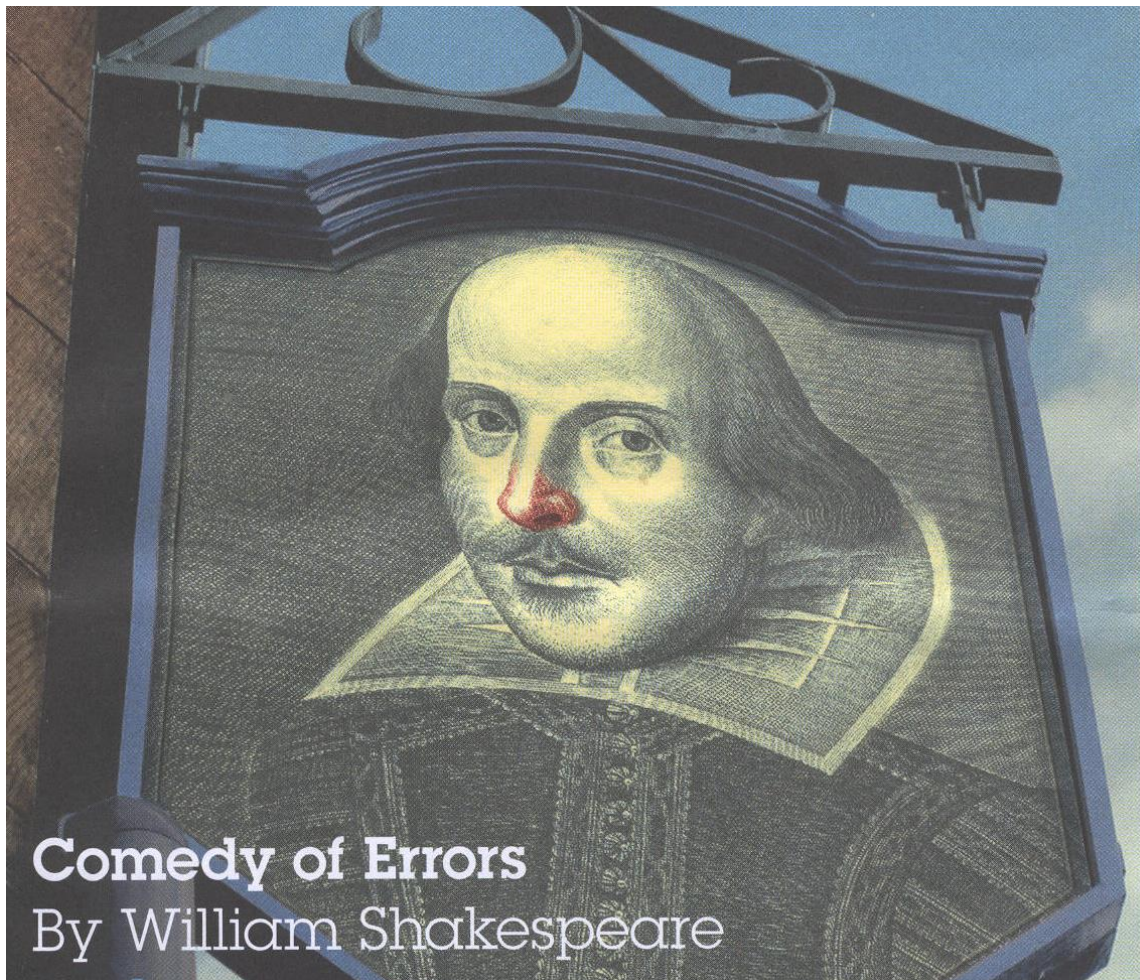


# COMEDY OF ERRORS



EDUCATION PACK



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# COMEDY OF ERRORS - EDUCATION PACK

## INTRODUCTION:

This pack is designed as a useful aid to **Key Stages 3 & 4 English Literature, Drama, PHSE and Citizenship**. It accompanies the Northern Broadsides' workshops and gives a detailed insight into the 2005 touring production of The Comedy of Errors. Artistic Director, Barrie Rutter (who plays Egeon in the show) formed Northern Broadsides in 1992. Based at Dean Clough, Halifax, the multi award winning company has toured throughout the world and specialises in performing classical or formal theatre in a northern voice. The purpose of the workshop is to provide some useful tools for looking at the play. Shakespeare is meant to be performed, not studied. Whilst this workshop will not help directly to answer GCSE English questions it will hopefully provide ways of making the text and the show more interesting and accessible.

## CONTENTS:

- 1) HISTORICAL BACKGROUND – A look at the Elizabethan attitudes prevalent when the play was written, what was happening at that time and where the play came from. Discussion use for the classroom.
- 2) VERSE - Student handouts on iambic pentameter to support part of the workshop.
- 3) POETRY and IMAGERY - A translation of Luciana's speech and an explanation of some of the imagery terms. Also used in the workshop.
- 4) FORMAL or CLASSICAL PRESENTATION - Northern Broadsides' approach to the classics, for anyone interested in the workings of the unique company.
- 5) THEMES - An exploration of ideas and concepts within the play. These include marriage, obligations of women, identity, jealousy, twins, madness, family life, servants and masters and appearance versus reality. This is a major part of the workshop and should be continued in the classroom as stimulation for discussion and to give some ideas for further activities.
- 6) SUMMARY - Hopefully, a useful tool in just following the story, also a key part of the workshop to be continued in the classroom.

## 1) HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

### PERIOD, ATTITUDES AND SOURCE

The earliest of Shakespeare's comedies, "The Comedy of Errors" is also the shortest of all his surviving plays, (over two thousand lines shorter than "Hamlet"). The play was first performed at Gray's Inn for an audience of lawyers.

The main source of the play came from the Roman playwright Plautus; from his Latin play "Menaechmi", a farce about the confusion caused by a pair of twins. Shakespeare elaborated on the farce by introducing a second pair of twins. Plautus sets his play in the Greek city of Epidamnum. Although Shakespeare sets his play in Ephesus, some of his reported action also features Epidamnum.

In 1593, when "The Comedy of Errors" was written, Elizabethan England experienced an age of maritime exploration. Business between sea faring merchants, as in the play was a common activity. The action takes place in Ephesus, which today would be located in Turkey but at the time of the play it was a centre of Greek civilisation and commerce. (Syracuse is located in Sicily.) We cannot watch, listen, read or perform Shakespeare plays without the way we think now, having an affect on the text. The common potato had just arrived. It was a time of religious tension between the Catholics and Protestants. They had none of the modern day inventions that we take for granted, today. They had different beliefs, values and attitudes. Elizabethan audiences found different things funny than we might do today.

"Comedy of Errors" is the only Shakespeare play with "comedy in its title. It is a comedy because it is humourous, though it doesn't quite follow the comedy conventions of the day in that it doesn't end in a marriage. It does however develop from discord and harsh law to harmony and festivity, plus there is the possibility of marriage between Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse. Some of the Elizabethan verbal humour can appear dated and may be missed by modern audiences but in Comedy of Errors there is a great deal of situational and physical comedy, which is as equally funny today as it was in the 1590s.



## 2) VERSE:

### BLANK VERSE and IAMBIC PENTAMETER

Why do we find Shakespeare difficult? It's in a 400 year old language and therefore hard to understand. We do not identify with many of the expressions or the humour. It's mostly written in **blank verse, iambic pentameter**.

**Blank verse** is simply verse that doesn't necessary rhyme. **iambic pentameter** is a form of verse that was instantly recognisable to the Elizabethans and used by most dramatists of the day.

**iambic** - from iambus: a rhythmic foot of stressed and unstressed syllables, **de-dum**.

**Pentameter** - from the Greek for **five** (Pentagon, pentangle) tells us how many feet are in each line.

**De-dum, de-dum, de-dum, de-dum, de-dum**. Each line consist of ten syllables, alternatively stressed and unstressed.

"To **be** or **not** to **be** that **is** the **question**."

"**Tomorrow** **and** **tomorrow** **and** **tomorrow**  
Creeps **in** this **petty** **pace** from **day** to **day**."

"The **qual** it **ty** of **mer** **cy** **is** not **strained**.  
It **drop** peth **as** the **gen** **tle** **rain** from **Heaven**."

In Northern Broadsides we speak with northern accents. The hard granite stone consonants and short vowels of the northern voice are perfect for the rhythm and pulses of iambic pentameter.

When Adriana mistakes Antipholus of Syracuse for her husband and invites him home to dinner, he says in his confusion:

"Am I in earth in heaven or in hell?"

Every alternative word or syllable is emphasised, the last one in the line being the loudest.

"Am I in **earth** in **heav** **en** or in **hell?**"

If you take out the unaccented words we are left with:

**“I, earth, heav, or, hell?”**

These emphasised words are the only ones needed to tell the story. Shakespeare has done this with almost every line of the play. The groundlings were not sophisticated people and the theatregoers were not there to study the play. They were there for entertainment. Audiences were happy just to understand and enjoy the play for what it was. Nevertheless, it is a very clever feat to place every word in the place it will do the best job. The whole play is a poem. It is like a music symphony, drifting in and out of verse crescendos and quiet sections throughout. You will also find he often puts a rhyming couplet at the end of a scene. This tells the audience when the “commercial breaks” are coming, so they can cough or shift in their seat before the next scene. Adriana tells Dromio to guard the gate as she takes Antipholus into dinner:

“Ay, and let none enter, lest I break your pate.

LUCIANA: Come, come, Antipholus, we dine too late.”

### **Limericks:**

Modern audiences do not instantly recognise **iambic pentameter** but a form of verse they are familiar with is the **limerick**. This is a limerick to demonstrate blank verse.

There was a young man from Dundee,  
Got stung on the leg by a wasp.  
When asked if it hurt,  
He said “No not a bit.  
He can do it again if he wants.”

This does not rhyme but we know it is in verse. We know it is in verse because it has a rhythm.

De-dum diddy-dum diddy-dum  
De-dum diddy-dum diddy-dum  
De-dum diddy-dum  
De-dum diddy-dum  
De-dum diddy-dum diddy-dum

The rhythm of the limerick is as recognisable to us as the rhythm of iambic pentameter (**De-dum, de-dum, de-dum, de-dum, de-dum**) was to the Elizabethans. What Shakespeare does is to take this recognisable rhythm and he plays with it to make a point. This is a limerick to demonstrate this.

There was a young fellow from Tyne,  
 Who tried to put words into rhyme.  
 The only thing was,  
 He failed because  
 He always tried to put far too many, much too many words into the last line.

The main purpose of **iambic pentameter** was not so that it could be studied 400 years later but as an aid to the actor. It tells the actor how to say the line by showing where the emphasis should fall.

Making two characters share the same line displays the pace and thought links of the two characters about the same subject.

Dromio S: I am transformed, master, am not I?

Antipholus S: I think thou art in mind, and so am I.

Dromio S: Nay, master, both in mind and in my shape.

Antipholus S: Thou hast thine own form

Dromio S: No, I am an ape.

The pulse of the iambic pentameter verse also echoes the **heartbeat** and therefore corresponds with emotions and feelings.

Sometimes different characters will use an alternate rhythm or speak in prose to show their emotions or relationships to each other. Dromio S describes the kitchen wench, Act 3 Scene 2, “all grease, I know not what to do but make a lamp of her. – If she lives till doomsday she’ll burn a week longer than the whole world.” Although he creates a striking image, it is very base and hardly poetic. Therefore, the description is all made in prose. At the end of the scene when they have finished discussing her Antipholus S reverts back to verse to send Dromio in search of a ship. Earlier in the scene Luciana and Antipholus have a flirting exchange where they each take a line of verse. Each line ending, finishes in rhyme. “Luciana: What are you mad, that you do reason so? Antipholus S: Not mad but mated. How I do not know. - etc” The shared verse suggests that although Luciana has no wish to steal her sister’s husband, she is enjoying the attention.

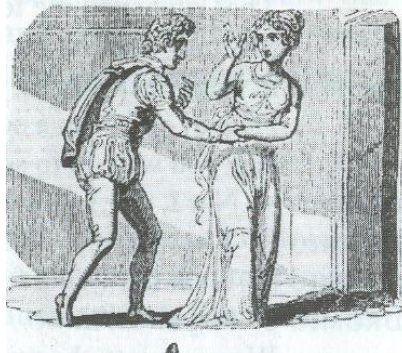
### 3) **POETRY and IMAGARY:**

Look at Luciana’s speech then at the same speech translated into modern language. Which is easier to understand?

## COMEDY OF ERRORS - Act 3 Scene 2:

**LUCIANA:**

And may it be that you have quite forgot  
 A husband's office? Shall, Antipholus,  
 Even in the spring of love thy love-springs rot?  
 Shall love in building grow so ruinous?  
 If thou did wed my sister for her wealth,  
 Then for her wealth's sake use her with more kindness;  
 Or if you like elsewhere, do it by stealth.  
 Muffle your false love with some show of blindness;  
 Let not my sister read it in your eye.  
 Be not thy tongue thy own shame's orator.  
 Look sweet, speak fair, become disloyalty;  
 Apparel vice like virtue's harbinger.  
 Bear a fair presence, though your heart be tainted;  
 Teach sin the carriage of a holy saint.  
 Be secret-false; what need she be acquainted?  
 What simple thief brags of his own attainment?  
 'Tis double wrong to truant with your bed  
 And let her read it in thy looks at board.  
 Shame hath a bastard fame, well managed;  
 Ill deeds is doubled with an evil word.  
 Alas, poor women, make us but believe,  
 Being compact of credit, that you love us.  
 Though others have the arm, show us the sleeve.  
 We in our motion turn, and you may move us.  
 Then, gentle brother, get you in again.  
 Comfort my sister, cheer her, call her wife.  
 'Tis holy sport to be a little vain  
 When the sweet breath of flattery conquers strife.



Antipholus woos Luciana

## COMEDY OF ERRORS - Act 3 Scene 2:

**LUCIANA:**

It may be that you have quite forgot a husband's duty.  
 Shall, Antipholus, even in the springtime of love rot his love-springs?  
 Shall the building of love grow into a ruin?  
 If you married my sister for her wealth,  
 Then for her wealth's sake be kinder to her.  
 Or if you fancy someone else, do it on the sly.  
 Conceal your false love with a blindfold.  
 Don't let my sister read it in your eye.  
 Don't let your own tongue shout out your shame.  
 Look sweet, speak nicely, be disloyal with grace.  
 Dress up vice as though it is the messenger of virtue.  
 Look good and happy on the outside, though inside you don't feel it.  
 Teach sin to walk like a holy saint.  
 Be secret and false. Why does she need to know?  
 Which of the simplest of thieves would brag of his own disgrace?  
 It's twice as wrong to be out all night being unfaithful and then let her  
 read it in your face at breakfast.  
 Shame is well known for keeping control of its dark secrets.  
 An evil deed is doubled with an evil word.  
 Us poor women, who are completely made up of trust, you just have  
 to make us believe that you love us.  
 Even if others have your arm, you only have to show us the sleeve.  
 You can easily send us into a spin.  
 So, my gentle brother, get back in there.  
 Comfort my sister, cheer her, call her wife.  
 It's a stupid pastime, playing false when a few sweet words of flattery  
 would conquer any trouble.

If the modern speech is easier to understand why do we persist with the archaic language of Shakespeare? The whole play is a poem, full of imagery and pictures. They didn't have television in Shakespeare's day so he had to make pictures with words to create images or ideas in the reader's mind. Imagery makes what is being said more powerful. In The Comedy of Errors various images centre around things like the chain or necklace, the rope, plants, animals, identity and of course water and the sea because the play is set in the Mediterranean and so much is to do with maritime, seafaring merchants, sailors and shipwrecks. Images can be made through **simile, metaphor or personification**.



**Simile** is when an image is used as a comparison to something else. Antipholus of Syracuse says in Act 1 Scene 2: "I to the world am like a drop of water that in the ocean seeks another drop." 'The images run like a thread, woven through the material of the play.' The above sentence is an example of a **Metaphor**, creating the idea that the play is a piece of fabric patterned with images. **Personification** is describing something abstract as though it were a person. In Act 1 Scene 1 Egeon talks of the "helpful ship, splitted in the midst". He goes on to suggest it as the time when he became divorced from his wife but Shakespeare also creates an image of the ship itself being split in two, the male half of the ship being "divorced" from the female. Sometimes a single image is created to enhance the text and then is played around with. In Act 2 Scene 2 when Adriana thinks Antipholus of Syracuse is her husband she defers to him, saying "Come, I will fasten on this sleeve of thine." The word "fasten" could suggest anything from a limpet to something being sewn on his sleeve but she then extends and clarifies the image by comparing their relationship to a vine, wrapped around a big strong, manly tree. "Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine."

#### 4) **FORMAL or CLASSICAL PRESENTATION:**

**Barrie Rutter's** distinctive approach to theatre is fuelled by his passion for language and a celebration of the musicality of the northern voice. These plays were meant to be performed. Northern Broadsides specialise in performing formal or classical works. Formal or classical presentation differs from other work because it is in verse. It is not natural or based in reality because we don't speak in verse in every day speech. However, we are still actors and we have to make what we do **believable**. Barrie Rutter has no truck with "What would my character do?" There is no psychological investigation involved during the rehearsal process. The notion of character internalisation did not exist during Shakespeare's time. "I don't believe in the word character," says Rutter. The characters have characteristics, given to them by the poet. It is our job as actors to interpret and play them. Integral to every Northern Broadsides' production is the music. Associate Director, Conrad Nelson plays Dromio of Syracuse in the production. He has been the composer and Musical Director for every production since the company's inception. He has also been the company's choreographer, another fundamental facet to any production. These are not only instantly recognisable features of Northern Broadsides but are expected. The musicality of the northern voice, augmented by Conrad's intricate music accompanied by dance, (often clog dance) are what makes this company unique.

## 5) THEMES:

During the workshop there will be a practical session exploring and discussing the themes. Working in small groups of 4 or 5, each group will use a “Theme Card” to stimulate this. This exercise could be continued in the classroom. Using the cards discuss the theme then present a moving tableau to present the ideas and interpretation of the theme. The final image should be underlined with the title of the theme. The themes relate to the text as follows:

### MARRIAGE

Most of the themes in the play cross over in that a word like ‘hierarchy’ can equally be discussed about a woman’s position in marriage as it can apply to a servant’s position with his master. Also identity may apply to twins, self-identity or in this case the identity of women in society. Adriana struggles to reconcile the sexual and spiritual roles within her marriage. Her problems arise out of a dual attitude that the Elizabethans had towards women within their society. Since the renaissance period, women were viewed as both divine and dangerous at the same time. Everything was seen from a man’s point of view and men could either look upon a woman’s beauty as something to lead them to the appreciation of higher celestial things or as something to lead them to temptation and in turn, damnation. Antipholus of Syracuse worships Luciana in Act 3 Scene 2 as “more than earth divine”. He asks, “Are you a god?” Later in the scene, his servant, Dromio demonises the pursuit of him by the maidservant Luce, saying she is “one that haunts me, one that will have me”. He calls her “a very beastly creature”, a “diviner” (witch), that knows “what privy marks” he has. “I, amazed, ran from her as a witch.” As the “divine”, Luciana is the goddess that Antipholus wishes to possess. As the “diviner” Luce is the demon who wishes to possess Dromio. The fact that the names of these two women have the same root, Luciana and Luce, suggests they are from the same female stereotype.



Luce (Nell) pursues Dromio S

All this has a profound effect upon Adriana as she ponders the obligation of women in marriage. In Act 2 Scene 2 she attempts to combine both extremes, attending her husband’s body and soul. She offers him their own private dinner, another way of offering him sex. She also offers him confession, a religious sacrament. “Husband, I’ll dine with you today, and shrive you of a thousand idle

pranks.” She instructs Dromio, “Sirrah, if any asks for your master, say he dines forth and let no creature enter”. It cannot be mere coincidence that Shakespeare changed Plautus’ location from Epidamnum to Ephesus, as Ephesus is said to be founded by the Amazons, an extreme of one of these role models; it is also well known as the place where St Paul sent his letter, setting out the standards by which a good Christian wife should defer to her husband as the head of the household. Having a population of women, descended from the Amazons, St Paul obviously saw the place as somewhere most in need of his advice. “Wives should be subject to their husbands as to the lord.” Such attitudes may be viewed as dated but are as likely to be agreed with today as modern ideas were thought to be the norm by the Elizabethans. At the beginning of the play, Act 2 Scene 1, Adriana complains at the restrictions imposed on women in marriage when men do not do not have such impositions. “Why should their liberty than ours be more?” Luciana knows her place and agrees with St Paul. “The beasts, the fishes and the winged fowls are their males’ subjects and at their control. – Man, more divine, the master of all these, are masters to their females and their lords.” Perhaps the two sisters think the way they do because Adriana, the Amazonian has to put up with her master yet Luciana feels she has to think a certain way to obtain a man.

### IDENTITY

In many of Shakespeare’s comedies, the act of the parents, sometimes intentionally, sometimes not, is a driving force for the main characters to go in search of who they are. “Comedy of Errors” sets the form for “Two Gentlemen of Verona”, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and “As You Like It”. When Antipholus of Syracuse sets out to find his brother, he is as much trying to find the other half of himself, as he is a sibling. The fact that both sets of masters and servants share the same names, it is natural that they should suppose that name bestows identity. Both Syracusans think that because they have been recognised by name, the locals must indeed know them. As the confusion grows by Act 3 Scene 2 Dromio is asking, “Am I Dromio? Am I your man? Am I myself?” Antipholus answers, “Thou art Dromio, thou art my man, thou art thyself.” However, later in the scene when Angelo shouts “Master Antipholus,” Antipholus cautiously answers “Ay, that’s my name,” rather than that is I. As names become untrustworthy in Act 3 Scene 1, Dromio of Ephesus turns to his body. “That you beat me at the mart I have your hand to show,” he reassures the wrong master. A scene later, the other Dromio is not so sure when Luce, the maidservant stakes her claim on the basis of “privy marks” on his body, shared by his twin. The other characters in the play have no reason to doubt any discrepancy between appearance and reality. When they need confirmation of identity they rely on material objects such as Angelo’s chain, Dromio’s rope or the prostitute’s ring. Adriana suggests that her identity within her marriage is not so fixed. If Antipholus mistreats her and visits prostitutes, she cannot feel like a wife because he does not treat her, as a husband should: in the similar way that a

king cannot be ruler if he has no subjects to rule. At the end of the play the two Dromios are even having problems identifying themselves. “Methinks you are my glass and not my brother.” They have to “draw cuts” for seniority. This idea of hierarchy by chance probably did not sit well with an Elizabethan society, which needed clear guidelines to an individual’s place. They had very structured class codes about things such as, who could carry a sword, what kind of clothes, what colour, how much, or how expensive any individual should wear. This became necessary, following the Reformation when there was a shift in position between the Church, the Crown, the State and Nobility. Shakespeare questions these needs in the Elizabethan society.

### JEALOUSY

Antipholus of Ephesus is not presented as a pleasant character. In Act 4 Scene 1 he sends his servant off to buy a rope in order to whip his wife for locking him out of the house. “Go thou and buy a rope’s end; that will I bestow among my wife and her confederates for locking me out of my doors by day.” Yet it is he that cavorts with prostitutes. It is he who suspects his wife of being unfaithful.



The courtesan accosts Antipholus S

Adriana knows about her husband’s infidelities. She knows in Act 2 Scene 1 that “He breaks the pale and feeds from home”. Luciana advises her. “Self harming jealousy! Fie, beat it hence.” But Adriana loves her husband. “He is the ground of my defeatures. My decayed fair a sunny look of his would soon repair.” She yearns. “Would that alone a love him would detain so he would keep fair quarter with his bed.” “Since that my beauty cannot please his eye, I’ll weep what’s left away, and weeping die.” Luciana replies again. “How many fond fools serve mad jealousy!” She is not blind to the fact that her husband’s “blood is mingled with the crime of lust.” In Act 2 Scene 2 she knows that if he heard that she had been “licentious” he would “Tear the stained skin off my harlot brow, and from my false hand cut the wedding ring”. She feels defiled by the “adulterate blot”. She has been turned into a prostitute herself “by the contagion” and by “digesting the poison of his flesh”. Yet even after her sister reveals that he made a pass at her,

in Act 4 Scene 3, she gives Dromio the gold to bail out her husband, despite the fact that he is in trouble because of his dealings with a prostitute. Luciana asks, "Who would be jealous, then, of such a one? No evil lost is wailed when it is gone." Adriana replies, "Ah but I think him better than I say, and yet would herein others' eyes were worse. – My heart prays for him, though my tongue do curse."

Even when the prostitute has "acquainted his wife with his fits", Adriana still excuses his behaviour and puts it down to madness, as she does in the final scene when pleading for him not to be hurt. "Hold, hurt him not, for God's sake; he is mad." The Abbess blames his madness on her nagging. "The consequence is, then, thy jealous fits hath scared thy husband from the use of wits." She accepts the blame. "She did betray me to my own reproof." And still she pleads to the Duke to have her husband returned from the abbey.

### TWINS

Shakespeare's fascination with twins probably comes from the fact that he himself fathered twins, Judith, and Hamnet, who died aged eleven, a couple of years after the play was written. Although he echoed his male and female children a few years after his son's death in "Twelfth Night", "Comedy of Errors" uses two sets of male twins, making the mistaking of identities much easier to ingest. The main plot device of both plays centres around the twins separated by an unfortunate ship disaster. Because the main plot in "Comedy of Errors" is built on jokes surrounding the double twins, much of the humour is situational and depends a great deal on physical comedy and relies heavily upon the comic talents of the actors playing the twins. Much of this physical humour is aggressive and coupled with the ludicrousness of the dual twins, can make it ridiculous. It could be said that the play is more of a farce than a comedy. (The word "farce" derives from the French for filler or stuffing.) Plautus' play, "Menaechmi", is filled with farcical situations and slapstick violence. Casting is an obvious nightmare for any director considering "Comedy of Errors". Finding two sets of identical twin actors is practically an impossible feat; therefore other devices must be used to create the suspension of disbelief. Wigs, beards and articles of clothing are an obvious choice. Northern Broadsides extends these methods. The two Dromios have exceptionally high singing voices, so where possible, they will use these, such as making an entrance, singing the same signature tune. The two Antipholi mirror each other's mannerisms. Their father, Egeon, also copies these. If this is done with the actors on stage together, the audience will catch on much earlier. This mirroring can also be adopted by the Dromios in Act 3 Scene 1, when they are either side of the door; the set in the Northern Broadsides' production using a miniature door, making it possible for the audience to see both actors.

## MADNESS

There are many references to madness, its treatment and its cure throughout the play. From the very first mistaken identity, in Act 2 Scene 2, when Antipholus S thinks he is speaking to the same Dromio who has just said he didn't have the money, he asks his real servant, "Wast thou mad that thus so madly thou didst answer me?" After Adriana has cajoled him into dinner, he asks himself in the same scene, "Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell? Sleeping or waking? Mad or well devised?"



Dr Pinch exorcises the madness

Later in Act 4 Scene 4 Dr Pinch is called in to exorcise the madness that has seized Antipholus E and his servant. Pinch pronounces, "Mistress, both man and master is possessed. – They must be bound and laid in some dark room." Even in the final act, Duke Solinus assumes: "You are all mated, or stark mad."

## FAMILY LIFE

In the final act Aemilia, unveils herself as the long lost mother and the play thrusts aside farcical humour to reveal a moving family reunion. For this act to work and the central three acts to have purpose and momentum, the dire solemnity of the opening scene must move the audience. They must feel the sympathy that Solinus feels but they also must believe the Duke when he says, "We may pity, but not pardon thee". The audience has to believe Egeon's life is at stake.



Egeon's story

In many of Shakespeare's plays we find that it is the children who heal the problems of the parents; so it is in this play when Egeon and Aemilia are brought back together Antipholus' money pays his father's fine. The harsh law of Ephesus is undermined by the triumph of youth, defying the authoritative figure of the Duke and allowing life to continue in a changed world. The convention that comedies usually ended in a marriage was to show life continues through procreation, and family as part of that life cycle. Although Comedy of Errors does not have that conventional marriage ending it does have the celebration as joy marks the final scene and family members, separated by misfortune are reunited against all the odds.

### SERVANTS AND MASTERS

At the end of the play after the revelation of the twins and the family has been reunited, the Antipholus brothers never actually meet or greet each other; which is strange, given that Antipholus of Syracuse has been seeking his brother for some fifteen years. There seems to be no reason for this oversight by Shakespeare. It may have merely been that he gives less importance to the master characters than he does the servants. In turn, the reason for this could simply be because the Dromios were played, on the day by bigger name actors such as Will Kemp, very popular with the Elizabethan audiences. Whatever Shakespeare's reasons, and whoever the actors, the groundlings would certainly have enjoyed the servant characters more than the masters. Although the Dromios are of the lower echelons, as with most of Shakespeare's clowns, they are not lower or lacking in intelligence. What they do lack is power. Dromio of Syracuse easily matches the wit of his master in their exchange about baldness in Act 2 Scene 2. Antipholus knows his servant will have the answer and conclusion to all his questions.



Adriana threatens Dromio E

Where neither of the Dromios can compete is they have no power to prevent being beaten, not only by their masters but by their mistress, also. In Act 2 Scene 1, Adriana has no hesitation in telling her servant, whom she perceives as a “prating peasant”, to return to his master, or else. “ Back, slave or I will break thy pate across.” Dromio E is well used to the treatment. “And he will bless that cross with other beating. Between you I shall have a holy head.”

## 6) SUMMARY:

Due to a trade war between Ephesus and Syracuse, Duke Solinus explains to Egeon that because he has entered the country, the law is that he must either pay a thousand mark fine or die. Egeon explains that he was a merchant from Syracuse who once travelled to Epidamnum on business. Whilst there, his wife Aemilia gave birth to identical twin boys in the same hour that a servant woman also gave birth to identical twin boys. Egeon bought the servant’s sons to attend on his own. When their ship ran into a storm on the way home, Aemilia tied one son to the mast along with one of the servant twins. Egeon did the same with the other two boys but the family were separated when the ship ran aground on rocks. Eighteen years later the son that had stayed with Egeon on Syracuse, accompanied by his servant, left home to search for his brother and mother. For the five years prior to when the play starts, Egeon has been scouring throughout Greece looking for his lost family until he has now reached the point where he is too unhappy to live and accepts the death sentence given to him by the Duke. But Solinus is moved by his story and gives him until sunset to raise the 1000 marks fine.

For some reason not explained by Shakespeare, both sets of twins have been given the same names; the masters are both called Antipholus and the servants Dromio. The Syracusian son, looking for his mother and brother, by coincidence arrives in Ephesus and is told by a merchant not to mention where he is from because of the harsh law, for which already that day someone has been sentenced to death. The merchant returns some money to Antipholus S that he has been holding for him. Antipholus S gives the money to his servant, Dromio S, and tells him to take the money back to their inn. As Antipholus S sits pondering his situation the other Dromio from Ephesus comes along and tells him his wife awaits him to come home for his lunch. Antipholus S is confused and asks the Dromio (who he thinks is his servant) what he’s done with his money, the 1000 marks. The local Dromio doesn’t know what his master is talking about and runs off to avoid a beating. Antipholus S thinks this place is full of trickery and goes back to his inn to check on his money.

Adriana, Antipholus of Ephesus’ wife, chats with her sister Luciana, while she awaits her husband. Dromio E comes home and says his master has gone mad. Adriana believes her husband is having an affair and she sends Dromio E back to get him. Meanwhile the other Dromio has returned to his real master



Antipholus S who goes mad with him for pretending he didn't have the money and for inventing stories about wives and lunches etc. Adriana and Luciana arrive to chastise them and tell them to get home. Antipholus S thinks he's gone daft or is dreaming or something and decides to go along with the illusion. Adriana tells Dromio S to guard the gate while she takes her husband in to dinner.

The local Antipholus arrives home with some friends, Angelo, a goldsmith who is making a chain for Adriana and Balthasar, yet another merchant. Antipholus E is surprised to find his door locked and the voice of a porter refusing him entry. When the porter, Dromio S announces himself as Dromio the other Dromio is naturally confused. Antipholus S is about to break his door down so Balthasar suggests they lunch in the pub. Antipholus E, annoyed at his wife, tells Angelo to bring the gold chain to the pub because he has decided to give it to the local prostitute.

Antipholus S has meanwhile fallen in love with Luciana. She tells him he should at least pretend to love her sister. Dromio S is being pursued by the fat kitchen wench. His master suggests they should get out of the place and sends him to find out when the next ship is leaving. Antipholus S then bumps into Angelo who gives him the gold chain. Antipholus S is delighted with his present but just wishes to escape Ephesus so there is more confusion when yet another merchant tells Angelo he desperately needs some money that is owed to him. Angelo tells the merchant he will repay him when he receives the money for the chain. Antipholus E, having instructed his servant to buy a rope in order to beat his wife, arrives to meet Angelo and the merchant. When Angelo asks for the money for the chain, Antipholus E swears he never received it and then is arrested for theft. On his way to gaol he bumps into Dromio S, who tells him there is a ship leaving that night. Dromio knows nothing about any rope. Antipholus E sends his servant home to get some bail money to get him out of gaol.

Adriana discovers that her husband has been flirting with her sister and though even more dismayed when Dromio S comes to collect the bail money, she allows the servant to leave with a purse of gold. Dromio S meets his real master and presents him with the gold. Antipholus S is totally confused, especially when the local prostitute asks him for his chain, which she insists he promised her in exchange for a ring. The Syracusians flee. The prostitute intends to have Antipholus arrested for theft and tell his wife what he's been up to.

When Antipholus E asks his real servant for the bail money, Dromio E rightly tells him the money he gave him has been spent on the rope. Adriana, Luciana and the prostitute all arrive. Adriana has brought Pinch, the schoolmaster to perform an exorcism to rid her husband of the madness he is obviously possessed by. Antipholus E grows wild and he and his servant are restrained at home for their own good. When the Syracusians appear, brandishing swords everyone assumes that the local lunatics have escaped. They all run off. Angelo and the

merchant turn up and see that Antipholus S is wearing the gold chain. They confront him for lying about it. When Adriana returns, the Syracusians take refuge in a priory. Adriana insists her husband should come out but the abbess grants them sanctuary and refuses to hand him over.

It is now nearing sunset and time for the execution of Egeon. Duke Solinus arrives for the event. Adriana appeals to the duke for justice against the abbess. Antipholus E and his Dromio turn up. The duke thinks they must all be mad and calls for the abbess. Egeon sees the local Antipholus and Dromio and is broken hearted that they don't recognise him. The abbess emerges with the Syracusians and all are amazed. She reveals herself as Egeon's lost wife and explains that her son and the servant were taken to Corinth by fishermen and she ended up in Ephesus and became a nun. All the confusions are sorted, Egeon's ransom is paid and all are reunited with the twin servants becoming acquainted.



Antipholus and Dromio E sing Dr Pinch's beard

During the workshop the summary will be split up into scenes on "Scene Cards". The participants will be will randomly choose a card and be cast into the required groups to perform the scene. " This may be done in any way the group chooses. The scenes will be performed chronologically with the workshop leader filling in the gaps to complete the play. This may be continued in the classroom and with more time the whole play can be performed.

## SCENE CARDS

### 1) ACT 1 SCENE 1:

Characters: Egeon, Duke Solinus, jailer and attendants.

Egeon tells his story after the Duke explains why he must die.

### 2) ACT 1 SCENE 2:

Characters: Antipholus S, Dromio S, First Merchant, Dromio E.

The merchant warns Antipholus about the law. Antipholus sends Dromio S off with the money then Dromio E turns up to urge his master home to dinner.

### 3) ACT 2 SCENE 1:

Characters: Adriana, Luciana, Dromio E.

Adriana and Luciana discuss how women should behave with their men. Dromio arrives to say his master won't come home.

### 4) ACT 2 SCENE 2:

Characters: Antipholus S, Dromio S, Adriana, Luciana.

Antipholus scolds Dromio for jesting with him. Adriana arrives with her sister to tell the wrong husband to come home to dinner.

### 5) ACT 3 SCENE 1:

Characters: Antipholus E, Dromio E, Angelo the goldsmith, Balthasar the merchant, Dromio S, Luce the kitchen maid, Adriana.

Antipholus E, accompanied by his servant, Dromio, invites Angelo and Balthasar home to dinner. When they get there, they cannot gain entrance, as Dromio S is unseen behind the gate, guarding it. Luce arrives to lay claim on the wrong Dromio then Adriana arrives to add to the confusion. Antipholus E, thinking his wife has a lover, threatens to break down the door. Balthasar suggests they all go off to the pub so Antipholus E agrees, threatening to give a chain promised to his wife, to the local prostitute instead.

## 6) ACT 3 SCENE 2:

Characters: Luciana, Antipholus S, Dromio S.

Antipholus S tries to chat up Luciana. Dromio S comes to tell his master that he is being chased by the fat kitchen maid then Angelo arrives to give the chain to the wrong Antipholus.

## 7) ACT 4 SCENE 1:

Characters: Second Merchant, Angelo, an officer, Antipholus E, Dromio E, Dromio S.

The merchant threatens Angelo with the officer if he does not pay him some money owed to him. Angelo asks Antipholus E to pay for the chain that he gave to Antipholus S. Antipholus E sends Dromio E off to find a rope to beat his wife with. Dromio S arrives in the confusion over the chain to tell his master he has found a ship to get them out of the mad place. Antipholus E sends the wrong Dromio home for gold to bail him out of gaol.

## 8) ACT 4 SCENE 2:

Characters: Adriana, Luciana, Dromio S.

Luciana tells Adriana that her husband has been chatting her up when Dromio S turns up to say his master needs bail money.

## 9) ACT 4 SCENE 3:

Characters: Antipholus S, Dromio S, a courtesan.

Dromio S tries to explain the gold for the bail money to the wrong master, Antipholus S, when the local prostitute arrives to ask for the chain, which Antipholus E promised her in exchange for favours and a ring that she gave to him.

## 10) ACT 4 SCENE 4:

Characters: Antipholus E, Dromio E, a jailer and officers, Adriana, Luciana, a courtesan, Schoolmaster Pinch. Antipholus S, Dromio S.

Dromio E does not have the required bail money for Antipholus E; Adriana, accompanied by her sister and the prostitute bring Pinch, the schoolmaster to perform an exorcism on the mad pair. After Pinch has taken them away, the other twins arrive. Everyone runs off, thinking the madmen have escaped.

## 11) ACT 5 SCENE 1:

Characters: Second Merchant, Angelo, Antipholus S, Dromio S, Adriana, Luciana, a courtesan, Aemilia the Lady Abbess, Duke Solinus, Egeon, an executioner and officers, a messenger, Antipholus E, Dromio E.

Angelo and the merchant see Antipholus S with the chain that Antipholus E denied having. Adriana, Luciana, and the prostitute arrive to see Antipholus and Dromio S take refuge in the priory. The Abbess, Aemilia, grants them sanctuary. When the Duke arrives for the execution of Egeon, Adriana appeals for him to intervene. Antipholus E and his servant arrive; Aemilia reveals herself as their long lost mother; Egeon's life is saved and the family are reunited.

