



William Shakespeare's

A MidSUMMER Night's Dream

"what fools these mortals be!"

A study guide by Dr. Lauren Chochinov

SIR 

IN THE SCHOOL

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Biography

William Shakespeare was born in April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. While today he is known as one of the world's greatest playwrights and poets, his personal life remains mostly a mystery. At eighteen he married Anne Hathaway, who was 26 at the time, and together they had three children, Susanna (1583), and twins, Hamnet and Judith (1585). Hamnet died in 1596.

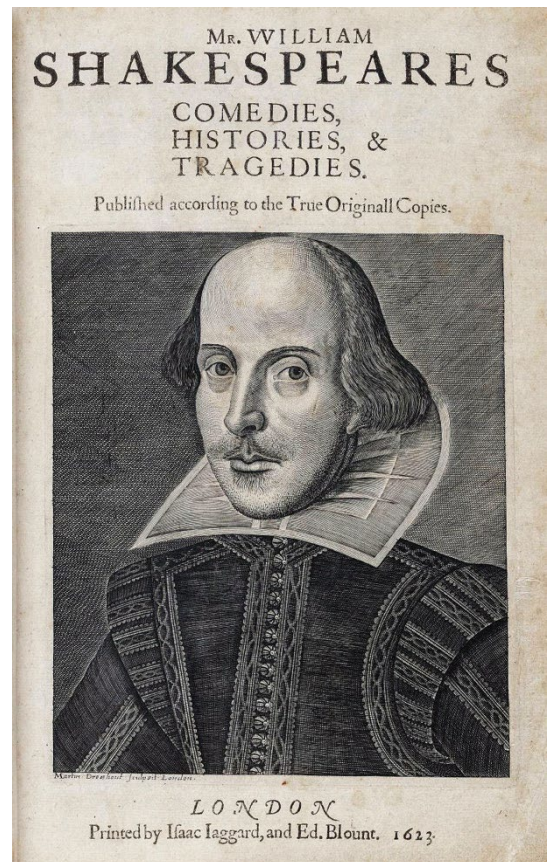
By 1592, Shakespeare was an established playwright and actor in London. During Shakespeare's lifetime, actors were members of acting companies – groups of all-male actors who performed together and shared profits. Shakespeare joined the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1594 and wrote the majority of his plays exclusively for them. The group's name changed to the King's Men in 1603 after the death of Queen Elizabeth I and the coronation of King James I. In 1613, Shakespeare retired to Stratford-upon-Avon and died three years later on April 23, 1616.

In 1623, a group of Shakespeare's friends published the first volume of his collected works. Known as the *First Folio*, the book contained thirty-six plays, divided into three categories: histories, comedies, and tragedies. A prolific poet, Shakespeare also composed 154 sonnets, as well as other poems.

This concise biography does little to capture the singular brilliance of William Shakespeare. His plays have been performed, adapted, banned, celebrated, and reviled for centuries. In the preface to the First Folio, the book's editors John Heminge and Henry Condell write of their late friend:

Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he uttered with that easinesse, that wee have scarce received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province, who onely gather his works, and give them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And there we hope, to your divers capacities, you will finde enough, both to draw, and hold you: for his wit can no more lie hid, then it could be lost. Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe.¹

Read him, therefore, and again and again. A most welcome assignment!



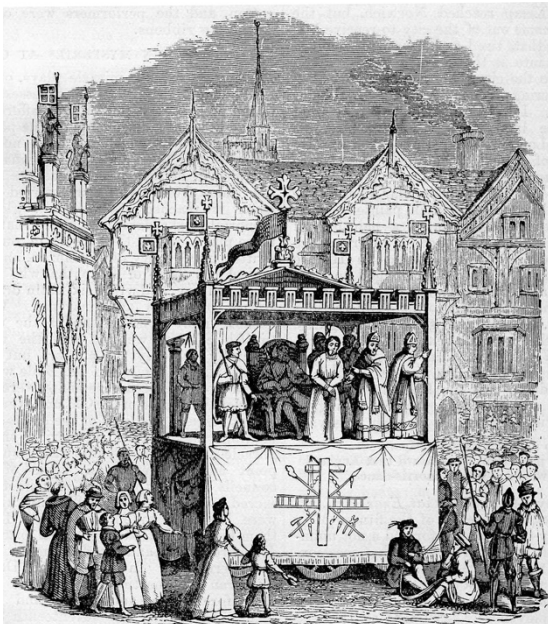
¹ From: <https://www.shakespeare-online.com/biography/firstfolio.html>

Elizabethan Theatre

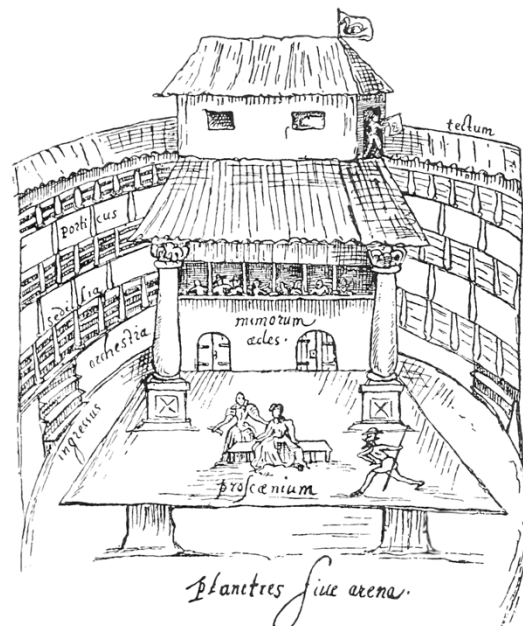
Today, going to the theatre likely evokes images of enclosed buildings where the audience sits at a distance from the stage while professional actors perform. The idea of the theatre as a purpose-built building comes from the Early Modern period. During the Middle Ages, theatre was performed by amateur actors who often used pageant wagons – a stage on wheels – to mount productions of religious plays. These cycle plays were traditionally sponsored by guilds (early unions) and focused almost entirely on stories from the bible or morality tales.

In 1485, Henry Tudor defeated the English king, Richard III, marking an end to the medieval period and the beginning of the Early Modern period also known as the English renaissance. Plays were more secular in theme due to shifting religious beliefs during the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547), and Catholic focus of medieval theatre became undesirable. Members of the aristocracy began sponsoring professional acting troupes who would perform in manor homes and great halls. The first permanent theatre – an enclosed building purposely built for performance – was constructed in 1576 (creatively called *The Theatre*). Queen Elizabeth I was a great patron of the arts and during her reign (1558-1603), theatre flourished. Playwrights like Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe produced their most famous works thanks to the financial backing of the aristocracy.

Plays were performed during the day to take advantage of the light. Sets were minimal and most of the audience stood during each production, crowding around the stage and often loudly heckling the actors. Due to protests from Puritans – staunch Protestants – theatres could not be built within the London city limits. This is why the most famous theatres of the Elizabethan age were constructed on the south bank of the Thames River. The Globe theatre, where Shakespeare's troupe performed his plays, was built in 1599.



Medieval pageant wagon



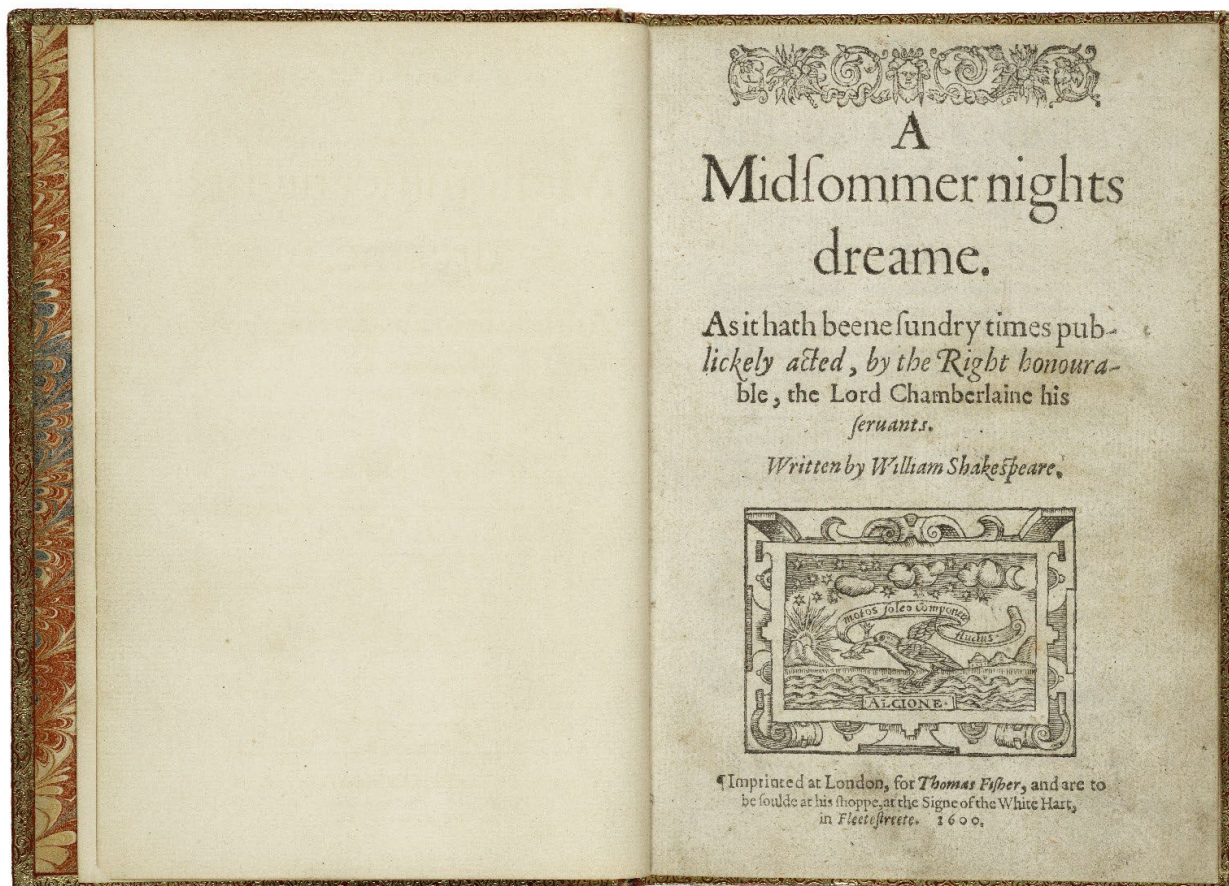
The Swan Theatre (1596)

Performance History

A Midsummer Night's Dream was likely written in 1595 or 1596. While its first public performance date is unknown, it may have been performed in 1596 at a wedding reception for two members of the aristocracy. It was performed for the first time at court in 1604 at Hampton Court Palace for the newly crowned King James I.

A Midsummer Night's Dream has been adapted many times since its Early Modern inception. Selections from the play were performed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though these heavily edited versions focused on music and dance and discarded most of Shakespeare's script. The 1755 opera *The Fairies* by David Garrick was especially popular and it was not until the nineteenth century that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was once more performed in its entirety, though music and spectacle remained an important aspect of Victorian productions. The music of German composer Felix Mendelssohn was especially popular and used in the play well into the twentieth century.

Modern adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* have shifted from the traditional Victorian versions that relied heavily on ballet sequences and Mendelssohn's compositions. Today, the play offers endless opportunities for experimentation with setting and costume. There are numerous examples provided in the resources section of modern productions.



Plot Summary²

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a play of entrances and exits. Set in ancient Greece, the play begins with King Theseus and his soon-to-be-bride, Hippolyta, trying to settle a dispute between Lysander who is in love with Hermia and Demetrius, who is Hermia's betrothed. Lysander and Hermia run away to the forest on the outskirts of Athens where they intend to be married in secret, but Demetrius follows them with the help of Helena, a noblewoman who loves Demetrius though he does not reciprocate her feelings. At the same time, an acting troupe made up of working-class labourers decide to prepare a play for Theseus's wedding and go off to rehearse in the forest.

The forest is the realm of fairies. Oberon, the fairy King, is jealous of his wife Titania's new servant. He arranges for Robin Goodfellow, a mischievous fairy, to produce a love potion that he will use on Titania to distract her. Upon overhearing the quarreling lovers, however, Oberon decides to use the love potion on Demetrius too so that he will fall in love with Helena. Robin uses the potion on Lysander, assuming he is Demetrius, and when Lysander awakens and sees Helena, he immediately falls in love with her.



Meanwhile, Robin enchants one of the actors, Nick Bottom, replacing his human head with a donkey's head. When Titania wakes up, the first person she sees is the transformed Bottom and she instantly declares her love for him thanks to Robin's love potion. As the four youths bicker in confusion – the men declaring their undying devotion to Helena, Helena and Hermia arguing over what has occurred - Oberon decides that with the day soon approaching, it is time to set everything right. He and Robin remove the spell from Titania and Lysander, but leave Demetrius enchanted. The next morning, Theseus and Hippolyta arrive in the forest and find all four young Athenians asleep. When they wake up, Lysander and Hermia confess their secret marriage plans and Demetrius insists that he is in love with Helena. The two couples join Theseus who declares that they will be wed during his own marriage ceremony. After the weddings, the mechanicals perform a terrible rendition of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, and everyone leaves the wedding festivities in good humour. Oberon and Titania arrive once everyone has left for bed and bless the three new unions. The play ends with Robin addressing the audience, begging forgiveness from all who may have been offended and asking that they imagine the play was but a passing dream.

² All quotations are from: <https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/a-midsummer-nights-dream/>

Characters

The Royal Court

Theseus: Famed hero of Greek mythology, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus is the Duke of Athens and soon to be married to Hippolyta.

Hippolyta: The queen of the Amazons who is betrothed to Theseus.

Lysander: An aristocratic Athenian youth in love with Hermia and the rival of Demetrius.

Demetrius: Another youth of Athens who is betrothed to Hermia and rejects the advances of Helena.

Hermia: A young Athenian woman who is in love with Lysander but has been promised to Demetrius.

Helena: Another young Athenian woman who is in love with Demetrius though he does not share her feelings.

Egeus: The father of Demetrius who threatens Lysander should he stand in the way of his son's engagement to Hermia.

Philostrate: A servant in Theseus's court who is in charge of organizing entertainment for the royal wedding.

The Mechanicals

Nick Bottom: A weaver who is transformed by Robin into a man with a donkey's head.

Peter Quince: A carpenter.

Francis Flute: A bellows-mender.

Tom Snout: A tinker.

Snug: A joiner.

Robin Starvelling: A tailor.

The Fairy Court

Oberon: King of the Fairies who is married to Titania.

Titania: Queen of the Fairies and Oberon's wife.

Robin Goodfellow (Puck): A mischievous spirit who works for Oberon and assists him in performing magical enchantments.

Context

Renaissance Classicism: Throughout Shakespeare's lifetime, the study of classical mythology became so popular that it was part of the school curriculum. In the Middle Ages, people were more interested in stories from the bible, but during the Renaissance, tales from ancient Greece and ancient Rome were reconsidered and inspired many artists and writers. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is set in ancient Athens and many of its characters are plucked from Greek and Roman myth.

Athens: Today, Athens is the capital of Greece, but in antiquity, Athens was one of the most powerful and influential city-states in the country. It was associated with democracy and is sometimes called "the cradle of Western Civilization." *A Midsummer Night's Dream* references "Athenian laws" and Athenian citizens. The juxtaposition of Athens with the wilderness is a clear division between urban civilization (a city) and fairyland (the wilderness).

Theseus: One of the great heroes of ancient Greece. Theseus is most famous for killing the Minotaur, a fearsome creature housed in the centre of a labyrinth. Theseus was often associated with reason and justice.

Hippolyta: Queen of the Amazons. The Amazons were a mythical tribe of women warriors. Depending on the version of the myth, Theseus either abducted Hippolyta and brought her to Athens or she fell in love with him and willingly joined him in marriage. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus says that "he wooed [her] with [his] sword" (1.1.17), which indicates that in Shakespeare's version, Theseus conquered the Amazons and took Hippolyta back to Athens with him. This undercurrent of violence is notable and encourages a reconsideration of what the play says about love and marriage. If the name Hippolyta rings a bell, she is also Wonder Woman's mother in the DC comic books.

Robin Goodfellow (Puck): A mischievous spirit from English folklore, the figure of Robin Goodfellow (or Puck) was popular in Elizabethan theatre. Puck may also be connected to Pan, a Greek God who was half man, half faun. Pan was the god of many things but is often associated with the wild.

Cupid: Also known as Eros in Greek Mythology, Cupid is depicted as a small, winged cherub wearing a blindfold. He shoots arrows at unsuspecting mortals that cause them to instantly fall in love. Cupid is a metaphor for the complexities of love: he is blind, but dangerous, and a shot from his arrows creates instant love, often against the victim's knowledge or will. It is no coincidence that Oberon's potion is applied to the eyelids.

Hercules: Like Theseus, Hercules was one of the most famous heroes in Greek mythology. A demigod, Hercules is famous for his feats of strength including his Twelve Labours.

Cadmus: According to Greek mythology, Cadmus founded the city of Thebes.

Sparta: A powerful city-state in ancient Greece known for its military strength and warrior culture.

Pyramus and Thisbe: Pyramus and Thisbe are two characters from the eighth-century poem *The Metamorphosis* by Ovid, a Roman poet. *The Metamorphosis* was very popular in Renaissance England and inspired many poets and playwrights to adapt its stories. Pyramus and Thisbe were two young lovers who came from rival families. After Pyramus mistakenly believes that Thisbe is dead, he kills himself with his own sword. When Thisbe discovers her lover's death, she kills herself too. If this sounds familiar, it's because Pyramus and Thisbe were the inspiration for Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Fairies/The Otherworld: Unlike Disney's Tinkerbell, fairies were not considered tiny, winged beings until the nineteenth century. They appear in myth and folklore as mysterious figures who live in the Otherworld, a place that usually looks like a forest with no clear boundaries or borders. Heroes may wander into the Otherworld without knowing that they have stepped into a different realm and find themselves accosted by fairies – who often appear to be human but have magical or supernatural abilities. Fairies exist outside the laws of humankind and were believed to cause mischief through magical interventions. Forests appear frequently in fairy stories as spaces of mystery and transition.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare adapts this common trope, making the forest outside of Athens a liminal space where characters find themselves at the mercy of fairy enchantments. The laws of Athens do not apply in the forest, which is why Lysander and Hermia initially choose to go. The laws of Athens also do not apply to Oberon and his court. He functions independently, despite the rule of Theseus who is oblivious to Oberon's presence or power. The legacy of these myths can be found in fairy tales, where characters like Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood, and Hansel and Gretel wander into the forest and face danger or important moral lessons. As fairy tales replaced older folktales, Fairies evolved into witches and wolves, though the association between the forest and the supernatural survives.

Poetic Form

Shakespeare famously wrote in blank verse: unrhymed iambic pentameter.

While he also writes in rhyming couplets, iambic pentameter is an important feature of his writing. It gives the dialogue rhythm and differentiates between who is speaking. Upper class characters speak in blank verse or rhyming couplets. The Mechanicals, working-class men, speak in prose, lines without meter or rhythm.

Iamb: two-syllable pattern.

Examples:

“Red rose” = one iamb

“Garden” = one iamb

Iambic pentameter refers to a line that contains ten syllables.

Examples:

“I love thee not; therefore pursue me not.”

I love / thee not / therefore / pursue / me not.

“Some true-love turned, and not a false turned true.”

Some true / love turned / and not / a false / turned true.

Resources:

1. Overview of Shakespeare’s poetic forms by the Utah Shakespeare Festival:
<https://www.bard.org/study-guides/shakespeares-language/>
2. Modern songs re-written as Shakespearean sonnets: <https://popsonnet.tumblr.com/>

Quotations

“The course of true love never did run smooth” – Lysander (1.1.136)

- As Lysander and Hermia fret about their circumstances, Lysander explains that complications are common and even expected when it comes to love stories.

“Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.” – Helena (1.1.240-241)

- Cupid is often depicted in art as a winged, blindfolded cherub holding a bow and arrow. Here Helena angrily bemoans the nature of Love claiming that Love often acts irrationally or, quite literally, as if it is blind. Helena personifies Love, seeing it as not just an emotion, but an entity capable of making choices and acting of its own volition.

“A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his box
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
But I might see young Cupid’s fiery shaft
Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat’ry moon,
And the imperial vot’ress passed on
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.” – Oberon (2.1.163-170)

- Oberon’s reference to “vestal” likely refers to Queen Elizabeth I who was known as “the virgin queen” for her refusal to marry and her commitment to chastity (whether Elizabeth truly was a virgin is up for debate, but she encouraged and maintained this persona throughout her life). Vestal virgins were virgin priestesses in ancient Rome who served in the temple of the goddess Vesta. Oberon describes Cupid shooting an arrow at a vestal virgin who is impervious to its spell, undoubtedly a compliment aimed at England’s famed virgin queen.

“I’ll put a girdle round about the Earth
In forty minutes.” – Robin Goodfellow (2.1.181-182)

- In the Elizabethan era, a girdle was a woman’s belt. Robin uses a metaphor to describe how quickly he is able to search for Oberon’s flower. He uses the image of the girdle - an object that wraps around a body – to describe moving around the planet.

“I am your spaniel, and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me I will fawn on you.
Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave
(Unworthy as I am) to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love
(And yet to place a high respect with me)
Than to be used as you use your dog?” – Helena (2.1.210-217)

- The original “pick me, choose me, love me,” Helena tells Demetrius to treat her as he would his dog. Helena’s speech will likely cause understandable controversy amongst students, but her desperation for Demetrius’s love (and his continued rejection) make their eventual fairy-induced marriage all the more troubling.

“Lord, what fools these mortals be!” – Robin Goodfellow (3.2.117)

- A major question the play evokes is whether or not the characters within have free will. Multiple characters fall victim to Robin’s spells, which manipulate their feelings or, in Bottom’s case, cause physical deformities. Robin’s gleeful declaration that humans (mortals) are fools reveals the division between the human world and the fairy world. What Robin finds amusing and nothing more than an evening’s entertainment could have dire consequences for the humans involved.

“And though she be but little, she is fierce.” – Helena (2.3.341-342)

- This quote is often seen out of context, but it is part of a larger speech that Helena makes about Hermia. While they are arguing, Helena explains that she and Hermia were once close friends, but now Hermia has stolen Demetrius’s affections and schemed with Lysander to mock her. She negatively calls out Hermia’s physical features, here referring to her short stature.

“Methought I was enamoured of an ass.” – Titania (4.1.78)

- The potion Oberon uses on Titania makes her inadvertently fall in love with Bottom, who has the head of a donkey. Oberon’s main objective is to distract Titania so he can steal away her new servant boy. When the spell is reversed, Titania is confused and says, almost in disbelief, that she thought she was in love with a donkey. It is a comical moment, but it is up to the audience to decide whether they find Oberon’s behaviour amusing or cruel (or both!).

“The poet’s eye, in fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.” – Theseus (5.1.12-18)

- Theseus describes the power of poetry and art. He explains that poets create “the forms of things unknown” and give them life. It is a testament to the power of art – the ability to imagine new worlds far beyond reality. While *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* contains a lot of comical commentary on actors and the theatre, here Shakespeare links art with creation.

“If we shadows have offended,
Think but this and all is mended:
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream.” – Robin (5.1.440-445)

- Robin’s final words in the play address the audience directly. He refers to the characters/actors as “shadows” and asks that if anyone is offended by the play’s contents, they should simply imagine that they have been dreaming. The characters in the play often sleep and awaken to find themselves enchanted or in love. They wonder if their experiences are dreams or reality. In this quote, Robin cheekily links the audience to the characters in the play, seeing dreams as an escape or an explanation for the inexplicable.

Pre-Show Discussion Prompts

- Listen to the way the upper-class characters speak compared to working-class characters. Is there a difference? Why would Shakespeare choose different forms of poetry to depict class?
- What role does free will play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? What is free will? How would you define it?
- Why is so much of the action of the play set in a forest? Can you think of other stories set in forests? Do they share anything in common?
- Shakespearean comedies always begin with social disruption – how is society disrupted at the beginning of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?
- What is the connection between “love” and “dreams”? Or “love” and “blindness”? Think about why they are so often linked throughout the play.
- Pay attention to how often Shakespeare references theatre and acting – think about the way he depicts actors and plays. Is he complimentary? Mocking?
- Themes to consider: **love, free will, dreams, magic, nature, theatre**

Post-Show Discussion Prompts

- How do you feel about the fate of each character?
- Shakespearean comedies usually end with a wedding (or weddings), which is used to remedy the social disruption that occurs at the beginning of the play. At the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the only character who remains enchanted is Demetrius. Given what we know about his original feelings towards Helena, do you think that the end of the play is a happy one? What are your feelings about each of the couples: Theseus/Hippolyta, Lysander/Hermia, Demetrius/Helena, Oberon/Titania?
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* features two royal courts: one ruled by Theseus and one ruled by Oberon. In your opinion, who is the most powerful ruler and why?
- Why is so much attention given to *Pyramus and Thisbe* in Act 5? What is the purpose of this “play within a play”?

Classroom Activities

Writing Activities

- Translate selections into modern English
- Re-write the Act 3 Scene 2 argument between Hermia and Helena in the style of a text message thread or as a reality show script
- Using [Pop Sonnets](#), learn about iambic pentameter and rewrite popular songs in sonnet form
- Write a fairy spell in the style of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – look at the imagery used, the poetic form, the symbolism, etc.
- Research context connections: trickster gods and goddesses across cultures, the evolution of fairy tales from folklore to Disney
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* creative writing prompts:
 - Write a new ending where the enchantment is removed from Demetrius
 - Write a sequel – one year later: are all the couples still happily wed? Does Robin cause more mischief?
 - Pick one character and re-write a scene from their point of view

Performance Activities

- Using popular music, create a soundtrack or playlist for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – this could be individualized for each character or specific scenes
- Opportunity to learn about dialogue forms: soliloquy, monologue, argument, etc.

Visual Art Activities

- Stage craft: design a set (draw/craft) the forest – what are its features, how would you craft these for a stage?
- Special effects: what special effects would you need for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? How would you create these?
- Costume design (research opportunity: fashion, costume history, etc.)
- Recreate scenes in different forms of media: graphic novels, memes, audio or visual recordings, etc.

Classroom Activities: Examples

Fairy poetry

Consider the similar rhyme schemes used when fairies speak and Shakespeare's incorporation of natural imagery into their songs and spells.

“Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire;
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere.
And I serve the Fairy Queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favors;
In those freckles live their savors.” (Fairy, Act 3, Scene 1, 2-13)

*“You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen.
Newts and blindworms, do no wrong,
Come not near our Fairy Queen.”* (First Fairy, Act 2, Scene 2, 9-12)

“What thou seest when thou dost wake
Do it for thy true love take.
Love and languish for his sake.
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear.
Wake when some vile thing is near.” (Oberon, Act 2, Scene 2, 33-40).

Curriculum Connections

ELA

Explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences:

- Modern connections – examples of love stories from film or television (compare and contrast)
- Approach the play from a subjective perspective: personal opinions, feelings regarding characters and character motivation
- Shakespearean humour: what makes a comedy a comedy? Is *A Midsummer Night's Dream* funny?

Understanding Forms and Techniques:

- Analysis of poetic forms, poetic language, vocabulary
- Character analysis based on what is said by the character/what other characters say about the character
- Examples of figurative language: personification, metaphor, simile, symbolism, allusion, etc.
- Creative writing opportunities for annotation and translation, character analysis
- Incorporation of visual arts/mixed media – storyboards of each scene, turning the play into a graphic novel, experimenting with different forms of media (audio, visual) and adaptation theory

Organize, Record, Evaluate:

- Research suggestions: Shakespeare's sources including Ovid and Geoffrey Chaucer, Elizabethan theatre, gender roles in the Early Modern period, Tudor England, modern productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (stage and screen)
- Practice research skills and introduce primary sources and secondary sources

Enhance the clarity and artistry of communication:

- Prepare scenes for performance or to be read out loud
- Opportunity for students to practice their debating/argumentative skills
- Possible debate questions:
 - In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Love does not lead to happiness.
 - Robin Goodfellow is a cruel/good/funny/evil character in the play.
 - Oberon's treatment of Titania is justified.
 - Hermia/Helena/Lysander/Demetrius is the most sympathetic character in the play.
 - The inclusion of *Pyramus and Thisbe* does not advance the play's plot.

Celebrate and build community:

- Group scene work:
 - The Mechanicals rehearsal (Act 3 Scene 1)
 - The argument between Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia (Act 3 Scene 2)

Drama

Connections to the four essential learning areas in the Drama (DR) Framework:

Theatre History

- Elizabethan theatre and its conceits: acting troops, all-male performers, performance spaces (manor homes and halls)
- Analysis of different productions – both on stage and onscreen
- Shakespearean Comedy and its influence
- Comparison to other popular Early-Modern plays
- History of stagecraft (costumes and special effects)

Creation and Response

- Discussion of the play as literature in comparison to the play on stage
- Discussion of theatre experiences – the setting (type of stage, set design, costumes, audience participation, incorporation of music or dance, etc.)

Dance

As *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a world wherein dance plays an important role in creating setting, mood, and character, it lends itself especially well to the four essential learning areas listed in the Dance (DA) Framework.

The fairy world is full of dance and its inhabitants reference dance multiple times. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Act 2, Scene 1: Titania chides Oberon for disrupting their “ringlets” (89, 145) – dances in the round
- Act 4, Scene 1: Oberon removes the charm for Titania and they dance in reunion (as per stage directions)
- Act 5, Scene 1: The performers of *Pyramus and Thisbe* dance off stage. When the fairies arrive, Oberon and the fairies dance while they bless the recent weddings.
- Dance is a means of entering and exiting scenes
- It is a specific feature of the fairy world: the faeries often dance with each other
- The connection between dance and magic or magical beings
- Analysis of existing choreography and dance techniques
- Opportunity for creating new choreography
- Analysis of how dance is used in the play as a signifier: setting, character, emotion
- Connection between dance and the natural world
- Historical analysis: dance in Elizabethan England
- Adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (film or stage) – opportunity for analysis and comparative work
- Students may wish to compare the play to George Balanchine's 1962 ballet

- Balanchine's ballet incorporates the music of Felix Mendelssohn and is an adaptation of the original play
- A second ballet based on the play, called *The Dream* (1964) also provides opportunity for analysis and comparison
- From the Balanchine Trust: [*A Midsummer Night's Dream*](#)

From the Royal Opera House's 2021 production of Ashton's ballet:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ol6EtEJwAlc>

PBS Recording of the Balanchine ballet:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrfiusNHCl&t=11s>

Visual Arts

There are many opportunities to meet the four essential learning areas listed in the Visual Arts (VA) Framework.

Set Design:

- Analyzing existing sets/structures
- Considering the previous productions – the evolution of stage craft, set design
- Creation of sets/set design

Costumes:

- Analysis of shifting trends in costuming for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from a historical perspective into modernity
- Costume as character – discussion of how costumes may convey a character's class, nationality, personality, etc.
- Elizabethan theatre and gendered costuming
- Opportunity to design costumes

Art History:

- Specific focus on Romanticism and the work of nineteenth-century artists
- Students may explore the variety of media inspired by the play
- Analysis of art styles, mediums, and movements
- [Gallery of art related to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*](#)

Resources

The First Folio

- An overview of the First Folio from the Victoria and Albert Museum:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01Ytsmn4gv4>
- Short documentary on the First Folio by the Folger Library:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WicxFbaSxgE>
- Digital facsimile of the First Folio from the Bodleian Library, Oxford:
<https://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/book.html>
- Boston University's copy of the First Folio (digitized):
<https://archive.org/details/mrvvilliamshakes00shak/page/n23/mode/2up>

Shakespeare – General Information

- Detailed information about Shakespeare's life from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust:
<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/>
- Virtual tour of the Globe Theatre: <https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/about-us/virtual-tour/>

Contexts

- Ovid's *Metamorphosis* in translation:
<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.02.0028>
- Book IV of Ovid's *Metamorphosis* contains the tragic story of Pyramus and Thisbe:
<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Metamorph4.php>
- Overview of ancient Athens from the British Museum:
<https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/historical-city-travel-guide-athens-5th-century-bc>
- Elizabethan Fashion:
<https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1590-1599/>

Clips from Various Productions

- Trailer for the 2019 National Theatre production:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjmOP2hVfRg>
- Clips from the 2019 National Theatre production:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPv9ICpMyRw> (Act 3 Scene 1)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrsWq5ZWVHI> (Act 3 Scene 2)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-lbk7j9wYU> (Act 3 Scene 2)

- Act 3 Scene 1 from the 2013 Globe Theatre production:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGgsJd4_r4k
- Hermia and Helena's argument from the 2013 Globe Theatre production:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqmoIyIPEcc> (Act 3 Scene 2)
- Act 3 Scene 2 from the 2021 Globe Theatre production:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgD0mBpFsyg>
- The 1969 film directed by Peter Hall:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLQrVU4OCw>
- Multiple clips from the 2012 Globe Theatre production:
<https://teach.shakespearesglobe.com/midsummer-videos>
- Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUm41WqTix8>
- Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* performed by the Schulich School of Music:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrhbm-kaxpk>

Teaching Resources

- Images of characters from different productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:
<https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/a-midsummer-nights-dream/character/relationships>
- Resources for teaching *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from the Folger Shakespeare Library:
<https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/a-midsummer-nights-dream/>
- Resources for teachers from the Royal Shakespeare Company:
<https://www.rsc.org.uk/learn/schools-and-teachers/teacher-resources>