

How does William Shakespeare use imagery in *Much
Ado About Nothing*?

In this lesson you will learn how the author develops meaning by analyzing the use of figurative language in the form of imagery.

Let's Review

Much Ado About Nothing

Shakespeare, 1623

Act I, Scene I

SCENE I. Before LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE, with a Messenger

LEONATO

I learn in this letter that Don Peter of Arragon
comes this night to Messina.

Messenger

He is very near by this: he was not three leagues off
when I left him.

LEONATO

How many gentlemen have you lost in this action? 5

Messenger

But few of any sort, and none of name.

LEONATO

A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings
home full numbers. I find here that Don Peter hath
bestowed much honour on a young Florentine called Claudio.

Messenger

Much deserved on his part and equally remembered by
Don Pedro: he hath borne himself beyond the
promise of his age, doing, in the figure of a lamb,
the feats of a lion: he hath indeed better 10

- Author: William Shakespeare
- Play
- Written in 1623
- Comedy
- Act I, Scene 1

Core Lesson

- 1 Identify examples of imagery by finding the words and phrases that make a picture in our minds.
- 2 Ask, “What ideas does the author express through imagery?”
- 3 Ask, “How do those expressions contribute to the reader’s understanding?”

Core Lesson

1 Identify examples of imagery.

LEONATO

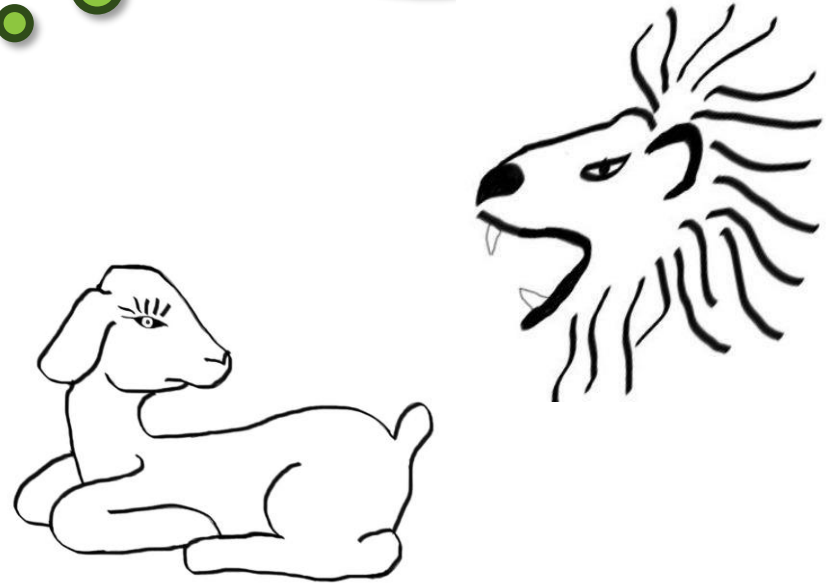
A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings home full numbers. I find here that Don Peter hath bestowed much honour on a young Florentine called Claudio.

MESSENGER

Much deserved on his part and equally remembered by Don Pedro: he hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing, in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion: he hath indeed bettered expectation than you must expect of me to tell you how.

(I.i.7-15)

Which words create an image?
What do the words mean?



Core Lesson

1 Identify examples of imagery.

BEATRICE

I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow
than a man swear he loves me.

BENEDICK

God keep your ladyship in that mind!
So some gentleman or other shall
'scape a predestinate scratched face.

BEATRICE

Scratching could not make it worse, an
'twere such a face as yours were.

(I.i.114-121)

Which words create an image?
What do the words mean?



- Beatrice is not interested in men swearing their love.
- Benedick accuses Beatrice of scratching men's faces.
- Beatrice thinks scratches would not hurt Benedick.

Core Lesson

1 Identify examples of imagery.

BENEDICK

Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

BEATRICE

A bird of my tongue is better than
a beast of yours.

BENEDICK

I would my horse had the speed of
your tongue, and so good a
continuer. But keep your way, i'
God's name; I have done.

(I.i.122-126)



- Benedick compares Beatrice to a parrot.
- Beatrice would rather be a bird than a beast.
- Benedick wishes his horse was fast and tireless.

Core Lesson

2 Ask, “What ideas does the author express through imagery?”

Messenger: [Claudio]
hath borne himself
beyond the promise of
his age, doing, in the
figure of a lamb, the
feats of a lion.

(I.i.11-13)

What does this tell us
about
the speaker?

What does this tell
us about the
subject?

Don Pedro's
messenger is
impressed with
Claudio.

Claudio looks young
and innocent, yet he is
fierce and effective in
battle.

Core Lesson

2 Ask, “What ideas does the author express through imagery?”

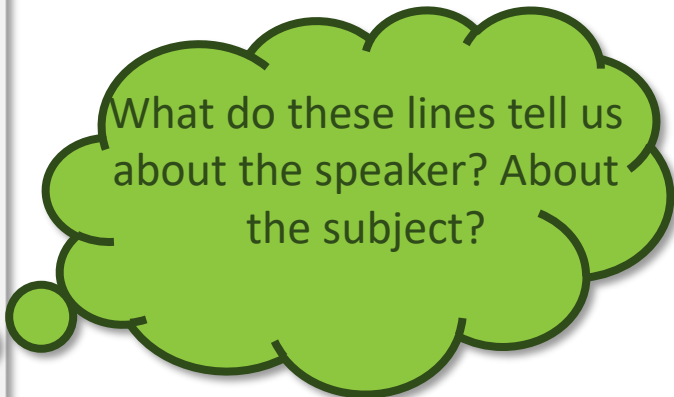
BEATRICE

I had rather hear my
dog bark at a crow than
a man swear he loves
me.

BENEDICK

God keep your
ladyship in that mind!
So some gentleman or
other shall ‘scape a
predestinate scratched
face.

(I.i.114-119)



What do these lines tell us
about the speaker? About
the subject?

Beatrice not interested
in love, wants Benedick
to know that.

Benedick feels sorry for any man who might
get close to Beatrice. His opinion of Beatrice
seems to be quite low.

Core Lesson

2 Ask, "What ideas does the author express through imagery?"

BENEDICK

Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

BEATRICE

A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

BENEDICK

I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer. But keep your way, i' God's name; I have done.

(I.i.122-126)

What do these lines tell us about the speaker? About the subject?

Benedick and Beatrice insult one another, each playing off the other's words.

There seems to be a pattern here: animals!


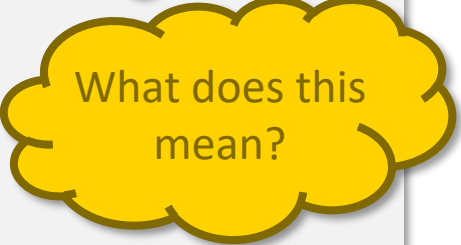
lamb, lion, dog, crow, cat, parrot, "beast," horse . . .

Will there be more?

Core Lesson

3

Ask, “How do those expressions contribute to the reader’s understanding?”

Character	Plot	Theme
<p>Claudio: gentle, strong</p> <p>Beatrice: independent, strong willed, quick witted</p> <p>Benedick: similar to Beatrice</p>	<p>Claudio a hero</p> <p>Beatrice and Benedick enemies</p> 	<p>Pattern: characters described as animals</p> 

Core Lesson

How does William Shakespeare use imagery in *Much Ado About Nothing*?

William Shakespeare uses imagery by inserting words and phrases that conjure pictures of various animals in the minds of his audience in order to communicate key points about characters, plot, and theme. The animal imagery strengthens our understanding of characters' personalities and motivations, creates plot tension, and prepares us to examine possible themes.

Core Lesson

- 1 Identified examples of imagery by finding the words and phrases that make a picture in our minds.
- 2 Asked, “What ideas does the author express through imagery?”
- 3 Asked, “How do those expressions contribute to the reader’s understanding?”

In this lesson you have learned how the author develops meaning by analyzing the use of figurative language in the form of imagery.