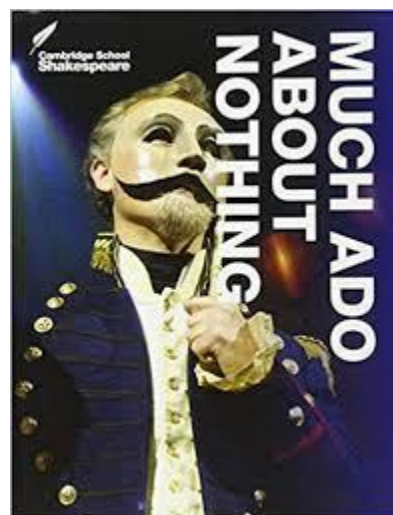


## ***Books every boy should read before leaving prep school***

# Much Ado About Nothing

A review by Edward Thomson, Year 8

Face it. You are going to study Shakespeare at some point, and *Much Ado About Nothing* is not a bad place to start. It is not as long as many of Shakespeare's other plays, and as a comedy it is less daunting. As always with Shakespeare, there are many editions to choose from, but the one that I would recommend would be the Cambridge University Press edition. With a page of text facing a page of notes, this edition helps the reader gain a better understanding of what they are reading, as well as its context whilst also showing different stagings of the play.



One of the main themes of *Much Ado About Nothing* is deception. Most of the characters are deceived by each other at one point or another leading to the main plot twists, which I shall not divulge. There is something for everyone: Beatrice and Benedick's banter, the love stories and schemes, all within the backdrop of Leonato's great house.

Some find Shakespeare's language a barrier to his work. I would argue that the language is beautiful, but for those who think otherwise, I challenge you not to find Shakespearean insults a fount of mirth. Even if you do not find this to be true, it will still add to your familiarity of the language - helpful for your next schools. His vocabulary will also be useful for creative writing, which is a component in English GCSE, as well as many entrance exams.

Why this play, rather than another play or book? Now is an excellent time to read this, as there is a fabulous production currently on BBC iPlayer, set in 1918. I do not wish to reveal anything, but there is a Christmas tree. That is all I will say. One can read the play and then watch it or vice versa: they work in conjunction with one another. Both give one a greater understanding of the other. That the play need not be set in a specific era shows how Shakespeare is



transferable into any time and therefore remains relevant. You who said that it is old and irrelevant, I see you.

If you were not to enjoy this play, 'I would challenge you to a battle of wits.' But you will, so I needn't bother.