Beatrice really loves him, he then expresses his deeper feelings much more to the audience as he says to himself that if Beatrice does love him, “ it must be requited” (2. 3. 183) and otherwise he will not be. This shows that dramatic irony leads into constructing and developing characters, as dramatic irony in a way allows audience to overview and understand a character's deeper thoughts/feelings. Soliloquy is also a technique that has been used similar to dramatic irony by putting forward the emotions of a character and having an overview of his/her personality/thoughts to aid in building the character.

Dramatic irony is where ‘ there is something that a character doesn't know, but the audience are aware of it’, whereas a soliloquy is where ‘ the audience know what a character is feeling but other characters are not addressed’. A good example of a soliloquy is in the scene where benedick is speaking to himself about how a man changes himself after falling in love. In the scene, benedick says how “ One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well” (2. 3. 21) but unless there is a woman who has all three qualities, he shall not fall in love with any

woman. From this scene, it is observed that benedick has certain values that a woman should have, and that she is the woman he will fall in love with.

As seen, soliloquy opens the door to a character's deeper feelings. These are feelings that a character is not likely to state when other characters are present and addressed. This shows how soliloquy, similar to dramatic irony, lets the audience know about a character's deep thoughts/emotions. Another technique that had been used was Symbolism. This technique is present in many scenes throughout the play.

It has been used to make the audience visualise and understand certain aspects of the play. An example of this is in the scene where Beatrice gets deceived by her cousin into believing that "Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely" (3. 1. 37). In the scene Hero tells Margaret how it is good for Benedick to forget Beatrice as "Disdain and scorn ride sparkling" (3.

1. 51) in Beatrice's eyes and "Mispricing" (3. 1. 52) everything they see.

This was being said so to make Beatrice realise that her behaviour was full of scorn and pride. At this time when the play was written, women generally had to be polite when men are around.

However, it is seen that Beatrice's character does not obey this rule, and her behaviour is contrasted with other women. In the introduction of the play, as seen in the paragraph that analysed "tone" as a technique, Beatrice was a witty character. Though at the introduction tone was used to develop the character of Beatrice to be witty, it has also been repeated throughout the play. The repetition of this fact has led to symbolise Beatrice with the character of wit and wit itself.

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This shows how symbolism has been used along with tone and repetition to construct characters of the play. The literary techniques analysed above show how they were used to construct characters and position audience to let the characters be constructed within their thoughts. Shakespeare has used various literary techniques including tone, character-specific dialogue, dramatic irony, soliloquy, and symbolism to directly and indirectly construct and develop the characters of the play *Much Ado about Nothing*. All of these techniques relate to each other within the context of constructing characters by various means like giving characters an insight of character's thoughts, letting audience know more about the personality of characters etc. Thus these techniques have been used in the play to create and develop the characters of the play.