

WHAT A COINCIDENCE!



AIM: To investigate the chain of coincidences that are revealed as *The Comedy of Errors* unfolds.

The Comedy of Errors includes a number of coincidences. For example, both Antipholus brothers (along with their servants) are wearing the same clothes on the day they meet in Ephesus.

List the other coincidences in the text.

Discuss

1. How do the coincidences in the text impact on the believability of *The Comedy of Errors*?
2. How would you, as a performer or director, choose to deal with the coincidences if you were involved in a production of this play?
3. Does the series of coincidences influence your enjoyment of the play?
4. How crucial to the plot are each of the coincidences in the text?
5. Would a similar chain of coincidences be an effective theatrical device in tragedy?

Watch the set-up for the movie *Sliding Doors*, 1998.

Directed by Peter Howitt, with Gwyneth Paltrow, John Hannah, John Lynch.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=QsQuNu4NBmQ

Discuss

1. What are the similarities in style and content between *The Comedy of Errors* and *Sliding Doors*?
2. Why do you think that audiences enjoy watching stories that revolve around the varying consequences of one moment?
3. How do the notions of coincidence and consequence influence your own decision-making?
4. What are the correlations between coincidences and a belief in fate or predetermined destiny?
5. Do you agree with the statement that everything happens for a reason? Why or why not?

“ **DROMIO OF SYRACUSE**

Thither I must,
although against my will,
For servants must
their masters' minds fulfil.

Act Four, Scene One
The Comedy of Errors

”





Write or devise a short piece based on a recent coincidence in your life.



Include two alternative endings; one for the way the situation played out after the coincidence, and one based on a potential result had the coincidence not occurred.



Decide whether you would have ended up in the same position, regardless of the path you followed, or whether that one coincidental moment has had an ongoing impact on your life.



Make a mobile phone film, a photo essay, a storyboard, a cartoon or another visual representation of an instance of your life that was a comedy of errors.



The Comedy of Errors relies on the characters being identical twins.

Some might say having an identical twin is a benefit, others would argue it's a hindrance.



Imagine you have an identical twin.

Write or devise a short piece that demonstrates how this would help or hinder your typical day.



Emilia spends 20 years in Ephesus without ever revealing herself to her son, let alone telling him about the missing half of his family.



Discuss

1. Do you think this is a flaw in the play?
2. What reasons could there be for Emilia's behaviour?
3. If you were playing (or directing) Emilia, what could you do to ensure that an audience believes Emilia's actions?



Identify the character in the play with whom you can best relate.

List your reasons for your choice.



Write a series of diary entries, using the journey of your chosen character throughout the play as your starting point.