

Classroom Connections

Before the performance...

What Would You Give Up to Pursue a Goal?

At the beginning of the play, the four lords make a pact to pursue academics for three years. Ask students what they would be willing to give up to pursue a goal. Ask students to journal about any conflict they experience in their own lives between professional, academic or athletic goals and their family, love or personal lives. Ask students to share their journal entries and discuss their opinions about their life's priorities. Do students believe that the four lords in *Love's Labor's Lost* should stay committed to their goal, or should they give up their oath to pursue their "true love?"

Write Your Own Sonnet

Shakespeare's sonnets are poems of 14 lines in iambic pentameter consisting of three quatrains and a couplet. The rhyme scheme goes: *abab cdcd efef gg*. Ask your class to come up with seven pairs of rhyming words together. Then ask everyone to write their own sonnet using the same rhymes and see what kinds of different sonnets are created!

Word / Play

Shakespeare shows his love of language in *Love's Labor's Lost*, which is full of wordplay and verbal artistry. The longest word in Shakespeare's canon, "honorificabilitudinitatibus," is found in this play. In addition, Shakespeare invented some 1,700 words in his lifetime, including "manager," "assassin," "gentle" and "pale." There was no dictionary to standardize language in Shakespeare's time, and he freely created new and original words to express the images he wanted to capture in his plays. However, without a dictionary, how can we know the meaning of a word we have never heard before? When watching one of Shakespeare's plays, we can get clues to a word's meaning by paying attention to the actors' movements. Students can engage in this process by using original sounds and movements to express their own images. Ask students to focus on an image in their minds, then have them create a new word for it. Next, each student should develop a movement that physically expresses their word. Have students share their words and movements with the class and let classmates try to guess the meaning of each new word.

Getting Caught: Secret Crush/Love Notes

In *Love's Labor's Lost*, the King of Navarre, Berowne, Longaville and Dumaine are only able to communicate with their love interests by sending them secret notes and poems. Ask students to write their names down on strips of paper, place those strips of paper in a box and draw one name out of the box. Then, over the course of three weeks, ask each student to write three poems about the person they selected. Each poem should be at least two lines in length and can be in any style they wish. After writing each poem (one per week), the students should find either a messenger or another way of sending this poem to the person they selected in secret. After the students have received their three poems, ask them to guess the identity of their secret author. If guessed correctly, discuss what about the style, content or delivery method of the poem indicated who was the author.

Page to Stage: When Would You Set It?

After reading the play or reviewing the synopsis, ask the class to summarize what happens in the play. The summary should be as concise as possible, but include the key events of the plot. After the summary, begin a discussion about what the play is about. What is interesting or meaningful about the play? What themes or issues are important to the students? Note that when a contemporary director approaches a production of Shakespeare, he or she has two primary responsibilities: to the playwright and to the audience. The director needs to make the production relevant for a contemporary audience while remaining true to the intentions of the playwright. Based on what the students said was interesting or meaningful, ask students to develop an idea for the setting of *Love's Labor's Lost*. Students can focus on a specific time period, location or world event. How does the design of a play help communicate the meaning of the play?

Classroom Connections

...After the performance

What Does It Mean to Break an Oath?

"What fool is not so wise / To lose an oath to win a paradise?" (Act 4, Scene 3)

Love's Labor's Lost begins with the main characters swearing an oath to study together for three years while fasting and refusing the company of women. Within a day, all the men have broken this oath. By the end of the play, all the men desire to take the oath of marriage, but this play does not have a typical happy ending wedding scene. Instead, the men are forced into another oath of waiting a year for their beloveds. Do you think they will be able to keep this oath? Have the men changed from the beginning of the play? What sort of oaths do we take today? What are the consequences when we break them?

Create Your Own Nine Worthies

At the end of *Love's Labor's Lost*, several of the characters perform a play about the Nine Worthies. The Worthies were heroes who excelled in wars and were chivalrous to their fellow man. Who would you consider to be a "Worthy" today? Divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to brainstorm modern-day heroes and decide on their own Nine Worthies. They should then create a play, pageant or song to honor them.

Duty vs. Desire

In *Love's Labor's Lost*, several characters are forced to make difficult decisions between giving in to their desires and fulfilling important obligations. For example, the King of Navarre, Berowne, Longaville and Dumaine are faced with a choice between fulfilling their oaths to study and abstaining from the company of women or giving in to their love for the Princess and her attendants. Ask students to write about a time in their own lives when they had to decide between doing something they wanted to do versus doing something they were required or obligated to do. In the end, what did they choose to do? What were the consequences of the choice that they made? If they had the chance to relive the situation, would they make the same decision? Why or why not?

One Year Later

Love's Labor's Lost does not end like a traditional comedy. The lords and ladies are forced to part ways and must delay their marriage prospects for a year. Ask students to brainstorm ideas for a sequel to *Love's Labor's Lost* that takes place one year after the play ends. Students can put together a treatment for a Hollywood script. Is the sequel a romantic comedy? Is it a serious drama? A reality show? Their plotline should answer the questions: What happened during the year when the lovers were separated? Do they reunite? What happens next? Students should title their script and present their pitch to the class.

"Wise and Loving"

Henry David Thoreau was a 19th-century author and philosopher who wrote the following quote:

"Man is continually saying to woman, 'Why will you not be more wise?' Woman is continually saying to man, 'Why will you not be more loving?' It is not in their wills to be wise or to be loving; but, unless each is both wise and loving, there can be neither wisdom nor love."

Ask the students to explain what the quote means to them. Ask students to discuss how Thoreau's quote relates to *Love's Labor's Lost*.

Wearing Masks

When the king and his men pay a visit to the ladies disguised as Russians, the ladies turn the tables on them with disguises of their own—they all wear masks to confuse the men and mock them for their game. When the men return as themselves, the women continue to bait them with their own words, delighting in the men's confusion. The men were wooing in earnest, hoping to win the hearts of the ladies. The ladies thought the men were merely having fun. Why did the men feel the need to visit the ladies disguised? How would the story change if the men had not come disguised but as themselves?