

Hero and Claudio's story

Use with the following images:
Characters ► Hero & Claudio ► 28

Use with:
Worksheet 5
Extract sheet 5

Aims

- to consolidate students' knowledge of the play's main plot
- to understand Hero and Claudio's story in the light of Elizabethan attitudes to courtship and marriage, and consider how their story could be convincingly portrayed in the 21st century

Possible teaching sequence

Preparation

- Students should be familiar with Hero and Claudio's first betrothal (Act 2 Scene 1), the wedding (Act 4 Scene 1) and the second betrothal (Act 5 Scene 4). Briefly revise these events before starting.
- Talk briefly about Elizabethan arranged marriages and the father's right to choose the husband for his daughter. Mention societies today which have similar customs, and ask students for their thoughts on how much say a father should have in his daughter's marriage.

Activities

Characters/Hero & Claudio/28

- Q1** Look at each image in the sequence, and at each Q1. Focus on differing portrayals of the first betrothal, the male anger at the wedding, and the surreal ritual of the second betrothal. Discuss the young 'lovers', virtual strangers when first betrothed, and what they go through (especially Hero).

Use Extract sheet 5 to help students make judgements on the audio clips. Explore any hostility students feel towards Claudio. (Try to get them to understand how an average Elizabethan male might have thought, even if it doesn't seem very admirable today). One 20th-century actor playing the part of Hero said she was very tempted to tell Claudio just where he could stick his marriage, yet some 19th-century critics pitied him for being so wickedly deceived!

- Q2** Go through the sequence a second time, looking at Q2 (the same for all images), which asks students to decide how scenes should be played in the context of the whole play (e.g. How is the Hero–Claudio love story balanced or contrasted with the Beatrice–Benedick love story? Which view of love and marriage does the play most strongly endorse, or is it ambivalent?)

Reinforcement

Work through the sequence again, with students individually or in pairs completing Worksheet 5. Volunteer groups or pairs give presentations to the class on the Q2 topic of how Hero and Claudio should be portrayed in the three key scenes: Hero betrothed, Hero rejected, Hero betrothed again.