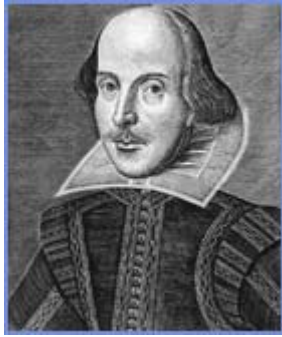


A Midsummer's Night Dream

By: William Shakespeare



Author: William Shakespeare

- Born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England on April 21, 1564
- Attended grammar school. No further formal education
- Married Anne Hathaway in 1590
- They had three children.
- 1590 went to London to work as an actor and playwright
- He was a public and critical success and became the most popular playwright in England.
- Part owner of the Globe Theater.
- His career covered the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I.
- He was a favorite of the both Monarchs.
- King James granted Shakespeare's company the title of "King's men."
- He wrote 27 plays and 154 sonnets
Example of the plays: Romeo & Juliet, Othello, Tempest, A Midsummer's Night Dream, and King Lear
- William Shakespeare retired to Stratford-upon-Avon and died in 1616 at the age of 52.

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William Shakespeare's romantic comedy about two pairs of lovers who get tangled up in a supernatural squabble.

The comedy was written around 1594-1596. The play demonstrates the extent of his learning and his imagination. He draws from Greek Mythology, the English country fairy lore and the theatrical practices of the Renaissance theatre conventions, such as men playing the women's roles. Also, the story is completely created from Shakespeare's imagination.

Many scholars believe it was suggested by "The Knight's Tale" from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. It portrays the adventures of four young Athenian lovers and a group of amateur actors, their interactions with the Duke of Athens, Theseus, the Queen of the Amazons, Hippolyta, and with the fairies who inhabit a moonlit forest. The play is one of Shakespeare's most popular works for the stage and is widely performed across the world.

List of Characters

The Supernatural Characters:

Oberon – King of the Fairies

Titania – Queen of the Fairies

Puck – a.k.a. Robin Goodfellow, jester and servant of Oberon

Titania's fairy servants: **First Fairy**, **Peaseblossom** (fairy), **Cobweb** (fairy), **Moth** (fairy) and **Mustardseed** (fairy)

The Athenians:

Theseus – Duke of Athens, good friend of Egeus

Hippolyta- Queen of the Amazons and betrothed of Theseus

Egeus- father of Hermia, wants to force Hermia to marry Demetrius

Lysander – beloved of Hermia

Hermia - beloved of Lysander, daughter of Egeus

Helena - in love with Demetrius

Demetrius - in love with Hermia

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Philstrate – master of the revels for Theseus

The Acting Troupe of craft men (The Mechanicals)

Peter Quince – carpenter, leads the troupe

Nick Bottom – weaver, plays Pyramus, Puck puts a donkey head on him

Francis Flute – bellows-maker who plays Thisbe

Robin Straveling – tailor who plays Moonshine

Tom Snout – the tinker who plays the wall

Snug – the joiner who plays the lion

Synopsis

THESEUS, DUKE OF ATHENS, is preparing for his marriage to Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons, with a four-day festival of pomp and entertainment. He commissions his Master of the Revels, Philostrate, to find suitable amusements for the occasion. Egeus, an Athenian nobleman, marches into Theseus's court with his daughter, Hermia, and two young men, Demetrius and Lysander. Egeus wishes Hermia to marry Demetrius (who loves Hermia), but Hermia is in love with Lysander and refuses to comply. Egeus asks for the full penalty of law to fall on Hermia's head if she flouts her father's will. Theseus gives Hermia until his wedding to consider her options, warning her that disobeying her father's wishes could result in her being sent to a convent or even executed. Nonetheless, Hermia and Lysander plan to escape Athens the following night and marry in the house of Lysander's aunt, some seven leagues

distant from the city. They make their intentions known to Hermia's friend Helena, who was once engaged to Demetrius and still loves him even though he jilted her after meeting Hermia. Hoping to regain his love, Helena tells Demetrius of the elopement that Hermia and Lysander have planned. At the appointed time, Demetrius stalks into the woods after his intended bride and her lover; Helena follows behind him.

In these same woods are two very different groups of characters. The first is a band of fairies, including Oberon, the fairy king, and Titania, his queen, who has recently returned from India to bless the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta. The second is a band of Athenian craftsmen rehearsing a play that they hope to perform for the duke and his bride. Oberon and Titania are at odds over a young Indian prince given to Titania by the prince's mother; the boy is so beautiful that Oberon wishes to make him a knight, but Titania refuses. Seeking revenge, Oberon sends his merry servant, Puck, to acquire a magical flower, the juice of which can be spread over a sleeping person's eyelids to make that person fall in love with the first thing he or she sees upon waking. Puck obtains the flower, and Oberon tells him of his plan to spread its juice on the sleeping Titania's eyelids. Having seen Demetrius act cruelly toward Helena, he orders Puck to spread some of the juice on the eyelids of the young Athenian man. Puck encounters Lysander and Hermia; thinking that

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Lysander is the Athenian of whom Oberon spoke, Puck afflicts him with the love potion. Lysander happens to see Helena upon awaking and falls deeply in love with her, abandoning Hermia. As the night progresses and Puck attempts to undo his mistake, both Lysander and Demetrius end up in love with Helena, who believes that they are mocking her. Hermia becomes so jealous that she tries to challenge Helena to a fight. Demetrius and Lysander nearly do fight over Helena's love, but Puck confuses them by mimicking their voices, leading them apart until they are lost separately in the forest.

When Titania wakes, the first creature she sees is Bottom, the most ridiculous of the Athenian craftsmen, whose head Puck has mockingly transformed into that of an ass. Titania passes a ludicrous interlude doting on the ass-headed weaver. Eventually, Oberon obtains the Indian boy, Puck spreads the love potion on Lysander's eyelids, and by morning all is well. Theseus and Hippolyta discover the sleeping lovers in the forest and take them back to Athens to be married—Demetrius now loves Helena, and Lysander now loves Hermia. After the group wedding, the lovers watch Bottom and his fellow craftsmen perform their play, a fumbling, hilarious version of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. When the play is completed, the lovers go to bed; the fairies briefly emerge to bless the sleeping couples with a protective charm and then disappear. Only Puck remains, to ask the audience for its forgiveness and approval

and to urge it to remember the play as though it had all been a dream.

SparkNotes Editors. "SparkNote on A Midsummer Night's Dream." SparkNotes.com. SparkNotes LLC. 2002. Web. 13 Jan. 2010. <http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/msnd/summary.html>

Several Themes for the student to explore:

The difficulties of Love

Magic

The nature of dreams

Relationship between fantasy and reality

Relationship between environment and experience

The Student needs to investigate

1. Cause and effect relationships and their impact on the plot.
2. Point of view the novel, of the play.
3. The tone, attitude
4. The mood - - the effect created by words choices, descriptions, settings, etc.

The Student needs to explain

1. Exposition
2. Rising action
3. Climax/Crisis
4. Falling Action
5. Denouncement/resolution

Topics for Discussion

1. Discuss the role of the play-within-a-play in Act V. Does it have any relevance to the main story.
2. Trace the gothic elements found in Dracula. Give an example of each element. What effect does the

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- craftsmen's production have on the tone of *A Midsummer's Night Dream*?
3. Explain how Theseus and Hippolyta represent order and stability.
 4. Oberon's love potion represents the power and instability of love. How is this shown in the various characters through out the play?
 5. Discuss the techniques, which Shakespeare uses to give a sense of plausibility to the play.
 6. Discuss the contrasts that are present in the play, such as: beautiful and ugly, short and tall, light or dark colorings, clumsy and graceful, ethereal and earthy.
 7. How does Shakespeare use the contrasting tones and characters in the play?

ESSAY QUESTION

1. Nick Bottom steals the show in most performances; Puck is usually considered the most important character in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*. Compare Puck to Bottom. Why might Puck be considered the protagonist? In what way does Puck's spirit dominate the mood of the play? In what ways does the comedy surrounding Puck differ from that surrounding Bottom?
2. Nick Bottom is full of advice and self-confidence but makes silly mistakes and misuses language. What dimension does this add to the play over all?
3. Compare and contrast the Athenian lovers with the craftsmen. How are the two groups different and/or the same?

4. Dreams are important theme. They are linked to the bizarre, magical mishaps in the forest. Why do the characters attempt to explain the bizarre events that they were involved with by dreaming?

VOCABULARY

The student is to look up each word's definition.

Nuptial
Vexation
Dowager
League
Bill of properties
Bellows-mender
Tinker
Joiner
Adieu
Revels
Changeling
Perchance
Cupid
Leviathan
Prologue
Gambol
Mimic
Athenian
Vixen
Officious
Knaveries
Harbinger
Spirits
Fairies
Hecate
Ditty
Amends
Gait
Bride-bed
Troupe
Pyramus and Thisbe

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