

# **A Midsummer Night's Dream Book Notes**

## **A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare**

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## Author/Context

William Shakespeare was born on either the 22<sup>nd</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon, a small British town outside of London, to parents Mary Arden and John Shakespeare. He was educated at the King's Free School of Stratford, where he studied the Bible and Latin. He married an older woman, Anne Hathaway, at age 18. It was now that he began to find writing poetry as a profession to support his family. They had a daughter Susanna and twins, Judith and Hamnet. He began writing and finding different groups to perform his work, including the Admiral's Men, The Queen's Men, Pembroke's Men, and Lord Strange's Men. However, the Chamberlain's Men was the group of players in which he composed, produced, and performed many of his plays in the now-famous Globe Theater. He was compared to contemporary "scholars" such as Ben Jonson and Christopher Marlowe, the former who would be one of his greatest actors and the latter one of his greatest playwriting rivals.

Shakespeare is argued to have produced an incredibly large library of work, including 38 plays and countless sonnets. His plays are divided into four main sections: the Histories, the Tragedies, the Comedies, and the Romances. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* falls under the category of Comedy, although it does have some elements of the magical Romance genre. His work has been produced since the Renaissance in all artistic mediums from the original theater to opera, symphony, film, and ballet. It has also been consistently revisited countless times by the same artistic medium because it is said to be timeless. Shakespeare's topics are about love, murder, jealousy, miscommunication, chastity, history, and even magic. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* encompasses the classic elements of Shakespeare's comedies. It has a framing structure, with the Athenian world opening and closing the play, has a large plot using magic and fantasy, has a happy ending, and uses a major character as comic relief, so to speak. Most of Shakespeare's plays use this character of the clown, jester, or commoner to spark slapstick laughter. Bottom and his players qualify to this "character" in *Midsummer*. Also, these lower-class characters speak in prose, not in poetry (Iambic Pentameter), like the rest of Shakespeare's characters.

This play is a combination of three plots: The Athenian lovers Hermia, Helena, Lysander, and Demetrius, The fairies Titania and Oberon's rivalry, and the commoners' production of *Pyramus and Thisbe*. Through these three plots, the common thread is this illustration of the ridiculous behavior of lovers of every sort, every creature, and every class. According to Shakespeare scholar Oscar James Campbell, "Shakespeare's own opinion, at least as he presents it in the fantasy, is that love is a wholly irrational passion, the slave of whim and fancy."

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written in 1595 and performed most likely for the Queen. Like this play, many of Shakespeare's plays were written for the direct audience member, Queen Elizabeth.

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# Plot Summary

The play opens in a palace in Athens one hour before the wedding of Theseus, Duke of Athens, to his newly conquered Amazonian queen, Hippolyta. Their nuptials are interrupted by Egeus, an Athenian father begging help of Theseus. His daughter, Hermia, is in love with young Lysander, and wants to marry him. Egeus already bequeathed her to Demetrius, who is also in love with her. Hermia's childhood friend, Helena, is in love with Demetrius, and follows him around like a lost puppy. Theseus tells Hermia that she has until morn to decide to marry Demetrius, join a nunnery, or die.

Lysander and Hermia decide to run away together into the woods and elope near his aunt's home. They get ready to leave as they see Helena ranting about her love for Demetrius and her unhappiness that he puts her down all the time. They tell her of their plan to escape.

In a room in the carpenter Quince's house in Athens, six commoners discuss their plan to put on the play, *Pyramus and Thisbe*, at the Duke's wedding. Quince dispenses the roles to the players, most notably the over-dramatic weaver Bottom. He will play Pyramus, while Flute will play Thisbe.

In the woods, the sprightly fairy Puck addresses the audience with his mischievous nature. Oberon and Titania enter the woods, furious with one another over the possession of a little Indian boy. Oberon spot Demetrius running into the woods looking for Hermia, followed by a doting Helena, whom he hates. He tells Puck to find a magic flower that holds juice that when placed on sleeping eyelids, makes the person sleeping fall in love with the first creature he or she sees upon waking. He tells Puck to place it on the sleeping eyes of a man he will notice by the Athenian clothes he has on (namely Demetrius). Puck plans to obey these orders.

Oberon sees Titania and plans to play a trick on her by placing the magic juice on her eyes, as well, allowing her to fall in love with a fool.

Lysander and Hermia go to sleep, separately because they are not yet married. Puck sees them and thinks that Lysander is the man on whose eyes Oberon wants the magic juice placed. He does so. Helena runs into the woods at the same spot, sees Lysander, wakes him for fear of death, and Lysander falls in love with her. He leaves the sleeping Hermia to follow Helena and win her heart.

The six players rehearse in the woods. Puck plays a trick on Bottom by transforming his head into that of a donkey's. The rest of the men are frightened off. Bottom is unaware of his appearance. Titania awakens, sees Bottom, and falls in love. She and her fairies adorn him with flowers, attention, and "love."

Demetrius follows a lonely and distressed Hermia through the woods looking for Lysander. She blames him for Lysander's disappearance. They bicker as Oberon and Puck watch, realizing that Puck placed the juice in the wrong's Athenian's eyes. They



sleep and Oberon squeezes the juice into Demetrius's eyes for Helena. He awakens, sees Helena, and falls in love. Lysander and Demetrius now fight for Helena, where they used to fight for Hermia. Hermia is now cast aside and cursed by the two men. Helena believes they are all playing a cruel joke on her. Hermia attacks Helena for stealing her lover and the insults fly on both parties' end. The two women then run away enraged.

Oberon reprimands Puck for his negligence and vows to make peace of the chaos. Puck tricks the two men into falling asleep and places the juice back in Lysander's eyes. He gets all four lovers to sleep in one location and says that in the morning, both couples will be happy and all will be well.

Titania still tends to Bottom, but they get tired and lay down to nap. Oberon, pleased with his handiwork, places the juice back in her eyes and allows her to return to her normal state. She awakens and returns to Oberon, thinking it was all a dream. Bottom's head returns to human status and he returns to Athens finding the players at Quince's house worried. They prepare to perform the play at the Duke's wedding night.

Egeus, Theseus, and Hippolyta are on a hunting trip in the woods and spot the four lovers asleep together. They are shocked at the amiability between the four, but welcome the new couples.

The three happy couples, Theseus and Hippolyta, Lysander and Hermia, and Demetrius and Helena return to the palace for a triple wedding. The play concludes with a hysterical presentation of *Pyramus and Thisbe* by the six players and a fantastical closing by Titania, Oberon, and Puck.

## Major Characters

**Theseus:** As the Duke of Athens, Theseus opens the play on the eve of his wedding to Hippolyta. Egeus begs of help from him with his daughter. Theseus tells Hermia that she must obey his father's wishes, join a nunnery, or die, and sets the command to Athenian law. Therefore, because of Theseus's decree, Hermia won't just be defying her father's wishes; she will be breaking Athenian law. Because of this decree, she runs away with Lysander. However, Theseus is also the one who finds the four lovers in the morning of the magical summer evening and changes his mind. He declares that the three couples (including himself and Hippolyta) will be married immediately in the palace. Theseus also demands the players' meager production of *Pyramus and Thisbe* later that day.

**Hermia:** The daughter of Egeus, Hermia is the object of desire initially for both Lysander and Demetrius. She is an Athenian and is in love with Lysander, going directly against her father's will. She is described as small with dark hair and 'though she be but little, she is fierce' (Act 3, Scene 2, line 325). When angered, she can be very juvenile and physical with her temperament. She also believes strongly in loyalty, chastity, and faith. She is damaged deeply when the two men who normally swoon over her, leave her alone in the woods in the night to seek her childhood friend, Helena. She ends up winning: she marries Lysander with the wishes of Theseus, Hippolyta, and supposedly her father, Egeus, as well.

**Lysander:** Lysander is virtually indistinguishable from Demetrius, save the women who love them. He is in love with Hermia and plans to elope with her outside of Athens. They escape into the woods at night. He wants to sleep next to her, yet because of her chastity, he must sleep alone, away from her. Therefore, he is the first 'victim' of the magic love juice, and wakes up enamored with Helena. He immediately ditches his beloved Hermia to follow Helena in the woods, insulting Hermia with the most vile words. He also physically fights with his once-friend Demetrius for the love of Helena, but eventually ends up marrying his true, original love, Hermia.

**Demetrius:** A young man of Athens who is in love with Hermia and adored by Helena. He is the choice of Egeus for Hermia, and believes he should marry her. He once shared a night with Helena and has been followed by her since then. Helena tells him about the escape of Hermia and Lysander into the woods and then follows them there, followed by Helena. He constantly puts down Helena until he is smitten by love. He and Lysander physically dual in a comic fashion for Helena, because they are both under the influence of the magic. He ends up with Helena.

**Helena:** The childhood friend of Hermia and her greatest nemesis throughout most of the play. She is desperately in love with Demetrius, who just so happens to be in love with Hermia, who wants him to leave her alone. Helena follows him all over, like a puppy dog, hoping that he will notice her. She is the object of scorn and malice initially by Demetrius, and then is suddenly adored by both Demetrius and Lysander. She is a sensitive character, for she believes that everyone is playing a trick on her, when the



changes are all due to the magic juice. She is tall and thin and called a 'painted maypole' in a fit of rage by Hermia. She is also the character who reminds both Hermia and the readers that they were once very close friends. She eventually learns how to play the men in the game of love. She ends up with her beloved Demetrius, yet only because of the magic.

**Bottom:** The comic relief in this romance/comedy. He is described as 'the shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort' by Athenians and 'simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens' by his lower-class peers. He loves to talk, hear his own voice, and consequently wants to play all the parts in Pyramus and Thisbe. He must settle for the title character, Pyramus, acting with over-dramatic flair in the concluding scene of the play. Since he constantly talks about nonsense, the fairies play him with. His head is transformed into an ass's head as Titania falls in love with him. In this fantastical state, he is adorned with flowers and tended by fairies, until the magical midsummer night concludes, and he returns to a normal weaver of Athens and player for the Duke.

**Puck:** Also known as Robin Goodfellow, he is a mischievous fairy who seems to start the accidental chain of events of mistaken amorous identity in the woods. Another fairy recognizes him and says, 'You are that shrewd and knavish sprite / Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he / That frights the maidens of the villagery' (Act 2, Scene 1, lines 33-35). He can change his shape and voice to suit his fancy. These characteristics help him manipulate the Athenians in the woods and allow him to place the magic juice in everyone's eyes.

**Oberon:** King of the fairies, Oberon controls much of the events that ensue in the woods. He brings in the magic flower juice that makes people fall in love, he plays tricks on his queen, he orders Puck to make amends, and he ultimately wins the Indian boy. There is rumor that he was in love with Hippolyta, the soon-to-be duchess of Athens. However, he ultimately loves Titania and ends his joke on her and commands that all the lovers be happy together in Athens.

**Titania:** She is the fairy queen, mate of Oberon the fairy king. She is beautiful, jealous, and strong-willed. She desperately wants to keep the little Indian boy and goes to great lengths fighting with Oberon to do so. Titania is always attended by many fairies beckoning to her calls. Oberon plays a trick on her by placing the fairy juice in her eyes and allowing her to make a mockery of herself by falling in love with the transformed Bottom.

### Minor Characters

**Hippolyta:** The fiancée (and later wife) of the Duke of Athens, Theseus. She was an Amazon warrior queen before Theseus defeated her in battle, also winning her heart. She serves mainly as the female voice in the Athenian palace, but does little to move the plot forward.

**Egeus:** The father of Hermia who begs for help from the Duke, Theseus, interrupting his wedding. He gives his daughter the choice of marrying Demetrius, whom he has





chosen, joining a nunnery, or dying. He loses merit at the end of the play, for she gets her man and the law backs her up.

**Quince:** A carpenter in Athens and the director of the players in Pyramus and Thisbe. Next to Bottom, he has the largest part of the 'lower-classmen' in this play.

**Flute:** A bellows-mender in Athens and one of the players. He plays the part of Thisbe and performs a drawn-out death scene in which his character takes center-stage.

**Snout:** A tinker and another one of the players. He plays the part of the mute wall in the production.

**Starveling:** A tailor of Athens and the final player. He plays the part of Thisbe's mother and also Moonshine.

**Little Indian Boy:** Although he never says one line in the play and oftentimes never appears, he is the catalyst for the argument between Oberon and Titania, which sets off the magical chain of events.

**Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed:** Fairies tending to Titania, and later Bottom. They have no distinct identity except for their presence onstage as fairies/attendants.

**Philostrate:** Master of the revels to Theseus. He introduces Bottom and the players of Pyramus and Thisbe at the end of the play.

**Snug:** A joiner and one of the players. He plays the part of the lion that roars onstage in Act 5.



## Objects/Places

**Athens:** Athens is the location that opens and ends the play. It is the world of the mortals, the non-fantastical, non-magical. Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus all remain in Athens, while the four Athenian lovers venture to the woods, where they begin their magical journey of fairies and flower juice, and altered sentiments.

**The Woods:** The woods encompass the middle three acts and bulk of action for the play. It is a world where fairies reign, magic is ubiquitous, and fantasy is reality. Titania and Oberon live there and simply move from one portion to another. Puck flies around to different parts, causing trouble, and Hermia and Lysander run into it for safety of their love. It is here that all of the magical events take place. People fall in and out of love, they curse, and fight in the realms of the woods. They also eventually make amends and create harmony and bliss for everyone in the woods.

**Quince's house:** Quince's house is in Athens, but is the antithesis of Theseus's palace. It represents the lower class and the commoners. It is also the locale of much of the rehearsals for Pyramus and Thisbe, for Quince is a carpenter and also the director of the mini-play.

**Pyramus and Thisbe:** This is the play that the commoners put on for Theseus and Hippolyta. It is an old and famous tragic love story that ends in death for both hero and heroine.

**Magic Flower:** This flower is the master of magic for the love-confusion in the woods. It originates from 'where the bold of Cupid fell:/ It fell upon a little western flower,/ Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,/ And maidens call it love-in-idleness' (Act 2, Scene 1, lines 165-169). When placed on the sleeping eyelids of a man or woman, it will cause him or her to fall in love with the next live creature that he or she sees. The juice from this flower is the machinery by which all the lovers are confused and is also the machinery by which everything is mended.

**The Wall:** Snout assumes the role of 'the wall' in their production of Pyramus and Thisbe at Theseus's palace. He, as the wall, divides the lovers, Pyramus (Bottom) and Thisbe (Flute) from seeing one another.

**Donkey Head:** Bottom's human head is transformed into a donkey's head while practicing in the woods. He frightens his friends away and is completely oblivious to this change. When Titania awakes, she sees Bottom as the ass and falls in love.

**Lion:** Snug's role in the Pyramus and Thisbe. He roars onto the stage.

**Moonshine:** Starveling assumes the role of 'moonshine' in the production. He says nothing and represents the light of the moon in Pyramus and Thisbe. However, moonshine is the main light that the Athenians have the woods that summer evening, as well.

**India:** The little page, the Indian boy, is from India. This region of the world is mentioned several times in the play regarding magical, mystical events. Titania met her friend (the boy's mother there) and the magic flower is from India, as well.

# Quotes

Quote 1: "Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour/ Draws on apace." Act 1, Scene 1, line 1

Quote 2: "With cunning hast thou filched my daughter's heart,/ Turned her obedience, which is due to me,/ to stubborn harshness." Act 1, Scene 1, lines 36-38

Quote 3: "Either to die the death or to abjure/ Forever the society of men." Act 1, Scene 1, lines 65-66

Quote 4: "She, sweet lady, dotes,/ Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,/ Upon this spotted and inconstant man." Act 1, Scene 1, lines 109-110

Quote 5: "The course of true love never did run smooth." Act 1, Scene 1, line 134

Quote 6: "The more [Hermia] hate, the more [Demetrius] follows me." Act 1, Scene 1, line 198

Quote 7: "The more [Helena] love, the more [Demetrius] hateth me." Act 1, Scene 1, line 199

Quote 8: "Through Athens I [Helena] am thought as fair as she [Hermia]." Act 1, Scene 1, line 227

Quote 9: "You are that shrewd and knavish sprite/ Called Robin Goodfellow." Act 2, Scene 1, line 33

Quote 10: "And sometimes lurk I [Puck] in a gossip's bowl." Act 2, Scene 1, line 47

Quote 11: "Not for thy [Oberon's] fairy kingdom" Act 2, Scene 1, line 144

Quote 12: "Thou [Titania] shalt not from this grove/ Till I torment thee for this injury." Act 2, Scene 1, line 146

Quote 13: "Make [Titania] render up her page to me." Act 2, Scene 1, line 185

Quote 14: "We cannot fight for love, as men may do;/ We should be wooed and were not made to woo./ I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,/ to die upon the hand I love so well." Act 2, Scene 1, lines 241-244

Quote 15: "Thou shalt know the man/ By the Athenian garments he hath on." Act 2, Scene 1, lines 263-264

Quote 16: "When thou wakest, it is thy dear:/ Wake when some vile thing is near." Act 2, Scene 2, lines 33-34

Quote 17: "Then end life when I [Lysander] end loyalty!" Act 2, Scene 2, line 63



Quote 18: "When thou [Lysander] wakest, let love forbid." Act 2, Scene 2, line 80

Quote 19: "Not Hermia but Helena I [Lysander] love." Act 2, Scene 2, line 113

Quote 20: "Methought [Hermia] a serpent eat my heart away, / And you sat smiling at his cruel prey." Act 2, Scene 2, line 150

Quote 21: "Thou [Bottom] art translated." Act 3, Scene 1, line 121

Quote 22: "What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?...On the first view to say, to swear, I [Titania] love thee [Bottom]." Act 3, Scene 1, lines 132, 144

Quote 23: "When in that moment, so it came to pass,/ Titania waked and straightway loved an ass." Act 3, Scene 2, lines 32-33

Quote 24: "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" Act 3, Scene 2, lines 115

Quote 25: "O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent  
To set against me for your merriment:  
If you were civil and knew courtesy,  
You would not do me thus much injury.  
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,  
But you must join in souls to mock me too?  
If you were men, as men you are in show,  
You would not use a gentle lady so;  
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,  
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.  
You both are rivals, and love Hermia;  
And now both rivals, to mock Helena:  
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,  
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes  
With your derision! none of noble sort  
Would so offend a virgin, and extort  
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport." Act 2, Scene 2, lines 145-161

Quote 26: "Hang of, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose,/ Or I [Lysander] will shake thee [Hermia] from me like a serpent!" Act 3, Scene 2, lines 260-261

Quote 27: "Two of both kinds makes up four...In your waking shall be shown: / Jack shall have Jill; / Nought shall go ill: / The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well." Act 3, Scene 2, lines 438-463

Quote 28: "May all to Athens back again repair / And think no more of this night's accidents / But as the fierce vexation of a dream." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 70-72

Quote 29: "My Oberon! What visions have I seen!/ Methought I was enamored of an ass." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 79-80



Quote 30: "I know you two are rival enemies:/ How comes this gentle concord in the world,/ That hatred is so far from jealousy,/ To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?" Act 4, Scene 1, lines 146-149

Quote 31: "God's my life, stolen hence, and left me [Bottom] asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 208-210

Quote 32: "He [Bottom] hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens." Act 4, Scene 2, line 10

Quote 33: "I never may believe / These antique fables, nor these fairy toys." Act 5, Scene 1, lines 2-3

Quote 34: "His [Bottom's] speech was like a tangled chain;/ Nothing impaired, but all disordered." Act 5, Scene 1, lines 123-124

Quote 35: "Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man." Act 5, Scene 1, line 295

Quote 36: "I [Puck] am sent with broom before, / To sweep the dust behind the door." Act 5, Scene 1, lines 396-397

Quote 37: "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,  
Gentles, do not reprehend,  
If you pardon, we will mend.  
And, as I am an honest Puck,  
If we have unearned luck  
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,  
We will make amends ere long,  
Else the Puck a liar call.  
So, goodnight unto you all.  
Give me your hands, if we be friends,  
And Robin shall restore amends." Act 5, Scene 1, lines 430-445

# Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping

## **Act I, Scenes 1-2: "Athens, A hall in the palace of Theseus" & "A room in Quince's house in Athens"**

Dreams 1: The title holds the word "dream," inferring that the play will be either a dream or will talk about dreams. The interpretation is up to the audience member or reader. However, the title foreshadows so many events that occur in the play and also subconsciously sets a mood before the first line is even uttered.

## **Act II, Scenes 1-2: "Night, A wood near Athens" & "Another part of the wood"**

Dreams 2: As Oberon explains the nature of the magic flower juice, he mentions that it must be placed upon *sleeping* eyelids. Dreams come to life during sleep. So, the magic juice works in collaboration with dreams and only works when the person is asleep, perhaps dreaming or perhaps awaking to a new dream.

Dreams 3: This is the first placement of the magic juice on sleeping eyelids. Oberon uses the flower juice on Titania to play a trick on her/teach her a lesson. He whispers into her sleeping ears that when she wakes, she will fall in love with something vile. She is sleeping as he whispers so his words could be heard in a dream.

Dreams 4: Hermia and Lysander slow down so that they may sleep for the night. However, they sleep separately, cueing Puck and perhaps separating their possible dreams. Hermia sleeps far from Lysander because her chastity as a maid is important.

Dreams 5: Puck has placed the magic juice in Lysander's eyes, so when Helena spots him on the ground, she wakes him up for fear of death or injury. He is sleeping and awakens in love with Helena, entering a new dream, a new fantasy. He has transformed his feelings in his dream.

Dreams 6: Hermia awakens in the woods, alone, looking for her beloved Lysander. She has had a horrible nightmare and wants Lysander to comfort her. In her nightmare, a serpent is eating her heart and Lysander sits "smiling at his cruel prey" Act 2, Scene 2, line 150. She is frightened and alone. Her nightmare foreshadows the treatment she will soon receive from Lysander.

## **Act III, Scenes 1-2: "The same spot in the wood" & "Another part of the wood"**

Dreams 7: Titania wakes from her slumber to see Bottom as a donkey and immediately falls in love with him. This amity is because of the magic juice placed on her during her sleep. When she awakens, like the Athenians, she is entering another dreamlike state, an altered reality transformed from her sleep.

Dreams 8: Oberon places the magic juice on the sleeping eyes of Demetrius so that he will wake and fall in love with Helena. This was the original plan confused by Puck that started the chaos in the woods.

Dreams 9: Oberon now makes sure that he uses the sleeping-dream state to right all of these wrongs. He commands Puck to fix everything. Puck tricks the two men into a slumber and places the magic juice on Lysander's eyes. The four lovers fall asleep together, in blissful harmony.

#### **Act IV, Scenes 1-2: "The same portion of the wood" & "Athens, A room in Quince's house"**

Dreams 10: Oberon plans to return the fairy world to normal, since he has already done so with the mortal world. He plans to awaken his Titania from her dreamlike trance of being in love with Bottom, the ass. He plans to have the evening remembered "as the fierce vexation of a dream" Act 4, Scene 1, lines 70-72. The king of the fairies plans to have the magic translated into dreams for those who experience it.

Dreams 11: Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus see the four lovers sleeping in the woods peacefully. They are shocked at the happy slumber, and the play seems to have come full circle as they wake up into their new happy world. They wake up from their magical dream in the woods to get married.

Dreams 12: Bottom returns to his players in Athens with his normal head. He is recovering from his "dream," and tells his players that he has had the most incredible dream and will write it into the play as "Bottom's Dream." Everything magical seems to be explained through dreams.

#### **Act V: "Athens, The great hall in the palace of Theseus"**

Dreams 13: Puck addresses the audience in the closing lines of the play telling them that everything they have just seen is a dream. Every vision, every touch of magic that was just enacted, he tells them, can all be explained by dreams and slumber.



# Topic Tracking: Jealousy

## **Act I, Scenes 1-2: "Athens, A hall in the palace of Theseus" & "A room in Quince's house in Athens"**

Jealousy 1: This first hint of jealousy is seen as Egeus claims to Theseus that Demetrius has stolen Hermia's obedience and love. He is slightly jealous of the new man in his daughter's life. This father/daughter jealousy is of course natural, but is taken to extremes in the play. It is also just one type of jealousy explored in the five acts.

Jealousy 2: Helena is deeply in love with Demetrius, who is in love with Hermia. Therefore, Helena is jealous of Hermia's beauty and she claims that she too is as beautiful. She wonders what Hermia has that she doesn't that makes men follow her everywhere. So, out of jealousy, Helena tells Demetrius that Hermia and Lysander plan to escape to the woods so that he will follow them and she will follow him.

## **Act II, Scenes 1-2: "Night, A wood near Athens" & "Another part of the wood"**

Jealousy 3: Oberon and Titania bicker over many issues, including their supposed "other" loves and the possession of the little Indian boy. These arguments stem both from jealousy. The fairy without the Indian boy is jealous of the other and will go to any length to get him back.

Jealousy 4: Helena, again, is in bitter sentiment over her mistreatment from Demetrius. However, she is hurt not simply because he is rude and mean to her, but because she is jealous of Hermia. She tells the audience that she is thought as beautiful as Hermia all through Athens and cannot understand why Hermia gets the attention of her beloved Demetrius. This jealousy translates into her perpetual chase after Demetrius.

## **Act III, Scenes 1-2: "The same spot in the wood" & "Another part of the wood"**

Jealousy 5: When Lysander tells Hermia that he abandoned her in the middle of the night for Helena, Hermia is enraged with jealousy. The words that come out of Lysander's mouth hit Hermia and injure her, building her jealousy of Helena instead of building her frustration with Lysander.

Jealousy 6: The fights between both Lysander and Demetrius and Hermia and Helena all have something to do with jealousy. Lysander and Demetrius are jealous of one another and both want Helena, where they used to want Hermia. And Hermia and Helena fight because Hermia is jealous of Helena as the reverse used to be true.

## **Act IV, Scenes 1-2: "The same portion of the wood" & "Athens, A room in Quince's house"**

Jealousy 7: Oberon decides that the trick has gone far enough and will restore Titania to her normal self. Whether he is jealous of Bottom's position with her or not is unknown.

But, he does see her in love with another creature and then decides that the magic must end.

Jealousy 8: Oberon also decides that everything will go back to normal with all creatures in the forest. He has possession of the Indian boy and that fact illustrates that he is no longer jealous of Titania. Therefore, with his jealousy gone, everything is fine to go back to normal in the woods.

Jealousy 9: When Theseus sees the four lovers sleeping peacefully together, he is shocked because he knows how much they all hate each other. He says that jealousy is not far from hatred. This statement from Theseus resonates throughout the play and is illustrated through the characters' behavior. When they are jealous, they act enraged and as if they hate each other.

Act V: "Athens, The great hall in the palace of Theseus"

Jealousy 10: Jealousy exists in another form with Bottom. He loves attention and loves to speak. Therefore, he is jealous of stage time and plans to take all of it that he can. He overacts, speaks too much, and dies an elongated stage-death, stealing scenes from everyone on stage.



# Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness

## **Act I, Scenes 1-2: "Athens, A hall in the palace of Theseus" & "A room in Quince's house in Athens"**

Love's Foolishness 1: The mockery made of love in this play is evident from the first scene until the last. The play opens as a wedding is supposed to take place, the realization of a holy union of bliss. However, that union is interrupted by a plea from outside. The very fact that the symbol of love, a wedding, begins the play, but never truly takes place sets a precedent for the illustration of the foolishness of love for the rest of the play.

Love's Foolishness 2: Young Helena is unabashedly in love with Demetrius, a man who not only despises her, but is in love with her close friend, Hermia. The roles seem to reverse in this "couple," for Helena is the person who pursues an unwieldy Demetrius, while he chases another. This is a game of cat and mouse. These characters have turned love into a game.

Love's Foolishness 3: This time, love is mocked in a play within a play. The commoners (and comic relief of this Shakespearean play) decide to put on the lamentable tragedy of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, a great love story. They torture it to laughter by selecting it as their drama to enact, and they inadvertently mock the ideal of love by assigning the parts randomly. This theme will be revisited in Act 5.

## **Act II, Scenes 1-2: "Night, A wood near Athens" & "Another part of the wood"**

Love's Foolishness 4: Titania and Oberon enter, enraged with one another although supposedly in love. Their image in the play is of a fairy couple who currently hates each other. They discuss supposed loves each has with other people, minimizing the love they have together.

Love's Foolishness 5: Helena woos Demetrius harshly, unrelenting to his cruel treatment of her. She states that men are meant to woo women, not women to men. This reversal of identities in Shakespeare's time is slightly absurd and foolish.

Love's Foolishness 6: Oberon places the magic juice on Titania's eyes hoping that she will fall in love with "something vile" Act 2, Scene 2, lines 33-34. Enabling this fairy queen to fall in love with a vile creature mocks the validity of love.

Love's Foolishness 7: Helena cannot believe that these men love her. She believes that their love to her is a cruel joke, foolish treatment. She is upset with Lysander for doting over her, for she simply does not nor cannot believe it to be true. Furthermore, the love that Lysander at one point has for Hermia, suddenly transforms into adoration for Helena instantaneously from the magic juice. A simple drop of juice can change love quickly and foolishly.



### **Act III, Scenes 1-2: "The same spot in the wood" & "Another part of the wood"**

Love's Foolishness 8: In the players' production of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, they believe that a wall must physically separate the lovers. They assign the role of the wall to Snout a man, loaning loads of laughter and comedy to the serious love story.

Love's Foolishness 9: The image of Titania waking up to fall in love with the donkey-faced Bottom is pure mockery of the ideal of love. A beautiful fairy doting on and seducing not only a common man, but an ass is foolish, funny, and fearful. How much more can love be made fun of?

Love's Foolishness 10: Seeing the spectacle of the four Athenian lovers quarrel is humorous to the fairy Puck. He states in the most famous line from the play, "What fools these mortals be!" Act 3, Scene 2, line 115 implying that their foolishness arises because of love. Love makes the mortals act foolish and Puck notices it.

Love's Foolishness 11: This memorable scene of the love quadrangle all entangled is hysterical and foolish. Each man keeps changing the woman he loves, and each woman cannot believe the reality of the love proclaimed. Demetrius dotes on Helena, the woman he scorns, and Lysander abandons his true love Hermia, to dote on Helena as well. The two even become foolish fighters and prepare to duel for love. Furthermore, Helena and Hermia become foolish cat-fighters as well, all in the name of love.

### **Act IV, Scenes 1-2: "The same portion of the wood" & "Athens, A room in Quince's house"**

Love's Foolishness 12: The image of Titania entangled and sleeping above an ass is both daring and shocking. This play seems to take the mockery of love to extreme illustrations to prove a point.

Love's Foolishness 13: Love is also given a foolish name in the character of Bottom. He is desperately in love with himself, loves to hear himself speak, and wants to take every role in the play, and plans to write a prologue about his "dream." Having Bottom dote upon himself is the illustration of a foolish and comic character mocking a different type of love.

### **Act V: "Athens, The great hall in the palace of Theseus"**

Love's Foolishness 14: The play concludes with the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta that was interrupted in the first act. However, this time, instead of focusing exclusively on the beautiful union of one couple, the play allows a triple wedding to occur. This triple wedding takes away the importance of each couple's love and diminishes its importance somewhat.

# Topic Tracking: Magic

## Act II, Scenes 1-2: "Night, A wood near Athens" & "Another part of the wood"

Magic 1: Puck is introduced, epitomizing the very nature of magic in the play. He is a fairy with special powers to transform his voice and appearance so that he may "lurk in gossip bowls" Act 2, Scene 1, line 47 and cause mischief. His conversation with the fairy is very magical and fantastical and sets the scene for the rest of the play.

Magic 2: Titania's story of the origin of the Indian boy is very fantastical in nature. She talks about magical events in nature and immortality. Immortality is a magical characteristic that only the fairies possess.

Magic 3: Oberon tells Puck of the magic flower juice that when placed on sleeping eyelids, makes that person fall in love with the first creature it sees upon awakening. The flower is magical because it was hit by one of Cupid's arrows and now contains this fantastical love-transforming juice.

Magic 4: Oberon places the magic juice on Titania's eyes to play a trick on her. Here, magic is used as a tool for him to get what he wants: the Indian boy.

Magic 5: When Lysander awakens, he falls in love magically with Helena, fantastically forgetting Hermia. This transformation is only due to the magic flower juice mistakenly placed on his eyelids by Puck. Because of this change, the rest of the lovers' entangled plot grows and Lysander abandons Hermia to follow Helena.

## Act III, Scenes 1-2: "The same spot in the wood" & "Another part of the wood"

Magic 6: Puck sees the silly production of *Pyramus and Thisbe* and plans to cause mischief. He follows Puck and transforms Bottom's head into that of a donkey. He has the magical power to do so because he is a fairy. This transformation scares away the other players; however, Bottom is unaware of his change.

Magic 7: Puck tells Oberon of Titania's new love, Bottom the ass. Oberon laughs at what happens because of the little magic juice. He asks about the Athenian couple and Puck explains that he did place the magic juice on the man. This discussion is purely about the power of magic and what changes it can make and trouble it can stir with love.

Magic 8: Puck is ordered to correct the wrong done because of the magical mistakes. He uses his magical powers of voice transformation and invisibility to trick the Athenian men into a slumber. He then places more magic juice in the eyes of Lysander in order to correct the wrongs.

## Act IV, Scenes 1-2: "The same portion of the wood" & "Athens, A room in Quince's house"

Magic 9: Oberon rids Titania of the magic spell and she awakens thinking she was dreaming. However, it was no dream that she "was enamored of an ass," Act 4, Scene 1, line 80 for everything is real and due to magic. Puck removes the donkey head from Bottom by magic, as well. Everything goes back to normal, after everything has been mended because of the fairies and magic.

Magic 10: Theseus, Egeus, and Hippolyta have trouble believing the stories of the four lovers, for they seem too fantastical. The magic of the woods cannot truly reach Athens' credibility. However, Hippolyta believes them a little more than the others for, although they all seem too magical to believe, they do correspond with one another.

#### **Act V: "Athens, The great hall in the palace of Theseus"**

Magic 11: The play concludes with the fairies singing and Puck addressing the audience. The ending is magical and leaves the audience with a fantastical sentiment. Their mystical presence is magical as they bless the newlyweds.



# Act 1, Scene 1: "Athens, A hall in the palace of Theseus"

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 1

On the eve of their "nuptial hour," Act 1, Scene 1, line 1 Theseus, Duke of Athens, and Hippolyta, his wife-to-be and recently conquered queen of the Amazons, are interrupted by a frantic plea from one of the royal men of Athens, Egeus. As the two royals romantically discuss their warrior courtship and future life together, Egeus comes before the throne of Theseus, begging for help with his only daughter, Hermia. Hermia is in love with young Lysander. Problems arise because Egeus has given marriage consent to Lysander's friend, Demetrius. Demetrius, Lysander, Hermia, and Egeus bow before Theseus and Hippolyta asking for aid in this love-struck time of turmoil, still delaying the royal Athenian wedding. Egeus claims that Lysander has "with cunning...filched my daughter's heart,/ Turned her obedience, which is due to me,/ To stubborn harshness" Act 1, Scene 1, lines 36-38. Hermia defends her love with Lysander to her father, Theseus, and Hippolyta. Theseus listens to both father and daughter, but ultimately states that Hermia will "either...die the death or to abjure/ Forever the society of men" Act 1, Scene 1, lines 65-66. In accordance with Egeus, Theseus declares his plea Athenian law, and Hermia must either marry Demetrius, die, or become a nun.

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 1

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 1

Lysander reminds Demetrius of Helena, who is in love with Demetrius and "devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,/ Upon this spotted and inconstant man" Act 1, Scene 1, lines 109-110. This notice brings the supposed fickle nature of Demetrius into question and also introduces Helena, an old friend and soon-to-be nemesis of Hermia. Theseus warns Hermia to think about her decision before he leaves with Hippolyta, Egeus, and Demetrius.

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 2

The young lovers, Lysander and Hermia, are left alone as they poetically speak of their troubled lives. Lysander tells her that "the course of true love never did run smooth" Act 1, Scene 1, line 134 and begins a rather indulgent scene of self-pity. Their conversation continues and Lysander tells Hermia of his plot. He has an aunt who lives far from Athens, and the two will steal away into the woods that night and elope near his aunt. Hermia enthusiastically agrees.

Helena enters, interrupting the scheming couple. She is jealous of Hermia's hold over Demetrius, for she loves him deeply. She also yearns to have Hermia's looks, voice, and disposition, for she believes Demetrius would love her if she were more like Hermia. The two women, once friends, talk of how Helena wants Demetrius and Hermia wants nothing to do with him. Hermia cries "The more I hate, the more he follows me,"

Act 1, Scene 1, lines 198-199 while Helena wails "The more I love, the more he hateth me" Act 1, Scene 1, line 199. Lysander and Hermia tell Helena of their plot to escape to the woods and marry, against her father's wishes and Athenian law. They excite her by saying that Demetrius will dote on her, just as she dotes on him. As the two lovers exit, Helena is left onstage alone with her conniving thoughts. She blames Hermia's beauty for luring her sweet Demetrius away and remembers that "through Athens I am thought as fair as she" Act 1, Scene 1, line 227. Helena plans to tell Demetrius of their flight. She thinks he will follow them into the woods. She will follow him and regain her beloved man.

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 2



## Act 1, Scene 2: "A room in Quince's house in Athens"

The subplot comes alive as Quince the carpenter, Bottom the weaver, Flute the bellows-mender, Snout the tinker, and Starveling the tailor discuss a play they plan to put on for the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. The plans are discussed in Quince's house, and Quince is in charge of the play and assigning roles; however, Bottom wants to take on all the parts, including the lion and both male and female lovers of the play *Pyramus and Thisbe*. Bottom humorously energizes the group of lower-classmen as they decide upon parts and plan to memorize their lines so that they may be chosen by the Duke and Duchess to perform.

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 3

## Act 2, Scene 1: "Night, A wood near Athens"

The action shifts to the woods where the magical fantasy of this play is born. Puck, a "shrewd and knavish sprite," Act 2, Scene 1, line 33 enters with another fairy discussing the current confrontation of their masters, Oberon, King of the Fairies and Titania, Queen of the Fairies. Oberon and Titania are quarreling over a young Indian boy whom Oberon wants, yet Titania has locked safe away in her Fairy Queen lair, crowned with flowers and waited on by fairies. The fairy recognizes Puck as Robin Goodfellow, and he responds with a mischievous affirmative answer, telling of his omnipresence of "[lurking] in a gossip's bowl" Act 2, Scene 1, line 47 and wandering the night looking for action, slipping in and out of small places.

Topic Tracking: Magic 1

Oberon and Titania enter the stage on opposite ends, still enraged with one another. Aside from their frustration with the Indian boy, they both discuss their jealousy of the royal Athenians. Titania teases Oberon that his once love, Hippolyta, is marrying the Duke, Theseus, to which Oberon rebuts with his claim that Titania loves Theseus, as well. Titania talks of jealousy and the origins of the seasons for the mortals. Oberon still wants the Indian boy. Titania recounts the story of the boy, very poetically illustrating her close friendship with his mother. Oberon asks her how long she plans to stay in the woods, to which she responds until Theseus's wedding day. The two bicker over the boy, once again, and Titania swears she will not give him up, "Not for thy fairy kingdom," Act 2, Scene 1, 144 and leaves Oberon alone with the scheming Puck.

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 4

Topic Tracking: Magic 2

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 3

Oberon then tells Puck that he plans to teach Titania a lesson for keeping the boy. He will keep her in the woods as he conjures up mischief and says, "Thou shalt not from this grove/ Till I torment thee for this injury" Act 2, Scene 1, 146. He recalls a special flower that contains a magical juice, when placed on sleeping eyelids, will allow the person to wake up and fall in love with the first thing it sees, be it person or animal. Puck leaves to find the flower, while Oberon admits onstage alone in soliloquy that he will use the juice to "make [Titania] render up her page to me" Act 2, Scene 1, line 185.

Topic Tracking: Magic 3

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 2

Oberon makes himself invisible as he hears voices enter the woods. Demetrius arrives, searching for Lysander and Hermia, who he was told would be there. Helena follows him, begging for attention and love, when all she gets in return is scorn and vindictive treatment. After being put down and abandoned by Demetrius in the woods, she



proclaims, "We cannot fight for love, as men may do;/ We should be wooed and were not made to woo./ I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,/ to die upon the hand I love so well" Act 2, Scene 1, lines 241-244. Unrelenting and persistent, Helena plans to continue wooing Demetrius from Hermia, despite her debasement. Oberon oversees this dialogue and tells Puck, upon return, to place the magic flower juice over the eyes of Demetrius, whom "[he] shalt know...by the Athenian garments he hath on" Act 2, Scene 1, lines 263-264 so that Helena will get her man.

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 5

## Act 2, Scene 2: "Another part of the wood"

Titania tells her fairy attendants to gather round and sing her to sleep. They engage in a lullaby that lures her into a fairy slumber. The fairies leave her alone as Oberon enters her lair, squeezing magic flower juice on her eyelids. He does this, according to his plan to teach her a lesson, and upon the magical exchange says, "When thou wakest, it is thy dear:/ Wake when some vile thing is near" Act 2, Scene 2, lines 33-34. He leaves her side, excited about the dirty trick he is playing on his queen.

Topic Tracking: Magic 4

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 6

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 3

Lysander and Hermia wander through the woods, lost but still in complete adoration of each other. They decide to rest for the evening. Lysander wants to sleep next to Hermia, sharing and expressing their love. Yet, Hermia, as a virgin and maid, will not allow such a deed to take place, so she sleeps several feet from him, praying for his love to never end. Lysander, slightly upset from his denial, still agrees with Hermia, claiming loyalty is the most important thing, and he will "end life when [he ends] loyalty!" Act 2, Scene 2, line 63

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 4

Puck enters the woods complaining that he has not yet found the Athenian man on whom he was ordered to place the magic juice. He sees the sleeping couple lying separately. He sees Lysander lying and believes that he is the man Oberon was talking about. He gently places the magic juice on Lysander's eyelids and tells him "when thou wakest, let love forbid" Act 2, Scene 2, line 80.

Helena runs into the woods after Demetrius. He puts her down, once again, begging her to leave him alone, and then abandons her. Again, Helena gives a soliloquy comparing her ugliness to Hermia's beauty in a jealous rage.

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 4

Helena notices the sleeping Lysander on the ground and wonders if he is dead, wounded, or asleep. She tries to wake him, and upon his awakening, he is love-struck (because of the magic flower juice). Helena is confused and angry because she thinks that she is being mocked when Lysander says "Not Hermia but Helena I love" Act 2, Scene 2, line 113. She bursts into a jealous and self-conscious rage, blames Lysander for his ungentleman-like conduct, and leaves. Lysander sees the sleeping Hermia and looks upon her with disgust and follows after Helena into the woods.

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 5



Hermia awakes from a horrible nightmare in which she thinks a serpent is eating her heart and Lysander "sat smiling at his cruel prey" Act 2, Scene 2, line 150. She calls for him and realizes he is not there. She overreacts to his absence and vows to find him in the woods or die trying.

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 6

Topic Tracking: Magic 5

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 7

## Act 3, Scene 1: "The same spot in the wood"

As Titania sleeps in her bower, her fairy lair, the group of common players (Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout, and Starveling) enters the same spot in the woods, planning to rehearse their play. Quince the director tries to tell everyone where to go and what to do, but Bottom continues to interrupt with his prima-dona disposition, wanting to direct the play. They provide the comic relief to this play. Bottom claims that there must be a prologue in which they will tell the audience that Bottom as Pyramus does not truly die and that there must be a person to play the Wall that separates Pyramus and Thisbe before they die. The men then begin to get into position, directed by Quince, and rehearse. Puck enters behind them, watching their humorous spectacle and shocked at their close presence to Titania. They begin their enactment of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, with Bottom as Pyramus.

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 8

Puck is amused by Bottom's performance and follows him to another place in the woods. The rest of the company continues the rehearsal until Bottom re-enters the scene transformed with the head of a donkey, followed by an invisible Puck. The players, shocked at this appearance of a monster, flee the scene (followed by Puck), leaving a confused, ignorant Bottom alone. Snout and Quince return momentarily to tell him that "Thou art translated," to which Bottom responds with confusion, "You see an ass-head of your own, do you?" Act 3, Scene 1, lines 120-121 Bottom is unaware of his transformed state.

Topic Tracking: Magic 6

Titania awakens from her slumber to see a donkey face. Since Oberon placed the magic flower juice on her eyelids, she immediately falls in love with Bottom, transformed into a donkey, and asks him, "What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?...On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee" Act 3, Scene 1, lines 132, 144. Titania offers him fairy servants to wait on him and feed him with fruit and decorate him with flowers. The fairies surround him, following Titania away. He asks them for their names so he knows who is pampering him.

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 9

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 7

## Act 3, Scene 2: "Another part of the wood"

Oberon and Puck discuss the evening's events. Puck tells him that he saw a group of players who were very pitiful and gave the shallowest one of the bunch, Bottom, an ass's head. He continues to tell the story that "When in that moment, so it came to pass,/ Titania waked and straightway loved an ass" Act 3, Scene 2, lines 32-33. Oberon asks Puck if he placed the magic juice in the Athenian's eyelids while asleep. Puck proudly responds that he did.

Topic Tracking: Magic 7

Then, Hermia and Demetrius walk into the same spot in the woods arguing. Hermia blames Demetrius for Lysander's disappearance and claims that he killed him in his sleep. Demetrius is frustrated with Hermia's jabber and constant chatter and tells her he did nothing of the sort. The two bicker, until Hermia leaves in a fit of rage telling Demetrius he will never see her again alive. Demetrius then is weary from Hermia's bad mood; he still loves her, but stops following her for the meantime and falls asleep. Oberon places the magic juice on his sleeping eyelids while Puck gets Helena. Puck states in delight of the mischief and in frustration with the Athenian game of two men in love with one woman: "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" Act 3, Scene 2, lines 115

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 10

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 8

Helena enters the same spot in the woods, followed by a love-struck Lysander. She cannot understand his actions and still thinks she is being mocked. She also reminds Lysander that he is in love with Hermia and that she is in love with Demetrius. Demetrius then wakes up, opens his eyes, sees Helena, and falls in love. Helena is completely fed up and bursts at the two men:

*"O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent  
To set against me for your merriment:  
If you be civil and knew courtesy,  
You would not do me thus much injury.  
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,  
But you must join in souls to mock me too?  
If you were men, as men you are in show,  
You would not use a gentle lady so;  
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,  
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.  
You both are rivals, and love Hermia;  
And now both rivals, to mock Helena:  
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,  
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes*



*With your derision! none of noble sort  
Would so offend a virgin, and extort  
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport."* Act 2, Scene 2, lines 145-161

Hermia returns, sees the very living Lysander and asks him why he left her alone in the woods at night. He responds callously that he had no reason to stay when he wanted to find his love (namely Helena).

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 5

Helena now thinks that all three are against her and reminds Hermia of their long-lived, childhood friendship. She begins to leave. Demetrius and Lysander immediately stop her exit by beginning to duel for her hand. Hermia clings to Lysander as he shuns her with despicable insults: "Hang of, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose,/ Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!" Act 3, Scene 2, lines 260-261. Hermia responds that hate is the greatest injury and then physically turns on Helena. They fight and throw insults at one another until Helena enlists her "men" for help from Hermia. They come to her speedy rescue and leave. Hermia is in shock and exits the stage.

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 11

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 6

Oberon and Puck have been watching the entire spectacle from a hidden spot in the set. Oberon tells Puck that the chaos is his fault. He commands Puck to place more magic juice in Lysander's eyes so that the two couples will be matched up correctly by night. Then, he plans to find Titania, laugh at her spectacle with Bottom and then make amends.

Lysander returns. Puck imitates Demetrius' voice in order to get him to follow him to a specific location where he will fall asleep. He does the same trickery with Demetrius, until they both lie sleeping. Helena enters followed by Hermia. All four fall asleep and Puck works his magic: "Two of both kinds makes up four...In your waking shall be shown:/ Jack shall have Jill;/ Nought shall go ill:/ The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well" Act 3, Scene 2, lines 438-463. The four Athenians lay sleeping together, and when they wake up, will quarrel no more.

Topic Tracking: Magic 8

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 9



## Act 4, Scene 1: "The same portion of the wood"

The four lovers are still sleeping in the woods as the attention shifts to Bottom and Titania. He is tended on, spoiled, and indulged by the fairies, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed, who jump at his every hysterical command. His words change to those of a donkey, as he craves hay and remarks that he needs a shave. The fairies leave Bottom to sleep as Titania cradles him in her bed. Oberon is still looking onto the scene as Titania is pictured on top of Bottom. He develops pity for his beloved fairy queen, for he knows that his trick has gone too far. Titania is entangled in bed with an ass! Oberon decides to undo all the magic he has done, for he now has the Indian boy in his possession. "May all to Athens back again repair / And think no more of this night's accidents / But as the fierce vexation of a dream" Act 4, Scene 1, lines 70-72.

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 12

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 7

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 10

He squeezes the juice over her eyelids and she awakens in shock: "My Oberon! What visions have I seen! / Methought I was enamored of an ass" Act 4, Scene 1, lines 79-80. Oberon shows Titania the sleeping Bottom. Puck removes the donkey's face and Oberon declares that all will be well in the morning. Bottom will return to his fellow players unbeknownst to the evening's events, the two sets of young lovers will marry with Theseus and Hippolyta, and the reunited Oberon and Titania will bless the marriages.

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 8

Topic Tracking: Magic 9

The fairies leave as Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus ride into the woods on a hunting trip. They talk of their great battles of the past with Hercules and Cadmus, flirtatiously competing with one another. They come across the four lovers sleeping peacefully on the ground and Theseus reminds Egeus that this is the day in which Hermia must announce her decision: to marry Demetrius, become a nun, or die. They tell the noblemen of their actions and how they came to the woods, all confused yet all content with their mates now. Theseus is confused and asks Lysander, "I know you two are rival enemies: / How comes this gentle concord in the world, / That hatred is so far from jealousy, / To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?" Act 4, Scene 1, lines 146-149. He is delighted with their response and plans for a triple wedding in Athens. The four lovers are amazed at the conversation they just had with the Duke, Duchess, and Hermia's father. They feel strong, but also feel as if they just woke up from a dream. They recount the night as they follow the royals to Athens.

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 11

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 9

Bottom awakens from his slumber in flowing chatter and deep confusion. He jumps into "play mode," as he looks for Quince, Snout, and the rest of the players. He is ready to play Pyramus in the play. He says, "God's my life, stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream" Act 4, Scene 1, lines 208-210. He plans to have Quince write a ballad of his dream that will be called "Bottom's Dream," because it has no bottom. In his typical humorous prima-dona style, he plans to recite it before the play.

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 12

## Act 4, Scene 2: "Athens, A room in Quince's house"

The players wait desperately for Bottom in Quince's house. They are worried because their play will be a disaster without Bottom and they will also not win sixpence for putting on the play. He is the only person in all of Athens, they believe, can play Pyramus. "He hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens" Act 4, Scene 2, line 10. Bottom shows up to everyone's joy and he starts to tell his dream. While recounting his tale, he changes subject to the play, *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 13

## Act 5, Scene 1: "Athens, The great hall in the palace of Theseus"

Theseus and Hippolyta enter the great hall in his Athenian palace. They cannot believe the stories they have heard from Hermia, Helena, Demetrius, and Lysander. "I never may believe / These antique fables, nor these fairy toys" Act 5, Scene 1, lines 2-3. Hippolyta is more inclined to believe them than Theseus, for the four distinct stories all correlate well and seem to be true.

Topic Tracking: Magic 10

The four lovers come into the hall with the royals as Theseus asks Philostrate what play they will be seeing on this joyous day of weddings. He gives a humorous list of four plays, all which do not please Theseus until *Pyramus and Thisbe*. Philostrate warns Theseus of the meagerness and novelty of this tragedy turned into a comedy by the players' mirth. Theseus commands to see the play anyway, and the players enter the palace ready to perform.

Topic Tracking: Love's Foolishness 14

Quince begins the prologue, chock full of incorrect grammar, mispronunciations, and complete farce. This scene consists of a play within a play and is set onstage with the palace set and the mobile set of the players. Theseus, Lysander, and Hippolyta comment on the childish players by saying, "His speech was like a tangled chain;/ Nothing impaired, but all disordered" Act 5, Scene 1, lines 123-124. Quince continues with the prologue, summarizes the story, and points out the actors who will play Pyramus and Thisbe and the wall that separates them. Bottom and Flute enact the play as Snout speaks as the wall separating them, Snug roars as the lion, and Starveling plays the Moonshine of the night. During the entire hysterical performance, the royals comment on the wit and mediocrity of the players and play. Bottom over-acts in a prima-dona over-dramatic death scene. As he dies a slow stage death, Hippolyta states, "Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man" Act 5, Scene 1, line 295.

Topic Tracking: Jealousy 10

As the "actors" lay dead on the floor, Theseus begins to speak. Bottom interrupts them saying that there is an epilogue to their play. Theseus stops them from continuing their spectacle. The players dance and sing a short song for the audience. Everyone leaves the palace.

Puck addresses the audience, inferring that the play is at its end. "I am sent with broom before, / To sweep the dust behind the door" Act 5, Scene 1, lines 396-397. Oberon and Titania join Puck with the fairies behind them. He blesses the newlyweds and tells the fairies to go through Athens and bless all the couples in love. They all sing and Puck concludes the play with the following soliloquy:



*"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,  
Gentles, do not reprehend,  
If you pardon, we will mend.  
And, as I am an honest Puck,  
If we have unearned luck  
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,  
We will make amends ere long,  
Else the Puck a liar call.  
So, goodnight unto you all.  
Give me your hands, if we be friends,  
And Robin shall restore amends."* Act 5, Scene 1, lines 430-445.

Topic Tracking: Magic 11

Topic Tracking: Dreams/Sleeping 12