

Synopsis *Love's Labour's Lost*

Summer 1939. A small village in Sussex; on a bend in a river.

Ferdinand, Berowne, Dumaine and Longaville are all writers and members of the Bloomsbury Group, and have sought a quiet rural retreat. Here, from the hurly-burly of pre-war London, they swear an oath to live and study for three years, foregoing all forms of pleasure, including having access to all women. The edict also extends to the local village.

Berowne points out that such strict observance will never last, especially as three more members of the Bloomsbury Group are due to visit, including the Princess of France who has to diary some business for her father, the King of France.

However, the edict has already been broken by Costard, the owner of the village tea-shop, who has been seen making love to her assistant Jaquenetta and has been sent to Ferdinand for punishment by the Spanish count Don Adriano de Armado.

Armado is a refugee from the Spanish Civil War, a former aristocrat with aspirations to be a poet. He confesses to Moth (his servant), that he too is secretly in love with Jaquenetta.

The Princess and her three friends, Rosaline, Katherine and Maria, arrive to be told that, due to the edict, they cannot share lodgings with the men. Instantly the four men are infatuated with the four women, a fact that Boyet, the Princess's secretary, informs the women of.

Armado frees Costard on condition that she delivers a letter to Jaquenetta. Berowne also gives Costard a letter for Rosaline. Confused, Costard gives Armado's letter to the Princess by mistake.

Meanwhile, the local vicar, Nathaniel, and school teacher, Holofernes, are approached by Jaquenetta to read the letter she has received. Holofernes, deducing it is Berowne's letter to Rosaline, tells Jaquenetta to take it to Ferdinand.

Berowne, lamenting his love for Rosaline, overhears Ferdinand writing a love letter to the Princess. One by one the men overhear each other declare their secret love and are found out. Defeated in the face of love, the four friends decide to break their oaths and win over the women by wooing them disguised as Russians!

Hearing this, the women switch jewellery and wear masks to trick the men to teach them a lesson. Eventually the trickery is revealed, and the women tease the men.

The townsfolk arrange a pageant featuring the '*Nine Worthies*' – great historical heroes. However, just as the celebrations get going, news comes that the Princess's father has died, and the war, which they have all tried so hard to ignore, looks certain to break out.