William Shakespeare's
A Midsummer Night's Dream:
A Discussion Guide

David Bruce

Dedicated with Love to Josephine Saturday Bruce

Educate Yourself

Read Like A Wolf Eats

Feel Free to Give This Book to Anyone Free of Charge

Be Excellent to Each Other

Books Then, Books Now, Books Forever

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

The purpose of this book is educational. I have read, studied and taught William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and I wish to pass on what I have learned to other people who are interested in studying William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In particular, I think that the readers of this short introduction to William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be bright high school seniors and college first-year students, as well as intelligent adults who simply wish to study *A Midsummer Night's Dream* despite not being literature majors.

This book uses a question-and-answer format. This book goes through the play scene by scene. I recommend that you read the relevant section of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, then read my comments, then go back and re-read the relevant section of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. However, do what works for you.

Teachers may find this book useful as a discussion guide for the comedy. Teachers can have students read a section of the play, then teachers can ask students selected questions from this study guide.

This discussion guide uses a few quotations from other sources; this is consistent with fair use:

§ 107. Limitations on exclusive rights: Fair use

Release date: 2004-04-30

Notwithstanding the provisions of sections 106 and 106A, the fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords or by any other means specified by that section, for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright. In determining whether

the use made of a work in any particular case is a fair use the factors to be considered shall include —

(1) the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes;

(2) the nature of the copyrighted work;

(3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and

(4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

The fact that a work is unpublished shall not itself bar a finding of fair use if such finding is made upon consideration of all the above factors.

Source of Fair Use information:

<http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/107>.

Very Important Note: The page numbers refer to the Signet Classic edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. However, the text is that of an online edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* available at <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/midsummer/full.html>. This means that mostly minor variations in the text will occur. The short quotations (quotations not in block format) are from the Signet Classic edition. The long quotations (quotations in block format) are from the online edition. Also, I am not using the MLA format, although you may require your students to use it.

Introduction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

• *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written about the same time as *Romeo and Juliet*, in 1594 or 1595 or 1596. These two plays, along with the history play *Richard II* mark a breakthrough period in which Shakespeare becomes one of the great playwrights, perhaps the best who has ever lived.

• In history, the play is first mentioned by Francis Meres in 1598.

• Shakespeare's comic target in this play is love and the crazy things it makes us do. For example, when you are confronted with two individuals who are alike in almost every way, love can make you hate one individual while you fall in love with the other. Love can also make you fall in love with an ass — someone who is unsuited to you in every way.

• Shakespeare deals with the nonrational in this play. Some things are rational, such as mathematics and logic. Other things are irrational, such as putting your hand in a blender and turning it on just to see what it feels like. The realm of the nonrational is the realm of beauty, poetry, laughter, dance, sex, and love. Art connects the world of the rational and the nonrational. A great deal of intelligence goes into producing art, but much art explores the world of the nonrational.

• Love is nonrational. Suppose you are confronted with two individuals who are basically alike in beauty, form, character, and personality, but one individual is rich and the other individual is poor. Reason would tell you to fall in love with the rich individual, but love may make you fall in love with the poor individual.

• The world of the nonrational appears to be more powerful than the world of the rational. Theseus is a very rational man,

but despite his best intentions, he cannot help breaking out into laughter at the bad acting and bad play of the craftsmen.

• Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) wrote the music for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. That music included the sound of "hee-haw," representing Bottom's transformation. It also included wedding music — music that is traditionally played at weddings today.

• *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has different casts of characters, who speak in different ways:

1) The craftsmen speak in prose, except when acting in their play, when they speak very bad poetry.

2) Theseus and Hippolyta speak in a conventional courtly style; they speak blank verse.

3) The lovers also speak poetry; they speak blank verse and rhymed couplets.

4) The fairies speak a dazzling variety of very good poetry.

• We can look at the characters as representing four realms:

1) The craftsmen represent the material world.

2) Theseus and Hippolyta represent a rational, orderly, social world of law and good behavior.

3) The four lovers represent the world of the emotions.

4) The fairies represent the nonrational/spiritual world.

A well-ordered life will pay obeisance in the proper degree to each realm. We need to participate in the material world to get money for the material things we need, we need reason

and laws, we need emotions such as love, and a life without nonrational/spiritual things (including love) is an empty life.

• Shakespeare seems to have used many sources for this play:

> • Plutarch's "Life of Theseus" for information about Theseus.
>
> • Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale" for information about Theseus and Hippolyta.
>
> • Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for information about Pyramus and Thisbe.
>
> • The Roman writer Apuleius' story *The Golden Ass*, which is about a man who is transformed into an ass.
>
> • English folklore, for information about fairies and about May Day and about Midsummer's Night (June 23/summer solstice).
>
> Solstice: "Either of two times of the year, the summer solstice or the winter solstice, when the sun is at its greatest distance from the celestial equator" — the *American Heritage College Dictionary*.

• May Day was a folk festival where a King and Queen were elected and then went to the nobles' houses and gave blessings. Both May Day and Midsummer's Day were a time for lovers to meet. Lots of partying and tales of fairies took place on these days.

• Many Shakespearean comedies end the way *A Midsummer Night's Dream* does, with music and dance.

• The actors often mention that they are in the woods and that it is night. Because the theaters in Shakespeare's time did not have artificial lights and had little scenery, this dialogue was

necessary to let the audience know where and when a scene was set.

• Many of the fairies are very small. Before this play, fairies were portrayed as being of human size. If you see Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* on the screen, you will see that the elves are human-sized. Tolkien follows an older tradition from before Shakespeare; Shakespeare gave us tiny-sized fairies such as Tinkerbelle. Tolkien wanted his elves to be formidable.

• During Shakespeare's time, the Puritans thought that plays were sinful and they wanted to close down the theaters, thus censoring all plays. In Act 5, Shakespeare seems to be arguing against censorship. Certainly, the play within a play contains nothing harmful. Shakespeare makes the point that the audience can distinguish between illusion and reality by having Snug point out that he is not a real lion, but a man portraying a lion. The fears of Snug and of the Puritans are pointless.

Chapter 1: Act 1

Act 1, Scene 1

• If you have read this play before, define "theme" and identify the main theme of this play.

Here are two definitions of "theme":

> Theme is the general idea or insight about life that a writer wishes to express. All of the elements of literary terms contribute to theme. A simple theme can often be stated in a single sentence.
>
> Source:
> http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/theme.html
>
> Date Downloaded: 28 November 2003
>
> THEME: A central idea or statement that unifies and controls the entire work. The theme can take the form of a brief and meaningful insight or a comprehensive vision of life; it may be a single idea such as "progress" (in many Victorian works), "order and duty" (in many early Roman works), "seize-the-day" (in many late Roman works), or "jealousy" (in Shakespeare's *Othello*). The theme may also be a more complicated doctrine, such as Milton's theme in *Paradise Lost*, "to justify the ways of God to men," or "Socialism is the only sane reaction to the labor abuses in Chicago meat-packing plants" (Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*). A theme is the author's way of communicating and sharing ideas, perceptions, and feelings with readers, and it may be directly stated in the book, or it may only be implied. Compare with *motif* and *leit-motif*.

Source:
http://guweb2.gonzaga.edu/faculty/wheeler/lit_terms_T.html

Date Downloaded: 28 November 2003

The main theme of this play is love. In particular, the main theme is the silly things that being in love make us do.

Act 1, Scene 1

• Shakespeare deals with the nonrational in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Define *rational*, *irrational*, and *nonrational*.

Shakespeare deals with the nonrational in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

Rational: mathematics and logic.

Irrational: actions such as putting your hand in a blender and turning it on just to see what it feels like.

The realm of the nonrational is the realm of beauty, poetry, laughter, dance, sex, and love.

Love is nonrational.

Act 1, Scene 1

• Compare and contrast Theseus and Hippolyta.

This scene introduces us to the royal court of Athens.

Theseus is very eager to marry Hippolyta, but Hippolyta is not so eager to marry Theseus.

Theseus

Male

Husband-to-Be

Conqueror

Eager to be Wed

Duke of Athens, a Center of Civilization

Speaks in Blank Verse

A Noble

A Warrior

Hippolyta

Female

Wife-to-Be

Conquered

Not So Eager to be Wed

Queen of the Wild Amazons

Speaks in Blank Verse

A Noble

Formerly a Warrior

Theseus conquered the Amazons and took Hippolyta as his captive. He fell in love with her and married her.

Theseus says that the time is going slowly before they are to wed. Hippolyta, on the other hand, says that the time will go quickly. Therefore, Theseus is much more eager to get married than Hippolyta is.

Amazons would not in fact be eager to get married. They wanted to live without men.

The theme of the play is the silly things that love makes us do. Right away, we see that Theseus has fallen in love and wants to marry someone with whom, by all accounts, he

ought to be incompatible. Love is making Theseus do something silly.

Act 1, Scene 1

• Who were the Amazons?

Amazons were wild women. They lived without men, and they were a warrior race. Most ancient women were not warriors.

Amazons were archers, and if one of their breasts interfered with their archery, they would cut the breast off.

To have children, they would kidnap men, have sex with them, and then kill them. The Amazons had sex without marriage.

When the babies were born, the Amazons kept, nurtured, and raised the girl babies, and they left the boy babies in the woods to die.

On p. 3, we read:

> *Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants*
>
> **THESEUS**
>
> Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
>
> Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
>
> Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow
>
> This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,
>
> Like to a step-dame or a dowager
>
> Long withering out a young man’s revenue.

HIPPOLYTA

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;

Four nights will quickly dream away the time;

And then the moon, like to a silver bow

New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night

Of our solemnities.

Act 1, Scene 1

• What do we learn about Egeus, Hermia's father, in scene 1?

The theme of the power a father has over a daughter is shown by Egeus' wanting his daughter, Hermia, to marry Demetrius, although she wants to marry Lysander. Egeus wants Hermia to be put to death if she does not obey his wishes. However, Theseus says that an alternate punishment for Hermia is virginity forever in a nunnery.

Hermia's father Egeus (three syllables) wants Hermia to marry Demetrius rather than Lysander.

Hermia's father is not a loving father here. He prefers that Hermia die rather than wed a young man he does not want her to marry.

This, of course, is an outrageous father and an outrageous situation. For one thing, very little difference exists between Demetrius and Lysander. It should not matter to Egeus which young man marries Hermia, since both contenders for her hand are well-born Athenian gentlemen.

This play is a romantic comedy, and we have a romantic-comedy situation here.

In addition, the theme of this play is love, and Egeus loves Demetrius and does not love Lysander. Egeus makes a big distinction between the two men when actually the two men have very little difference. Egeus also loves Demetrius more than his own daughter, as he wants his daughter to die if she will not marry Demetrius. Love is making Egeus want to do something silly, stupid, and immoral. Of course, no one is killed in this comedy.

Egeus is accustomed to obedience. He orders the two young men to stand forth at various times, and they obey his orders.

On pp. 4-5, we read:

EGEUS

Full of vexation come I, with complaint

Against my child, my daughter Hermia.

Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,

This man hath my consent to marry her.

Stand forth, Lysander: and my gracious duke,

This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child;

Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,

And interchanged love-tokens with my child:

Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,

With feigning voice verses of feigning love,

And stolen the impression of her fantasy

With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,

Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers

Of strong prevailment in unharden'd youth:

With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,

Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,

To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,

Be it so she; will not here before your grace

Consent to marry with Demetrius,

I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,

As she is mine, I may dispose of her:

Which shall be either to this gentleman

Or to her death, according to our law

Immediately provided in that case.

Act 1, Scene 1

• What do we learn about Hermia in scene 1?

The main point: Hermia shows a lot of spunk in this scene. She declines to marry Demetrius although her father orders her to marry him.

1. We learn that Hermia loves Lysander and not Demetrius.

Hermia tells her father that straight out.

2. We learn that Hermia is willing to stand up to her father.

She tells her father that she will not marry Demetrius although he is her father's choice of a husband for her.

3. We learn that Hermia is willing to run away from Athens with her boyfriend.

Hermia and Lysander decide that they will run away from Athens so that they can escape the laws of Athens. Instead, they will go to the house of Lysander's aunt, and there they will be married.

4. We learn that Hermia can speak poetry.

At first, she and the other lovers speak blank verse, but quickly they begin to speak a lighter form of poetry that consists of rhymed couplets.

Act 1, Scene 1

• Compare and contrast Demetrius and Lysander.

Lysander

Young Athenian gentleman

Has money

Loves Hermia

Loved by Hermia

Disliked by Egeus

Faithful to Hermia

Demetrius

Young Athenian gentleman

Has money

Loves Hermia

Loved by Helena

Liked by Egeus

Not faithful to Helena

Basically, Lysander and Demetrius are very much alike. They are interchangeable young Athenian gentlemen. Their only difference is in whom they love and in who loves them.

We must keep in mind that the theme of this play is the silly things that love makes us do. Love makes a distinction where

no distinction exists. Lysander and Demetrius are completely alike in most respects, yet Hermia loves one young man and not the other.

Act 1, Scene 1

• Theseus and Hippolyta speak in blank verse. At first, the young lovers speak in blank verse, but then they switch to rhymed couplets. Define "blank verse" and "rhymed couplets." What do you suppose the uses of these types of verse are? Which is more serious, and which is less serious?

Theseus and Hippolyta speak blank verse. The young lovers start out by speaking blank verse, but they also speak rhymed couplets.

Blank Verse

Here are a couple of definitions of "blank verse":

> BLANK VERSE (also called unrhymed iambic pentameter): Unrhymed lines of ten syllables each with the even-numbered syllables bearing the accents. Blank verse has been called the most "natural" verse form for dramatic works, since it supposedly is the verse form most close to natural rhythms of English speech, and it has been the primary verse form of English drama and narrative poetry since the mid-sixteenth Century. Such verse is blank in rhyme only; it usually has a definite meter. (Variations in this meter may appear occasionally.) The Earl of Surrey first used the term blank verse in his 1540 translation of *The Aeneid* of Virgil. As an example, in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Theseus' speech to Hippolyta appears in blank verse:
>
> The poet's eye, in a 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. (5.1.12-17)

Source:
http://guweb2.gonzaga.edu/faculty/wheeler/lit_terms_B.html

Date Downloaded: 29 November 2003

Blank verse is unrhymed iambic pentameter. The "blank" is the unrhymed part. It consists of five (penta) iambs. An iamb is a foot (a section of a line) that has two syllables, the first unaccented and the second accented. (Example: *remark* or *repeat* are both iambic because they have two syllables and the second syllable is stronger than the first.) The full line of the poem would have five feet.

Poor Thomas threw his money all away.

(Listen for the stresses or stronger syllables.)

Poor THOMas THREW his MONey ALL aWAY.

(The capitalized syllables are the stressed ones. Every pair of unaccented and accented syllable form an iambic foot. There are five feet in the line so it will be pentameter. This is iambic pentameter.

Source:
http://masconomet.org/teachers/trevenen/litterms.htm#B

Date Downloaded: 29 November 2003

Rhymed Couplets

Here are a couple of definitions of "rhyme scheme":

> Rhyme Scheme is rhymed words at the ends of lines.
>
> Example:
>
> Roses are red
>
> Violets are blue
>
> Sugar is sweet
>
> And so are you.
>
> Source: http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/rhyme_scheme.html
>
> Date Downloaded: 29 November 2003
>
> RHYME SCHEME: The pattern of rhyme. The traditional way to mark these patterns of rhyme is to assign a letter of the alphabet to each rhyming sound at the end of each line. For instance, here is the first stanza of James Shirley's poem "Of Death," from 1659. I have marked each line with of the first stanza with the alphabetical letter to indicate rhyme:
>
> The glories of our blood and state (A)
>
> Are shadows, not substantial things; (B)
>
> There is no armor against fate; (A)
>
> Death lays his icy hand on kings: (B)
>
> Scepter and crown (C)
>
> Must tumble down, (C)

> And in the dust be equal made (D)
>
> With the poor crooked scythe and spade. (D)
>
> Thus, the rhyme scheme for each stanza in the poem above is ABABCCDD. It is conventional in most poetic genres that every stanza follow the same rhyme scheme, though it is possible to have interlocking rhyme scheme such as terza rima. It is also common for poets to deliberately vary their rhyme scheme for artistic purposes — such as Philip Larkin's "Toads," in which the poetic speaker complains about his desire to stop working so hard, and his rhymes degenerate into half-rhymes as an indication that he doesn't want to go to the effort of perfection. Among the most common rhyme schemes in English, we find heroic couplets (AA, BB, CC, DD, EE, FF, etc.) and quatrains (ABAB, CDCD, etc.), but the possible permutations are theoretically infinite.
>
> Source:
> http://guweb2.gonzaga.edu/faculty/wheeler/lit_terms_R.html
>
> Date Downloaded: 29 November 2003

Here is a definition of "couplet" in *A Handbook to Literature* by William Harmon and Hugh Holman:

> Couplet: "Two consecutive lines of verse with end rhymes" (109).

Reasons for Using Blank Verse and Rhymed Couplets

Blank verse is more serious and is used in tragedy. Theseus and Hippolyta are rulers, so blank verse is a good choice for them.

Rhymed couplets are more playful and are a good choice of verse for the lovers.

Act 1, Scene 1

• Explain the conversation about love that Lysander and Hermia have that begins on pp. 7-8 with Lysander saying:

> **Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,**
>
> **Could ever hear by tale or history,**
>
> **The course of true love never did run smooth;**
>
> **But, either it was different in blood, —**

Pt. 1

> **LYSANDER**
>
> Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
>
> Could ever hear by tale or history,
>
> The course of true love never did run smooth;
>
> But, either it was different in blood, —
>
> **HERMIA**
>
> O cross! too high to be enthrall'd to low

Lysander talks about books he has read and stories he has heard. In these books and stories, those who love truly do not have an easy time of it. Problems always arise. For example, the man and woman could be different in blood. This means that they are different in social class. One is high born; the other is low born.

Hermia replies that one lover may be of too high a class to marry the loved one of lower class.

Pt. 2

LYSANDER

Or else misgraffed in respect of years, —

HERMIA

O spite! too old to be engaged to young.

Note: “Misgraffed” (1.1.137) means ill-matched.

Or they could be ill matched in terms of years. One lover could be too old to marry the other lover who is younger.

Pt. 3

LYSANDER

Or else it stood upon the choice of friends, —

HERMIA

O hell! to choose love by another’s eyes.

Or it could be the case that friends must choose whom one will love. In this case, the friends choose the wrong person for one to love. (In some cases, friends dislike the one you choose to love.) Friends may include rulers such as Theseus, and perhaps parents.

Pt. 4

LYSANDER

Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,

War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,

Making it momentany as a sound,

Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;

Brief as the lightning in the collied night,

That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,

And ere a man hath power to say ‘Behold!’

The jaws of darkness do devour it up:

So quick bright things come to confusion.

Sometimes, the two do love each other, but then other problems arise. War can arise. Death can arise. Sickness can arise. Sometimes, problems come between two loved ones.

Pt. 5

HERMIA

If then true lovers have been ever cross’d,

It stands as an edict in destiny:

Then let us teach our trial patience,

Because it is a customary cross,

As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,

Wishes and tears, poor fancy’s followers.

Because true love never runs smooth, our love will not run smooth; therefore, we should bear our cross with patience.

Pt. 6

LYSANDER

A good persuasion:

Lysander agrees with Hermia — what she says is a good principle.

Act 1, Scene 1

• What do we learn about Helena in scene 1? Why does she tell Demetrius that Hermia is running away from Athens?

Helena is in love with Demetrius, but he no longer loves her. This has broken her heart.

Because Demetrius is now in love with Hermia, Helena would love to be Hermia.

Helena is thought throughout Athens to be as "fair" (pretty) (1.1.227) as Hermia, but since Demetrius does not love her, Helena would love to have Hermia's features.

Helena tells Demetrius about the flight of Helena and Lysander from Athens because she wants him back. She says on pp. 11-12:

> I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
>
> Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
>
> Pursue her; and for this intelligence
>
> If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:
>
> But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
>
> To have his sight thither and back again.

The last line is significant. Apparently, Helena hopes to get Demetrius to love her again. We will see that in fact she will attempt to do just that. Helena follows Demetrius into the woods when he goes after Hermia and Lysander. She hopes that perhaps something will happen that night to make him fall in love with her again.

Once again we see the theme of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Helena is rejected by Demetrius, yet she continues

to love him. She is even willing to go with him into a wood at night in an attempt to win him back.

Act 1, Scene 1

• Suppose you are a play director. How can you make it easier for the theater audience to identify the four lovers and to tell who are couples?

The four lovers are much alike. Demetrius is very similar to Lysander. Helena is very similar to Hermia. A person producing the play needs to figure out how to help the audience to identity which male lover goes with each female lover. Some ways to do this are through height, color of hair, and color of clothing.

We learn later that Helena is tall and that Hermia is short, so one way to differentiate the couples is to have Helena and Demetrius both tall and Hermia and Lysander both short. Another way to help the audience is to use color. For example, Helena and Demetrius can both wear red, while Hermia and Lysander can both wear blue. In addition, we learn later that Hermia is dark, so Hermia and Lysander could have dark hair, while Helena and Demetrius can both have light hair.

Maybe Lysander and Demetrius could have their first initial on their clothing.

In a modern dress production, maybe one couple could be punk, while the other could be traditional (like Norman Rockwell).

Act 1, Scene 1

• How can you as readers tell the two couples apart?

By the way, as readers you can use alphabetizing to tell the lovers apart. Helena comes before Hermia, and Demetrius

comes before Lysander. Helena and Demetrius are one couple, while Hermia and Lysander are the other couple.

Act 1, Scene 2

• What do we learn about Bottom, the weaver, in Act 1, Scene 2?

This scene introduces us to the craftsmen. They speak prose, which is a major contrast to the poetry spoken by the other characters in the play.

The craftsmen provide very broad comedy.

No one can doubt that Bottom is a fool, but the reader will have to decide if he is a likeable fool. (He has friends, so we have evidence that he is a likeable fool.)

Bottom is an enthusiastic ham actor with bad taste in poetry.

1. Bottom is a ham actor.

Bottom is definitely a ham actor. He is willing to play the part of Pyramus, who is after all the hero of the play, but he would prefer to play the part of a tyrant to that of a lover, as a tyrant gets to rant and rave on the stage. Actually, Bottom does give us a preview of the way he would play a tyrant, as he recites a few lines of bad poetry in Ercles' (Hercules') vein:

> The raging rocks
>
> And shivering shocks
>
> Shall break the locks
>
> Of prison gates;
>
> And Phibbus' car
>
> Shall shine from far

And make and mar

The foolish Fates.

However, Bottom wishes to do more than play the part of Pyramus. He wishes to play ALL the parts of the play. He tries to takes the parts of Thisby and of the Lion as well as the part of Pyramus, but Quince, the playwright, won't let him.

2. Bottom misuses words.

Bottom misuses words often.

• He tells Quince to call the names of the actors *generally* (1.2.2) instead of *individually*.

• When acting the part of a tyrant, he refers to *Phibbus'* car (1.2.36) instead of *Phoebus'* car. Phoebus refers to the Sun-god Phoebus Apollo.

• When trying to take the part of Thisby, Bottom says that he will speak in a *monstrous little* voice (1.2.53).

• When trying to take the part of the lion, he says (p. 15),

BOTTOM

I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

• He tells his fellow actors that they will meet to rehearse the play most *obscenely* (1.2.108) instead of most *seemly*.

3. Bottom is enthusiastic.

Certainly, Bottom has a lot of enthusiasm for life. When confronted with a task, he seems to want to take it on headlong. We see this in his enthusiasm for acting.

4. Bottom is a fool.

Bottom has bad taste in acting and in poetry. He misuses words constantly.

5. Bottom has friends.

Bottom has friends, and his friends seem to look up to him. For example, they give him the main male part in their play.

Act 1, Scene 2

• In Act 1, Scene 2, what do we learn about Quince, Flute, and Snug?

Quince is a bad playwright and a bad poet.

None of the craftsmen is competent with words. Quince writes a "lamentable / comedy" (1.2.11-12), and Bottom misuses words constantly.

Quince

Quince is the most educated person among the mechanicals. He has written the play, and he is directing.

Flute

Flute will play Thisby, although he prefers not to because he has a beard coming.

In the Elizabethan stage, there were no actresses. Instead, men played the parts of women. A young, beardless boy would play the part of a woman.

Here, Quince says that Flute can wear a mask and act with his voice.

Snug

Snug will play the lion. He asks for the part in advance because he is "slow of study" (1.2.68).

Fortunately, all he has to do is roar, so there is no part of him to study.

Act 1, Scene 2

• Why do the rude mechanicals speak in prose?

Basically, the rude mechanicals aren't bright enough to speak in poetry.

Also, the world of work is usually separate from the nonrational world.

Blank verse is the serious language of the nobility.

Rhymed couplets are the language of young lovers.

The fairies speak a dazzling variety of poetry.

The rude mechanicals speak prose.

Chapter 2: Act 2

Act 2

• What are the functions of Act 2?

Act 2 introduces the fairies of the play, and it also sets in motion much confusion among the four your Athenian lovers.

The fairies speak a dazzling variety of poetry, and they form a contrast to the serious lovers and the bumbling craftsmen.

Act 2

• What sort of language is used by the royal court (Theseus and Hippolyta), the craftsmen, the young lovers, and the fairies?

The Royal Court (Theseus and Hippolyta)

Theseus and Hippolyta will soon be married. They are members of the royal court, and they speak in a dignified way. They speak blank verse.

The Craftsmen

They craftsmen are comic characters of the working class, and they speak prose. In addition, they are preparing a play to be performed on the wedding day of Theseus and Hippolyta. The play has rhymed quatrains: four lines with the rhyme scheme ABAB. The poetry is very bad, with words being repeated (as in the third line below) simply to fill the metrical line (p. 76):

> O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!
>
> O night, which ever art when day is not!
>
> O night, O night! alack, alack, alack,
>
> I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot!

The Young Lovers

The four young lovers whose love does not run smooth run off to the woods. They are noble, and so they start the play by speaking blank verse, but in the woods they speak rhymed couplets.

The Fairies

> The fairies speak a dazzling variety of poetry. Meters and rhyme schemes vary enormously. This is the first speech by a fairy (pp. 17-18):
>
> 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 favours,
>
> In those freckles live their savours:
>
> I must go seek some dewdrops here
>
> And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
>
> Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:
>
> Our queen and all our elves come here anon.

The first four lines are a rhymed quatrain that has an unusual meter known as cretic dimeter: two feet with a stress pattern of three syllables with the first and the third syllable stressed (p. 17).

O-ver HILL, O-ver DALE,

THORough BUSH, THORough BRI-er,

O-ver PARK, O-ver PALE,

THORough FLOOR, THORough FI-re,

"Thorough" is an archaic form of "through"; it has two syllables.

The fairy also uses other meters: trochaic tetrameter, and iambic tetrameter, and finally iambic pentameter, which is the most often used form of poetry in the play.

Act 2

• What are some characteristics of the fairies?

Titania and Oberon are powerful.

Titania and Oberon's quarrel has powerful effects on nature. Fogs that carry disease arise and go through the land. The rivers flood, destroying crops. Disease kills cattle, and crows grow fat by eating the corpses of the cattle. Mud covers the land. Although Titania and Oberon are in general good, their quarrel has bad effects for the natural world and for human beings. See pp. 20-21.

Titania and Oberon are capable of jealousy.

Titania is jealous of Oberon because of his love of Hippolyta, and Oberlin is jealous of Titania because of her love for Theseus. Both want the Indian boy named Ganymede, and Oberon may be jealous because Titania pays so much attention to the Indian boy instead of to him.

Titania and Oberon are spirits of love.

Titania and Oberon are spirits of love. They have come to the wood to bless the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta.

Puck is mischievous.

Puck is a jokester, a jester, who enjoys playing practical jokes. He can turn himself into a stool, but when you try to sit on it, Puck slides out from under you, and you fall to the floor. When Puck comes across travelers, he enjoys misleading them and getting them lost. He can imitate animals and take their form. He can make himself into a crab apple in a glass of ale, and make the ale spill on the person drinking it. None of these pranks is evil; they are merely annoying to the person who is the target of the practical joke and funny to the people who witness it. See p. 19.

The fairies are not evil, although they can be mischievous — Puck is certainly mischievous when he plays practical jokes.

Many fairies are small.

We learn on p. 18 that the elves are afraid because of the quarrel between Oberon and Titania, and that when the King and Queen of the fairies meet and quarrel,

> […] all their elves for fear
>
> Creep into acorn-cups and hide them there.

The cup of an acorn is very small, indeed. (It is the part that covers the top of an acorn.)

We learn on p. 27 that Titania gives this order to some of her fairies:

> Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,
>
> To make my small elves coats, […]

Note: “rere-mice” are bats.

We learn on p. 26 that Oberon says,

> And there the snake throws her enamell’d skin,
>
> Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:

A cast-off snake skin is wide enough to make a garment for a fairy.

The size of the fairies as described in the play is very tiny. They can hide in the top of an acorn. The wings of a bat can make a coat for a fairy. A snakeskin is wide enough to wrap a fairy in. On stage, Titania and Oberon are played by normal-sized adults, but the minor fairies such as Cobweb, Peaseblossom, and Mustardseed are often played by children.

Flowers are important to fairies.

The fairies are associated with flowers, which are things of beauty.

One of Titania’s favorite resting places is filled with flowers. One of the fairies’ occupations is to kill “cankers” (2.2.3) that would kill flowers. Another of the fairies’ occupations includes placing dewdrops on flowers.

Oberon understands the magical properties of flowers, including which one will make a good love charm and which one is the antidote to the love charm.

The fairies sing, dance, and speak poetry.

The conversation of the fairies consists of a dazzling variety of poetry. Frequently, they dance a round (dance in a circle). Titania’s attendants sing her to sleep.

The fairies live in a world that is nonrational. They don't work, but they do such things as dance and sing. Poetry is their normal mode of speech.

The fairies are creatures especially of moonlight.

We will find out that they are able to go about by day (they are not evil creatures of the night, but "are spirits of another sort" (3.2.388), but they are normally active at night.

The fairies are immortal.

We shall see this later: "Hail, mortal!" (3.1.176).

Act 2, Scene 1

• What do we learn about Puck in scene 1?

1. Puck serves Oberon.

When we first see Puck, he tells a fairy that she ought not to let Titania come within the sight of Oberon because he is angry at her. Later, Oberon sends Puck after a magic flower, and Puck gets it for him. Puck also obeys his order to put the juice of the magic flower on the eyes of an Athenian man — even though Puck incorrectly follows this instruction.

2. Puck has many names.

Puck's names include Robin Goodfellow and Hobgoblin.

3. Puck is famous.

The fairy recognizes him, but he does not recognize the fairy.

4. Puck is a jester and a practical joker. He is mischievous — but not evil.

Puck is a jester to Oberon and makes him smile.

When Puck identifies himself to the fairy (who has recognized him), he tells of many practical jokes he has

played on human beings — and they are played mainly on human beings.

Puck has many talents that aid him in his jests and practical jokes:

- Puck imitates animal sounds. He neighs like a young female horse to trick an older horse.
- He floats in a bowl like a crab apple and makes an old woman splash herself with the ale.
- He imitates a three-foot stool, and when a woman tries to sit on him, he slips out from under her and she falls down.

The fairy also talks about some of Puck's tricks:

- Puck frightens young girls from the villages.
- Puck skims the milk — and apparently drinks the cream.
- Puck sometimes makes women churn a handmill for grinding grain in vain. In other words, they churn and churn and get no result for their labor. He also does much the same with drink — it doesn't froth (form foam when ale is poured into a tankard) when it should.
- He also misleads travellers during the night.

5. Puck has supernatural powers.

On p. 23, Puck says,

> I'll put a girdle round about the earth
>
> In forty minutes.

In other words, he can travel around the Earth in only 40 minutes.

He can also change his shape, appearing to be a crabapple or a stool when he wishes.

Act 2, Scene 1

• What do we learn about Titania and Oberon in Act 2, scene 1?

Titania

Titania is the Queen of the fairy world.

Titania is not willing to give the boy Ganymede to Oberon.

Titania lives among flowers, beauty, song, dance, and poetry.

Oberon

Oberon is the King of the fairy world.

Oberon has a good knowledge of magic and charms.

Oberon, like the other fairies, including Titania, has poetry as his natural language.

Oberon is very capable of anger. His anger at Titania has upset the natural order.

Oberon is capable of kindness. He wishes to help the young Athenian lovers, although Puck's mistake results in chaos that is sorted out by the end of the play.

Act 2, Scene 1

• What are Titania and Oberon quarreling about?

One theme of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is love out of balance, and we see that enacted in the quarrel between Titania and Oberon over the Indian boy named Ganymede.

Their quarrel has caused disturbances in nature such as the flooding of rivers.

Jealousy

Oberon and Titania are jealous.

This is one of the silly things that love can make us do. Love can make us jealous.

The Quarrel

They are quarreling about an Indian boy named Ganymede. Oberon calls the boy a changeling.

Changeling: "A child secretly exchanged for another." — *The American Heritage Dictionary*.

However, Titania says that the boy is the child of one of her votaries — a woman who was fiercely devoted to her. I write "was," because the woman died in childbirth — she was mortal.

Oberon wants the boy to be his "henchman."

Henchman: "A loyal supporter or subordinate." — *The American Heritage Dictionary*.

A henchman is also a page.

There is also some jealousy between them. Titania seems to be partial to Theseus, and Oberon seems to be partial to Hippolyta:

Titania refers to Hippolyta as Oberon's "buskined mistress and warrior love" (2.1.71).

Oberon says to Titania that he knows "thy love to Theseus" (3.1.76).

• Should Ganymede be raised by Oberon or by Titania?

Boys should be raised in the company of fathers. We don't want, I think, for a boy to be raised entirely by women. However, it is best, I think, for Ganymede to be raised by both Oberon and Titania.

Act 2, Scene 1

• How has the quarrel between Oberon and Titania affected the natural world (2.1.81-117)?

The quarrel of Titania and Oberon has greatly affected the natural world, as we find out in a speech Titania makes on pp. 20-21.

Before describing the effect that their quarrel has had on the natural world, Titania tells Oberon that he is jealous, and that she does not have the relationship with Theseus that Oberon seems to think she has (20):

> These are the forgeries of jealousy:

The two have been quarreling for a while. Titania has wanted to dance with her fairies, but Oberon comes along and breaks up the dance with his quarreling (20):

> And never, since the middle summer's spring,
>
> Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
>
> By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
>
> Or in the beached margent of the sea,
>
> To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
>
> But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.

Because of their quarrel, the wind has picked pestilence-riddled fogs from the ocean and dropped them on the land. Because of their quarrel, the rivers have flooded (20):

Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,

As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea

Contagious fogs; which falling in the land

Have every pelting river made so proud

That they have overborne their continents:

Because of their quarrel, people can no longer grow food. The flooding makes corn rot before ears are able to develop. Because of their quarrel, cattle die of disease and crows grow fat (20):

The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,

The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn

Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard;

The fold stands empty in the drowned field,

And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;

Because of their quarrel, games can't be played because of all the mud from the flooding and paths are indistinguishable because no one walks on them any more — once more because of all the flooding (21):

The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,

And the quaint mazes in the wanton green

For lack of tread are undistinguishable:

No winter festivities are to be found — one line may be a typo, and some editors change "here" to "cheer." No carols, as in Christmas carols, are to be heard (21):

The human mortals want their winter here;

No night is now with hymn or carol blest:

Night air was thought to be dangerous, and the moon causes the air to give people rheumatism (21):

> Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
>
> Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
>
> That rheumatic diseases do abound:

Because of their quarrel, even the seasons are mixed up. There is frost when there should be no frost (21):

> And thorough this distemperature we see
>
> The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
>
> Far in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
>
> And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
>
> An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
>
> Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,
>
> The childing autumn, angry winter, change
>
> Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,
>
> By their increase, now knows not which is which:

Why is nature so badly messed up? Because of the quarrel between Titania and Oberon (21):

> And this same progeny of evils comes
>
> From our debate, from our dissension;
>
> We are their parents and original.

Act 2, Scene 1

• What is the revenge that Oberon seeks against Titania?

Titania is unwilling to give Oberon the Indian boy, and therefore Oberon plots revenge.

Oberon uses a magic flower to make Titania fall in love with the first creature she sees after awaking. The flower is described in this way (22-23):

> **OBERON**
>
> That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
>
> Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
>
> Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
>
> At a fair vestal throned by the west,
>
> And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
>
> As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
>
> But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
>
> Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
>
> And the imperial votaress passed on,
>
> In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
>
> Yet mark'd I where the bolt 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.

The flower is a pansy, a very common flower, but it been struck by Cupid's "love shaft" (2.1.159). This seems significant to me, as it is a combination of the common and

the rare. With so many people on our planet, being in love is apparently a common experience, but anyone who is in love would call a special and rare experience.

Puck will find the flower and give it to Oberon, who will then squeeze the juice onto Titania's eyes. Oberon tells Puck (23),

> Fetch me that flower; the herb I shew'd thee once:
>
> The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid
>
> Will make or man or woman madly dote
>
> Upon the next live creature that it sees.
>
> Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again
>
> Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

The word "creature" (2.1.172) is important. Titania need not necessarily fall in love with a fairy or a human.

Puck is quick. He says (23),

> I'll put a girdle round about the earth
>
> In forty minutes.

Act 2, Scene 1

• What do we learn about the relationship between Helena and Demetrius in scene 1? Pay special attention to Helena's "spaniel" speech (2.1.202-210).

Oberon turns himself invisible, and he eavesdrops on this conversation between Helena and Demetrius.

This conversation is revealing:

1. Mainly we learn that Helena loves Demetrius, and Demetrius does not love Helena.

2. Love makes us do silly things. For example, if we are spurned by the person we love, our self-esteem goes way down. If we were rational, we would say that there are plenty of fish in the sea for us.

3. Helena needs some feminist consciousness-raising. She tells Demetrius that he can treat her like a spaniel — a dog (a cocker spaniel) — if he likes, just so he doesn't ignore her.

Note: Demetrius makes an important pun in this scene. He says that he is "wood within this wood" (2.1.192). That means that he is insane within these woods.

4. The theme of the play is the silly things love makes us do, and love can make us abase ourselves in front of the person we love, as Helena does when she says that she would love to be treated the way that Demetrius treats his cocker spaniel. Demetrius may treat his dog badly, but to Helena being treated badly by Demetrius is better than not being regarded by him at all.

5. Demetrius of course is making a distinction between Helena and Hermia when no such distinction actually exists.

6. Demetrius says that he is sick when he looks on Helena, and Helena says that she is sick when she does not look on Demetrius.

7. Demetrius really wants Helena to leave him alone, and he threatens her, then he runs away. Helena, however, runs after him.

Here Helena invites Demetrius to use her the way that he uses his dog (24):

DEMETRIUS

Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?

Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth

Tell you, I do not, nor I cannot love you?

HELENA

And even for that do I love you the more.

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 a place of high respect with me, —

Than to be used as you use your dog?

When Demetrius runs away from Helena, she follows him (25):

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,

To die upon the hand I love so well.

Act 2, Scene 1

• How and why does Oberon decide to help Helena?

Because of his quarrel with Titania, Oberon can empathize with Helena. Oberon is having romantic troubles, and he can empathize with Helena, who is also having romantic troubles. He orders Puck to anoint the eyes of the Athenian gentleman with the juice of a magic flower so that he will fall in love with the maid. (Puck, of course, will mess up the command.)

The fairy world is not perfect, even with its poetry, dance, and song. The mortal world is not perfect, either. However,

both worlds have their pleasures of the nonrational variety. Even the craftsmen bring pleasure into the world. Their attempts to be poets and actors bring comedy, which is a nonrational pleasure, into the world. And, of course, the love troubles of Oberon and of Helena have a comic element.

Act 2, Scene 2

• What do Oberon and Puck do in scene 2?

At the end of scene 1, Puck arrives with the flower, and Oberon tells him to use its juice to enchant the eyes of a man wearing Athenian garments. Of course, Oberon wants Puck to enchant Demetrius, but Puck ends up enchanting Lysander in scene 2. In the meantime, Oberon will enchant Titania's eyes in scene 2.

Act 2, Scene 2

• What is the fairy world like? What are the occupations of the fairies? What do we learn about the fairies?

Titania asks her fairies to sing and dance, then to do other things (27):

> Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,
>
> Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,
>
> To make my small elves coats, and some keep back
>
> The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
>
> At our quaint spirits.

The fairies protect the "musk-rose buds" (2.2.3) by killing any disease that threatens them.

The fairies make coats by using bat wings.

The fairies make the hooting owl be quiet so it will not disturb Titania's sleep.

We learn these things about fairies:

1. Fairies are artists.

The dance, they sing, and they speak poetry.

2. Fairies are associated with nature, with the woods, with the moon, and with nighttime (although they can go about during daytime).

3. Fairies have a monarchy.

Fairies have a king and a queen, and the king and queen have many, many servants.

4. Fairies are tiny.

Some small elves can wear the wings of bats as coats (27, top).

5. Oberon is capable of playing dirty tricks.

His trick with the juice of the magic flower is deplorable — but funny.

6. Fairies can make mistakes.

Puck puts the juice of the magic flower on the eyes of the wrong Athenian man. He does not do this on purpose, although he enjoys the confusion that results from his mistake.

7. Oberon and Titania are jealous.

This is one of the silly things that love can make us do: Love can make us jealous.

8. Oberon has the power to turn himself invisible.

He does just that when he eavesdrops on Helena and Demetrius.

Act 2, Scene 2

• In Act 2, scene 2, Lysander attempts to seduce Hermia. What is her response?

Lysander tries to seduce Hermia, but she resists his advances. Hermia is more assertive than Helena, which is not to say that Helena has allowed herself to be seduced.

We learn more about Hermia in Act 2, scene 2. Previously, in Act 1, we learned that Hermia is spunky. Her father, Egeus, wants her to marry Demetrius, but she resists him because she is in love with Lysander.

In Act 2, scene 2, we have further proof that she can stand up for herself. Lysander attempts a seduction of her after admitting that he is lost in the wood, but she successfully resists. When Lysander loses his way in the woods, they decide to sleep in the woods and wait until daylight to find their way. Hermia picks out a place for her to sleep, and she requests that Lysander find a different, nearby place for him to sleep (28):

> […] Find you out a bed;
>
> For I upon this bank will rest my head.

Lysander, however, has the idea that they can sleep in the same place (29):

> One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;
>
> One heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth.

Lysander has in mind the idea that since they are already engaged to be married, why not sleep in the same bed?

Hermia, however, resists and tells him to lie further away from her. Even when he protests, she sticks to her request, saying (29):

But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy

Lie further off; in human modesty,

Such separation as may well be said

Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,

So far be distant; and, good night, sweet friend:

Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

Her resistance works, and Lysander finds a place for him to sleep further away from her.

William Shakespeare himself married Ann Hathaway, who gave birth to Susanna, their daughter, six months later. Shakespeare enjoyed his wedding night before he had the wedding.

Act 2, Scene 2

• What do we learn about Helena in scene 2?

While Lysander and Hermia sleep, Puck arrives to anoint Lysander's eyes — just in time for Demetrius' and Helena's arrival. Demetrius runs off, leaving Helena, who discovers Lysander and wakes him up. Of course, Lysander falls in love with Helena.

1. Helena still loves Demetrius, but Demetrius still does not love her.

On p. 30, we read:

HELENA

O, I am out of breath in this fond chase!

The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies;

For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.

How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:

If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.

No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;

For beasts that meet me run away for fear:

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius

Do, as a monster fly my presence thus.

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine

Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?

But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!

Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.

Lysander if you live, good sir, awake.

2. When Lysander (under the influence of the juice of the magic flower) says that he loves Helena, Helena does not believe him. Instead, Helena thinks that Lysander is mocking her.

On p. 31, we read:

HELENA

Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?

When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?

Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,

That I did never, no, nor never can,

Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,

But you must flout my insufficiency?

Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,

In such disdainful manner me to woo.

But fare you well: perforce I must confess

I thought you lord of more true gentleness.

O, that a lady, of one man refused.

Should of another therefore be abused!

Exit

Act 2, Scene 2

• How does Lysander justify rejecting Hermia and pursuing Helena?

Because of Puck's mistake (he anoints the eyes of Lysander, not Demetrius), comic confusion ensues. Lysander falls in love with Helena, and out of love with Hermia.

People in love justify their love by saying that they are using their reason. Lysander says that since he has come to his senses, he loves Helena and not Hermia. Actually, love is divorced from reason. We don't fall in love for rational reasons — love is nonrational.

Love is has nothing to do with rationality or with irrationality. Love is not rational like mathematics or logic. Love is not irrational like putting your hand in a blender and turning it on just to see what it feels like.

Love is nonrational like song, dance, poetry, and comedy.

However, Lysander uses what seems to him a rational explanation to justify his rejection of Hermia and his pursuit of Helena. We, of course, know that Lysander's actions have nothing to do with reason, but everything to do with the juice of a magic flower.

A speech on pp. 30-31 is important:

HELENA

Do not say so, Lysander; say not so

What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?

Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.

LYSANDER

Content with Hermia! No; I do repent

The tedious minutes I with her have spent.

Not Hermia but Helena I love:

Who will not change a raven for a dove?

Lysander says that Helena is more beautiful than Hermia, and therefore no one will blame him if he loves Helena and not Hermia: “Who will not change a raven for a dove?” (2.2.114).

LYSANDER

The will of man is by his reason sway’d;

And reason says you are the worthier maid.

Lysander says that reason tells him that Helena is worthier than Hermia, and therefore Lysander says that he will love her instead of Hermia. Of course, reason has nothing to do with love.

LYSANDER

Things growing are not ripe until their season

So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;

And touching now the point of human skill,

Reason becomes the marshal to my will

And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook

Love's stories written in love's richest book.

Lysander says that he was too young to be rational; however, now he is old enough to use reason, and his reason tells him to love Helena and not Hermia.

What are the silly things that love makes us do?

One of them is to make us think that we are being rational when we are not.

• Is the play hurt by the non-realistic device of the magic flower?

Of course, we don't need to believe in magic flowers and love potions. Shakespeare is saying something true in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; he is saying that love can make us do silly things. However, Shakespeare can and does use non-realistic devices such as magic flowers to make a point about reality.

People fall in and out of love on their own.

I don't think the play is hurt by the use of the non-realistic device of the magic flower.

Chapter 3: Act 3

Act 3, Scene 1

• In scene 1, Bottom and the other Athenian workmen decide to make changes to the play. How intelligent are those changes?

They are not at all intelligent. The craftsmen are afraid that the ladies will be afraid of such things as the lion. The craftsmen are also afraid that the audience will not understand the symbolism used in the play. Therefore, the craftsmen take pains to explain things that do not need to be explained.

1. The craftsmen decide to add a Prologue.

The purpose of the Prologue is to reassure the ladies that no one is actually being killed in the play. Of course, in a play, audience members make a willing suspension of disbelief. No one will actually think that these actors are being killed on stage. In fact, the ladies of the audience think that the deaths (and the acting, and the play) are funny. On p. 34, we read:

> **BOTTOM**
>
> […] I have a device to make all well.
>
> Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear.

Of course, this is a way for Bottom to get his name before the public.

2. The craftsmen decide to have the actor playing the lion tell everyone that he is not a lion.

Once again, the audience will engage in a willing suspension of disbelief. No one in the audience is going to think that the actor playing a lion is really a lion. On p. 34, we read:

> **BOTTOM**
>
> Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in — God shield us! — a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to ’t.
>
> **SNOUT**
>
> Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.
>
> **BOTTOM**
>
> Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion’s neck: and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect, — ’Ladies,’ — or ‘Fair-ladies — I would wish You,’ — or ‘I would request you,’ — or ‘I would entreat you, — not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it

were pity of my life: no I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are;' and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

Bottom and the craftsmen are afraid that the ladies will be afraid of the lion, but the lion is nothing to be feared. The Puritans of Shakespeare's day were against plays. Shakespeare may be making an anti-censorship statement here and arguing that plays are nothing to be feared.

Note that Bottom is willing for Snug to get credit for playing the lion.

3. The craftsmen decide to have an actor play the moon.

Once again, the actors are thinking literally. The play says that the action takes place at night; therefore, there must be moonlight for all to see. And so the actors decide to have a man play the man in the moon. He will carry a lanthorn (which will represent the moon), and he will have a bush of thorns (because according to folklore the man in the moon gathers wood for a fire — apparently, he was banished to the moon because he was gathering firewood — that is, working — on the Sabbath). On pp. 34-35, we read:

QUINCE

Well it shall be so. But there is two hard things; that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

SNOUT

Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

BOTTOM

A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find

out moonshine, find out moonshine.

QUINCE

Yes, it doth shine that night.

BOTTOM

Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the casement.

QUINCE

Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lanthorn, and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

Shakespeare was faced with the problem of having scenes set at night. He did not have an actor portray Moonshine. Instead, he simply had actors say that it was night. For example, Hermia says to Helena (51):

HERMIA

O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night
And stolen my love’s heart from him?

4. The craftsmen decide to have an actor play the part of a wall.

This, of course, will be ridiculous. Once again, they are thinking literally. They can't imagine someone imagining that a wall exists. On p. 35, we read:

> **SNOUT**
>
> You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?
>
> **BOTTOM**
>
> Some man or other must present Wall: and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper.

Act 3, Scene 1

• What is a willing suspension of disbelief? Are the craftsmen aware of the willing suspension of belief that theater-goers engage in? (Theater majors should be able to answer this question.)

The craftsmen don't understand that the audience will realize that a man in a lion costume is not really a lion. They don't know about the willing suspension of disbelief that members of the audience have while watching a play. Of course, members of the audience know that they are watching a play and that they are not really seeing fairies on stage, but members of the audience are willing to suspend their disbelief while the play is going on. And the audience of Shakespeare's play within a play realizes that they are not seeing a real lion.

Act 3, Scene 1

• What do we learn about Bottom the actor in this scene?

Bottom tends to look for ways to enlarge his role. For example, he wants Quince to write a Prologue that explains that the sword is not real, that Pyramus is not dead, and that Pyramus is really Bottom, the weaver. This helps to get Bottom's name before the public.

Bottom continues to misuse words. For example, he refers to "odious savours sweet" (3.1.83-84) instead of "odours savours sweet." Thisby also calls Ninus' tomb "Ninny's tomb" (3.1.98).

Act 3, Scene 1

• What is your opinion of the play that Quince has written? What is your opinion of the skill of the actors speaking Quince's lines?

The Play

1. The play is badly written.

We see how bad the writing of the play "Pyramus and Thisby" is. For example, Thisby (played by Flute) describes Pyramus as being both "most lily-white of hue" (3.1.94) and "of colour like the red rose" (3.1.95). So Pyramus' coloring is both white and red. (Maybe Pyramus is Scottish.) In addition, Pyramus is compared to a true horse (3.1.97).

2. The lines are badly rhymed.

When Quince needs a word that rhymes, he chooses one whether its sense fits the play or not.

Here "Jew" is rhymed with "hue" (36):

Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,

Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,

Most brisky juvenal and eke most lovely Jew,

As true as truest horse that yet would never tire,

3. Some of the images don't make sense.

Pyramus is as true as a horse that never tires.

4. Some of the images are contradictory.

Pyramus' complexion is both white and red.

The Actors

1. The actors mispronounce words.

Pyramus (Bottom) stays "odious" (3.1.83) instead of "odours."

Thisby (Flute) says "Ninny's tomb" (3.1.98) instead of "Ninus' tomb."

2. The actor playing Thisby isn't sure when he is to speak.

3. The actor playing Thisby speaks his cue and all.

Flute says all his lines at once. He is supposed to say some words that contain a cue for Pyramus to enter. *After* Pyramus enters, Thisby is supposed to say that she will meet him at Ninus' tomb.

On p. 36, we read:

QUINCE

Speak, Pyramus. Thisby, stand forth.

BOTTOM

Thisby, the flowers of odious savours sweet, —

QUINCE

Odours, odours.

BOTTOM

— odours savours sweet:

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.

But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,

And by and by I will to thee appear.

Exit

PUCK

A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here.

Exit

FLUTE

Must I speak now?

QUINCE

Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand he goes

but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

FLUTE

Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,

Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,

Most brisky juvenal and eke most lovely Jew,

As true as truest horse that yet would never tire,

I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

QUINCE

'Ninus' tomb,' man: why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once, cues and all. Pyramus enter: your cue is past; it is, 'never tire.'

FLUTE

O, — As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.

Act 3, Scene 1

• What is the reaction of the craftsmen to the newly ass-headed Bottom?

When Bottom appears in response to his cue, the audience sees that Puck has decided to play a joke on him: Bottom now has the head of an ass (donkey).

His friends are terrified and ran away (37):

QUINCE

O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!

Bottom thinks that his friends are playing a joke on him (37):

Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afeard.

Bottom makes some funny remarks while being unaware that he has the head of an ass (37):

Re-enter SNOUT

SNOUT

O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

BOTTOM

What do you see? you see an asshead of your own, do

you?

Exit SNOUT

Re-enter QUINCE

QUINCE

Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art

translated.

Exit

BOTTOM

I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me;

to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir

from this place, do what they can: I will walk up

and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear

I am not afraid.

Act 3, Scene 1

• Titania falls in love with the ass-headed Bottom. What is Bottom's reaction to this unexpected event?

Bottom is not aware that he has the head of an ass, although he does find himself craving hay and oats and he does find

his face very hairy (there's nothing wrong with that, of course, said the bearded man).

Remarkably, Bottom takes it in his stride. He doesn't find it at all odd that Titania, who is a beautiful fairy, would fall in love with him — although he does admit that she has "little / reason" (3.1.143-144) to fall in love with him.

Bottom is courteous. He addresses the little fairies in a courtly manner.

Bottom is jolly. He makes a number of jokes about the little fairies' names. None of the jokes is harmful.

Bottom is very willing — as we see — to order the little fairies around.

Bottom doesn't object to anything that Titania says, including when she calls him an "angel" (3.1.130) and when she says, "I love thee" (3.1.142):

> I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
>
> Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;
>
> So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
>
> And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
>
> On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

As we can see, love is nonrational — and blind.

Bottom says that reason and love keep little company together nowadays. This to me is a completely accurate statement — and the wisest remark made in the entire play (38):

> **BOTTOM**
>
> Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason

for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and

love keep little company together now-a-days; the

more the pity that some honest neighbours will not

make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

Act 3, Scene 1

• Who are Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed?

Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed are four fairy servants of Titania. They also become the servants of Bottom, doing such things as feeding him fruits and berries and honeybags and scratching his hairy face. They will pluck wings from butterflies and use them to fan Bottom. On p. 39, we read:

TITANIA

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;

Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;

Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,

With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;

The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,

And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs

And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,

To have my love to bed and to arise;

And pluck the wings from Painted butterflies

To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes:

Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

Act 3, Scene 2

• What is Oberon's reaction to Titania's falling in love with the ass-headed Bottom?

Puck lets Oberon know what has happened to Titania: "My mistress with a monster is in love" (3.2.6). This news makes Oberon happy: "This falls out better than I could devise" (3.2.35).

Act 3, Scene 2

• What is Oberon's reaction to Puck's mistake that resulted in Lysander's falling in love with Helena? What is Puck's reaction to his mistake?

Because of the magic flower, both Demetrius and Lysander love Helena. Helena is convinced that the three other lovers, including Hermia, are mocking her, and Hermia becomes convinced that Helena has used her tallness — not usually a reason for a man to love a woman — to steal Lysander from her.

Oberon orders Puck to put things to rights again, and Puck does (but it takes time).

Things really do need to be put to rights. Hermia is afraid that Demetrius has killed Lysander.

Another thing that love can do to us is to confuse us. Fortunately, eventually the confusion passes, and things usually sort themselves out.

Oberon may be a male chauvinist pig when it comes to his relationship with Titania, but he does feel sympathy for the four lovers. He tells Puck (44),

OBERON

What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite

And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight:

Of thy misprision must perforce ensue

Some true love turn'd and not a false turn'd true.

Oberon puts some of the potion on the sleeping Demetrius' eyes, and he tells Puck to bring Helena so that Demetrius will wake up, see her, and fall in love with her. Puck, mischievous as ever, brings Helena — and Lysander. Puck is looking forward to what will happen when Demetrius wakes up:

PUCK

Then will two at once woo one;

That must needs be sport alone;

And those things do best please me

That befal preposterously.

Act 3, Scene 2

• Why does Puck regard mortals (humans) as fools? "Lord, what fools these mortals be" (3.2.115).

A very famous line from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is this: "Lord, what fools these mortals be" (3.2.115).

Bottom may have the wisest line in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but Puck's line is notable for its truth, as any comedian, humorist, or satirist would agree.

Puck is able to see that love can make fools of humans — yet another thing that love can make us do.

Act 3, Scene 2

• What do Lysander and Demetrius argue about in this scene?

Of course, Demetrius wakes up and falls in love with Helena. Demetrius and Lysander then fight — verbally — over Helena. Neither of them wants Hermia anymore.

Helena is confused when Demetrius and Lysander both say that they love her. She believes that they are mocking her (46):

HELENA

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.

Adding to the confusion, Hermia hears the argument, follows the sound, and soon arrives on the scene.

Act 3, Scene 2

• What is Hermia's reaction at first to the pursuing of Helena by Lysander and Demetrius?

We can note that in the play Hermia always loves Lysander and Helena always loves Demetrius. Chances are, women are more constant in their love than men are.

Of course, when Hermia arrives on the scene, she is confused when she sees Lysander pursuing Helena.

Helena believes that Hermia is part of a confederacy to mock her. This astonishes Hermia, who eventually believes that Helena has used her "tallness" to steal Lysander from her (51).

Love can make us feel pain, and certainly both Helena and Hermia feel pain in this scene.

Act 3, Scene 2

• How does Lysander insult Hermia?

Lysander certainly insults Hermia in this scene. He is in love with Helena as a result of the magic flower, and that makes him detest the woman whom he used to love. I count eight insults (although some may be synonyms for each other) in the below passage (50):

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

LYSANDER

Away, you Ethiope!

DEMETRIUS

No, no; he'll […]

Seem to break loose; take on as you would follow,

But yet come not: you are a tame man, go!

LYSANDER

Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let loose,

Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!

HERMIA

Why are you grown so rude? what change is this?

Sweet love, —

LYSANDER

Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out!

Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

Here is a list of the insults. Lysander calls Hermia these things:

1. an Ethiope
2. a cat
3. a burr
4. a vile thing
5. a serpent
6. a tawny Tartar (a Mongol or a Turk)

7. loathed medicine

8. a hated potion

It takes strong language such as this, but Hermia soon believes that Lysander no longer loves her; instead, she now believes that he loves Helena.

Act 3, Scene 2

• What do Hermia and Helena argue about in this scene?

Of course, in the mass confusion of this scene, Hermia and Helena are arguing about boyfriends.

Hermia says to Helena (51):

HERMIA

O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!

You thief of love! what, have you come by night

And stolen my love's heart from him?

At this point, Helena calls Hermia a "puppet" (3.2.288) and Hermia begins to believe that Helena has used her tallness to steal Lysander from her (51):

HERMIA

Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the game.

Now I perceive that she hath made compare

Between our statures; she hath urged her height;

And with her personage, her tall personage,

Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.

And are you grown so high in his esteem;

Because I am so dwarfish and so low?

How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;

How low am I? I am not yet so low

But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

No fool, after a little arguing, Helena runs away, saying (53),

Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,

My legs are longer though, to run away.

This is the scene where we learn about the physical differences of the two women. Hermia is shorter and darker than Helena. Psychologically, Hermia is the more assertive of the two women.

Act 3, Scene 2

• Why do Lysander and Demetrius exit this scene? Why do Hermia and Helena exit this scene?

Lysander and Demetrius

Lysander and Demetrius each vow to protect Helena from Hermia (52):

LYSANDER

Be not afraid; she shall not harm thee, Helena.

DEMETRIUS

No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

However, they exit to fight each other, leaving Helena to the mercy of the at-this-point unmerciful Hermia (53):

DEMETRIUS

You are too officious

In her behalf that scorns your services.

Let her alone: speak not of Helena;

Take not her part; for, if thou dost intend

Never so little show of love to her,

Thou shalt aby it.

LYSANDER

Now she holds me not;

Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,

Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

DEMETRIUS

Follow! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

Exeunt LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS

Helena and Hermia

Hermia is about to attack Helena, so Helena uses her long legs to run away from Hermia, who runs after her.

Act 3, Scene 2

• How does Oberon make things right among the four Athenian lovers and with Titania?

Oberon knows that Puck, who loves mischief, caused these misunderstandings among the four Athenian lovers.

Oberon orders Puck to apply the magic juice to the eyes of Lysander, which will cause him to love Hermia. At this point Demetrius' eyes are still charmed, and they will remain charmed. Apparently, sometimes some outside help is needed to make love turn out well (54):

OBERON

When they next wake, all this derision

Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,

And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,

With league whose date till death shall never end.

In the meantime, Oberon will make things right with Titania. While Puck is busy fixing up the mistake he made with the four Athenian lovers, he will ask for the Indian boy. Because Titania is now in love with Bottom, she will give the boy to him. He will then release her from the spell (54):

OBERON

Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,

I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy;

And then I will her charmed eye release

From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

Act 3, Scene 2

• What kind of fairies are Oberon, Titania, and Puck, etc.? What other supernatural beings exist?

Puck tells Oberon that they must work fast as dawn is coming (54):

PUCK

My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,

For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,

And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger;

At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,

Troop home to churchyards: damned spirits all,

That in crossways and floods have burial,

Already to their wormy beds are gone;

For fear lest day should look their shames upon,

They willfully themselves exile from light

And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

Many supernatural beings, including ghosts, exist in the world of this play.

Oberon, however, points out that the fairies are different from the ghosts that cannot show themselves in daylight. Oberon has often been active in daylight (54-55):

OBERON

But we are spirits of another sort:

I with the morning's love have oft made sport,

And, like a forester, the groves may tread,

Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,

Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,

Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.

But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay:

We may effect this business yet ere day.

Many supernatural beings are evil, but these fairies are not evil.

Puck uses his mimicry to make sure that Lysander and Demetrius do not hurt each other. The lovers, who are exhausted from the event of the night, end up asleep in the same place, and Puck applies the magic juice to Lysander's eyes:

PUCK

On the ground

Sleep sound:

I'll apply

To your eye,

Gentle lover, remedy.

Squeezing the juice on LYSANDER's eyes

When thou wakest,

Thou takest

True delight

In the sight

Of thy former lady's eye:

And the country proverb known,

That every man should take his own,

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.

Exit

All works out well, and everyone ends up in love with the person with whom he or she ought to be in love.

Act 3

• Love makes us act in odd ways. What are some of the odd ways we see in Act 3?

We see many odd ways of acting. In scene 1, Titania falls in love with an ass-headed Bottom. In scene 2, the male lovers change or have changed whom they are in love with, although the ladies are very similar.

Love can make us fall in love with someone who is totally unsuited for us.

> We certainly see that in Act 3, scene 1. Titania, the queen of the Fairies, is a creature of beauty who loves the arts of singing, dancing, and poetry. She loves beauty and flowers. Bottom, on the other hand, is an ass. Because he has an ass' head, he is almost literally an ass, as well as an ass in intelligence. They are unsuited also because Bottom is mortal, while Titania is immortal.
>
> Shakespeare's satiric target is that love makes us do silly things. We certainly see that in Titania's love for the ass-headed Bottom. The craftsman and the fairy Queen are totally unsuited as mates.

Love can make us fall in and out of love quickly.

> Of course, we have the plot device of the magic flower, but all of us have loved one person, then not loved that person, and perhaps have loved that person again. In this play, Lysander loves Hermia, then he loves Helena, then he loves Hermia again. In addition, Demetrius loves Helena, then he loves Hermia, then he loves Helena again.

Love can make a distinction when there is no real distinction.

> Hermia and Helena are very much alike. They are attractive, well-born ladies of the noble class. Their differences are superficial. Yet Demetrius and Lysander can love one of these ladies and despise the other.
>
> Demetrius and Lysander are almost completely alike.

Love can make men fight over women.

> Demetrius and Lysander fight because both imagine that they are in love with Helena.
>
> Love makes Lysander and Demetrius swear to protect Helena from each other, and then leave her alone with Hermia, who really does want to harm Helena.

Love can make women fight over men.

> Hermia and Helen fight. Hermia thinks that Helena has stolen away Lysander's love.

Love can make us fickle.

> Love makes Lysander swear that he loves one woman, and then a few minutes later swear that he loves a different woman.

Love makes lovers speak poetry.

On p. 46, top, we read:

> **DEMETRIUS**
>
> [Awaking] O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
>
> To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?

Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show

Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!

That pure congealed white, high Taurus snow,

Fann’d with the eastern wind, turns to a crow

When thou hold’st up thy hand: O, let me kiss

This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

This is the way to feel about a woman, at least in the early, giddy stages of love.

Chapter 4: Act 4

Act 4

• General Notes

Act 4 is the shortest act in the play.

In Act 4, difficulties are ironed out. Oberon and Titania are reunited. The four lovers are divided into two couples, the members of whom love each other, and Bottom is reunited with his friends. This sets up the happy and comic act of Act 5. Of course, the other acts have been comic, but the lovers of Act 3 did experience unhappy emotions.

Theseus and Hippolyta bookend the play. They appear at the beginning, in Act 1, and at the end, in Acts 4 and 5.

Act 4 makes a transition from sadness to joy. Of course, Act 3 was comic, but the four lovers experienced some upsetting emotions in it — jealousy, anger, and hate.

Act 4, Scene 1

• Write a character analysis of Oberon.

1. Oberon can be selfish.

He wants the Indian boy from Titania, and he gets him.

However, boys should have a father figure in their lives.

2. Oberon is powerful.

He is able to make Titania fall in love with an ass, and he is able to release her from the magic spell.

3. Oberon is a leader.

He orders Puck around, and Puck obeys his orders.

4. Oberon does feel sympathy.

Once he has gotten what he wants, he feels sympathy for Titania's being in love with an ass.

He also feels empathy for Helena when Demetrius does not return her love.

5. Oberon makes things right.

Because of his knowledge of magic, everything turns out right in the end.

6. Oberon lives in a sexist society.

We may feel that he is selfish, but another (perhaps sexist) way of looking at the situation is that Titania is neglecting her duties when she does not give him the Indian boy and when she stays away from his bed.

Do we really want the Indian boy to be raised in a society of females only? What is best for the boy? To be raised by Oberon and his henchmen? Or to be raised by Titania and her fairies? Or to be raised by both Oberon and Titania?

One possible answer is for him to be raised by both Oberon and Titania, but in order for that to happen, either Oberon or Titania must give in. As it happens, Titania falls in love with the ass-headed Bottom and she willingly gives up the boy. After she comes to her senses, she does not ask for the boy back.

7. Oberon, Titania, and the other fairies are immortal.

Bottom is mortal, as the fairies are well aware.

8. Oberon and Titania are not deities.

Deities are worshipped.

Worship = Adore

Act 4, Scene 1

• How does Titania treat Bottom?

At the beginning of Act 4, scene 1, Titania is treating is treating Bottom very well, including kissing his “fair, large ears” (4.1.4).

The small fairies are Bottom’s servants, and he is enjoying himself. Some fairies scratch him because he is very hairy. He also asks a fairy to bring him a honeybag to eat.

Act 4, Scene 1

• Do Bottom and Titania make a good couple?

We have to say that Titania and Bottom are not suited for each other. Love can make us fall in love with someone who is not suited to us, and Shakespeare certainly shows us that here.

Titania is ethereal, and Bottom, who still has the head of an ass, is gross.

Nevertheless, while they are in love, they enjoy each other’s company.

Of course, when Oberon removes the magic spell, and Titania no longer is in love with Bottom, she is shocked that she could ever have loved him.

Bottom is a fool, but a likeable fool. He treats his servant fairies well, but orders them to do such favors for him as scratch his head, which is marvelously hairy.

Bottom and Titania are incompatible — something that Titania immediately realizes when her eyes are uncharmed by Oberon. Their differences are shown in the fact that Bottom continues to speak prose, while Titania continues to speak rhymed poetry. (Of course, when Bottom speaks poetry — as in the play — it is very bad poetry,

The tastes in music of Titania and Bottom are different. When Titania asks for music — meaning the music of the fairies — Bottom asks for the tongs and the bones. The tongs are struck by metal and the bones are bone clappers held between the musician's fingers. This is rustic music. The difference between the two kinds of music is like the difference between classical music and country music.

Tongs: "a grasping device consisting of two arms joined at one end by a pivot or hinge." — *The American Heritage Dictionary*.

Act 4, Scene 1

• What is Oberon's reaction to seeing Titania in love with Bottom now that Oberon has what he wants?

1) Oberon may be jealous of Bottom.

Previously, Oberon was jealous of the Indian boy because Titania was paying so much attention to him. Now, Oberon may be jealous of Bottom because Titania is paying so much attention to him.

2) Oberon begins to pity Titania.

After all, he has gotten what he wants from Titania (the Indian boy), so he isn't angry at her any more.

Therefore, Oberon decides to uncharm Titania.

Act 4, Scene 1

• What is the uncharmed Titania's reaction to seeing her lover?

She of course thinks that she had been dreaming.

She is horrified to discover that she really had been in love with the ass-headed Bottom.

This is actually something that can happen in us in real life. We can be in love with someone, then fall out of love, and think,

> "I WAS IN LOVE WITH THAT? WHAT THE HELL WAS I THINKING?"

Act 4, Scene 1

• What do we learn about the character of Theseus in Act 4?

Theseus and Hippolyta are out riding. Theseus wants Hippolyta to hear the baying of his hounds. That is how they discover the four young lovers in the woods.

1. Theseus is a hunter.

He is proud of his hounds, and he wants Hippolyta to hear the cries they make. The baying of the hounds was highly prized in Elizabethan times.

2. Theseus is not above making a bawdy joke.

When he orders the horns to sound to wake up the four lovers, he says something bawdy (64):

> Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past:
>
> Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?

Birds were thought to begin to mate on St. Valentine's Day. By saying this, Theseus is implying that the four young lovers spent the night in the woods so that they could have sex.

3. Theseus is an investigator.

Theseus asks questions to find out why the four young lovers spent the night in the woods.

4. Theseus is a fair judge.

Egeus wants to call the law down on Lysander's head for attempting to run away with Hermia. However, once Theseus hears that Demetrius no longer loves Hermia, he overrules Egeus and says that Hermia and Lysander shall be wed.

This is exactly as it ought to be.

In Act 1, Theseus said that he could not go against the law of Athens, but in Act 4, he does exactly that. The difference, of course, is that Demetrius does not now love Hermia, but now loves Helena.

Act 4, Scene 1

• Is this play sexist?

Titania's eyes are uncharmed by Oberon, and the King and the Queen of the fairies are reunited and in love again. In this play, men have supremacy over women. When Oberon gets what he wants, good things happen. When Titania resists Oberon, bad things happen — nature becomes unnatural, and she is punished. This is a sexist play — or at least it reflects a sexist society.

Even when Hermia resists marrying Demetrius and takes action by running away from Athens with Lysander, it is a man — Duke Theseus — who has power over her. Fortunately, he allows her to marry Lysander.

Act 4, Scene 1

• What do we learn from Bottom's speech about "Bottom's Dream" at the end of this scene?

1. Bottom still mixes up words — and senses.

Bottom continues to make malapropisms.

Bottom says that he will request Peter Quince to write a ballet of his dream — he means ballad.

On p. 67, Bottom garbles a passage in 1 Corinthians about Humankind's inability to understand God's will when he says:

> The eye of man hath not heard,
>
> the ear of man hath not seen,
>
> man's hand is not able to taste,
>
> his tongue to conceive,
>
> nor his heart to report,
>
> what my dream was.

Characteristically, Bottom mixes up the senses — and a verse from I Corinthians, Chapter 2.

This is an excerpt from I Corinthians, Chapter 2:

> 9: But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.
>
> 10: But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God

2. Bottom is still looking for a bigger part for himself.

Bottom intends to make Quince write a ballad (Bottom says "ballet") of his dream. It shall be called "Bottom's Dream," and he shall sing it before the Duke.

As it turns out, there is not time to turn it into a ballad, and Bottom does not — at least, not right away — tells his

friends about his dream. Apparently, Bottom is afraid of being teased or being made a fool of.

3. Bottom has much self-confidence and a very high opinion of himself.

He half-remembers what happened in the woods, and he wants Peter Quince to write a ballet (he mean ballad) about his dream. Bottom hopes to recite it before Duke Theseus.

4. Bottom thinks that he has had an important experience.

Here I agree with Bottom. He has been in contact with the fairy world, something that none of us — I think — can say.

In fact, Bottom is the only character who has contact with all four worlds in this play:

- The Fairy World
- The World of the Court
- The Workmen's World
- The World of the Theater

Bottom has direct interaction with the fairy world — the only mortal in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* who does so.

The lovers never see Puck, but Bottom sees Titania. Bottom interacts with all the worlds of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He is working class, he goes to the court to put a play, he interacts with the fairies in the woods, and he participates in art (the nonrational world) by acting in a play.

4. Bottom is not afraid of his experience — he celebrates it. In addition, he wants a ballad to be written about it.

Act 4, Scene 1

• Is Bottom a sympathetic character, or is the audience meant to dislike him?

I see Bottom as a sympathetic character even though he is, of course, a fool in many ways.

Certainly his friends like him. Twice, he is referred to as "bully Bottom" (3.1.8 and 4.2.19). "Bully" means a good fellow.

He is courteous when he is in the fairy world.

He also says the wisest line in the play: "to say the truth, reason / and love keep little company together nowadays" (3.1.144-145).

I like the character.

Act 4, Scene 2

• What do we learn about Bottom and the craftsmen in this scene? Do Bottom's friends like him? Does he like them?

Bottom's friends like him, and he likes his friends.

We can tell this by what they say about each other. In addition, Bottom's friends not only like him, but they also think that he is a good actor.

We learn that Bottom's friends like him and have a lot of respect for him.

1. They agree that they cannot put on the play without him.

2. Quince says that Bottom is the only man in Athens able to play Pyramus.

3. Flute says that he has the best wit of any handicraftsman in Athens.

4. Quince says that Bottom has a very sweet voice.

5. Flute believes that Bottom's acting would have won him a pension of sixpence a day for the rest of his life. Sixpence a day is a lot of money for these craftsmen. An apprentice would make a pence for a day's wages.

6. The rude mechanicals are very happy when Bottom arrives.

Bottom likes his friends.

1. He calls them "lads" and "hearts" (4.2.25).

2. Bottom gives them good news: Their play is "preferred" (4.2.39), which means that it is recommended or put forward. In fact, their play is put on a list of entertainments for the Duke to choose from.

3. Bottom gives them good advice: Let the man playing the lion not trim his nails, as they may hang down for claws, and let no one eat onions or garlic so that everyone has good breath. Since Bottom likes to overact and vigorously proclaim his words, we can see how the actors would realize that this is good advice.

Chapter 5: Act 5

Act 5

General Note

By the end of Act 4, all of the lovers are paired correctly: Oberon with Titania, Demetrius with Helena, and Lysander with Hermia. (And Theseus with Hippolyta.) However, one unfinished piece of business is left: the play by the craftsmen. (And, of course, the especially happy ending.)

Act 5 has only one scene.

Act 5

• Do Theseus and Hippolyta believe the story told by the young lovers?

Theseus does not believe the "dream" the lovers have related, but Hippolyta wonders if it is real. After all, all four lovers relate the same dream, and the consistency of their story is some evidence that the "dream" is real.

Theseus is a very rational man who equates the madman, the lover, and the poet. All of them see things that are not there, according to Theseus. A madman sees more devils than are in Hell. A lover looks at the face of a gypsy and sees the beautiful face of Helen of Troy. A poet has a busy imagination that sees things that don't exist, and his pen gives them business and shape.

In Elizabethan times, a poet is often also a playwright. Certainly, Shakespeare put lots of poetry in his plays, and he wrote sonnets. As Theseus says, Shakespeare sees things that don't exist and puts them in the plays — for example, magic love potions. However, we can add that Shakespeare also writes about true things. It is true that people can fall in and out of love very quickly. It is true that a man can love one woman for a while, then love a different woman for a while,

then fall in love with the first woman again. Shakespeare uses magic love potions as a plot device to write about true things.

Hippolyta half-believes the stories told by the young lovers. For one thing, the lovers tell basically the same tale (although from each participant's point of view). That kind of consistency is one way that we can tell whether something is real.

Act 5

• What do we learn about Theseus at the beginning of this act?

Theseus is right to be rational. He is a head of state, and we want our heads of state to be rational. For example, we want our laws to be rational. However, there is more to life than reason, and if one is rational all the time (which is probably an impossibility), one misses out on a lot. (Cf. Mr. Spock in *Star Trek* and Data in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.) Quite simply, the nonrational — poetry, comedy, love, dance, song, and pleasant dreams and daydreams — make up much of the fun part of life.

Readers can interpret the character of Theseus in two ways.

> 1) He is too rational and is not open to many important things in life — the nonrational things that are represented by the fairy world.
>
> 2) He is rational — as a head of state ought to be — but he is sympathetic to art.

I should point out that although Theseus is rational, he too is subject to the nonrational. For example, he falls in love and he laughs at humorous situations (as we shall see).

• The lovers are happy at the beginning of Act 5, and Theseus is happy that they are happy.

Act 5

• Why does Theseus decide to see the craftsmen's play? Why don't Philostrate and Hippolyta want him to see it?

Philostrate gives Theseus a list of entertainments to choose from, but many of the entertainments are clearly unsuitable for entertainment before a wedding night — anything involving a eunuch is unsuitable before a wedding night, in my opinion (72):

> **THESEUS**
>
> [Reads] 'The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
>
> By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.'
>
> We'll none of that: that have I told my love,
>
> In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

Note: Heracles' fourth labor was capturing the Erymanthian boar. This adventure also involved Heracles' battle with the Centaurs, and his rescue of Prometheus. Boars were dangerous, and this especially dangerous boar lived on Mount Erymanthus. While traveling to Mount Erymanthus, Heracles became the guest of a Centaur named Pholus. The Centaur ate his meat raw, and Heracles ate his meat roasted. The Centaurs had a jar of wine, and Pholus and Heracles drank from it. The other Centaurs smelled the wine, and they also drank, but they did not mix the wine with water and so became drunk and unruly. Heracles fought the Centaurs and chased them, and he discovered Prometheus, who had given the knowledge of how to control fire to mortals. Zeus had punished him by chaining him to a rock on a mountain and by sending an eagle each day to eat his liver, which grew back each night so it could be eaten again the following day. Heracles shot the eagle and released Prometheus, and then he consulted the wise Centaur Chiron, seeking advice about

how to capture the Erymanthian boar. Chiron advised Heracles to drive the Erymanthian boar into deep snow and then capture it. After following Chiron's advice, Heracles took the Erymanthian boar to Eurystheus, who ordered it to be thrown into the sea. The Erymanthian boar swam to Italy, where it died. Its tusks were put on display in the temple of Apollo at Cumae.

Theseus is intrigued by the oxymora in the craftsmen's title for their play (72):

> A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
>
> And his love Thisby; very tragical mirth.

The oxymora are "tedious brief" (5.1.56) and "tragical mirth" (5.1.57). As Theseus says, this is like "hot ice" (5.1.59).

Philostrate (Master of the Revels to Theseus, aka Theseus' entertainment director) does not recommend the play.

Theseus wants to hear the play, but he intends to take into account the intent of the actors in it. In other words, he knows that the play will be bad, but he also knows that the intentions of the actors are good.

Hippolyta is concerned that the actors will make fools of themselves, but Theseus assures her that as the audience they can treat the play as better than it is.

Theseus understands etiquette. He is a mighty personage, and people start to welcome him but become nervous in his presence and stop, unable to speak. In such cases, Theseus simply pretends that he has been welcomed. He does have a respect for people (73-74):

> **THESEUS**
>
> The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.

Our sport shall be to take what they mistake:
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
Takes it in might, not merit.
Where I have come, great clerks have purposed
To greet me with premeditated welcomes;
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practised accent in their fears
And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome;
And in the modesty of fearful duty
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least speak most, to my capacity.

Act 5

• What mistakes does Quince make in delivering his Prologue?

When Quince speaks the Prologue, he does exactly what other people do in Theseus' presence — he becomes discombobulated and says his Prologue badly, pausing in the wrong places and not pausing when he should pause. The Prologue is meant to be respectful, but comes out insulting. However, Theseus, true to his word, considers the intention

of Quince and recognizes that the Prologue is meant to be respectful (74):

Flourish of trumpets

Enter QUINCE for the Prologue

Prologue

If we offend, it is with our good will.

That you should think, we come not to offend,

But with good will. To show our simple skill,

That is the true beginning of our end.

Consider then we come but in despite.

We do not come as minding to content you,

Our true intent is. All for your delight

We are not here. That you should here repent you,

The actors are at hand and by their show

You shall know all that you are like to know.

THESEUS

This fellow doth not stand upon points.

When Theseus says, "This fellow doth not stand upon points" (5.1.118), he means that Quince does not pay attention to punctuation such as periods. This lack of attention to punctuation turns a Prologue that is meant to be a compliment into an insult.

This is what Quince meant to say:

If we offend, it is with our good will

that you should think we come, not to offend,

but with good will to show our simple skill:

That is the true beginning of our end.

Consider then we come — but in despite

we do not come — as intending to content you.

Our true intent is all for your delight:

We are not here that you should here repent you.

The actors are at hand and by their show

you shall know all that you are likely to know.

Of course, the Prologue, like the rest of the play, is badly written. These lines are especially badly overwritten (75):

Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,

He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast.

Act 5

• How good — or bad — is the craftsmen's play?

Of course, the craftsmen's play is horrible.

Some changes have been made in the play. There are no parts for Thisby's father and Pyramus' father. This is not a problem. Many plays change before being performed for the first time.

Of course, the play is badly written. Pyramus repeats words because they are needed to fill the line (76):

O night, O night! alack, alack, alack,

Bottom occasionally steps out of character. For example, he hears Theseus say that the wall should curse Pyramus, so Bottom tells Theseus that Thisby's cue has been spoken and so she will appear.

Some bawdy humor appears in the play. Thisby once says that she kisses the wall's "stones" (5.1.190), which is an Elizabethan word for "testicles.

The Rolling Stones = The Traveling Testicles

According to Theseus, even the best plays are but shadows. We can disagree with him. The best plays are monuments of human achievement. The craftsmen's play is a monument of funny comedy. ("Funny comedy" is not a repetitious phrase — much so-called "comedy" is not funny.)

Numerous mistakes are made in the play. Pyramus refers to Ninny's tomb. He thanks the Moon for its sunny beams. There is way too much alliteration and silly wordage (81):

gracious, golden, glittering gleams,

O dainty duck! O dear!

In addition, Pyramus, who is played by Bottom, takes a long time to die. After he rises from the dead, Pyramus mixes up human senses, asking if Theseus would like to hear a dance.

One theme of the play within a play is the same as one theme of the play: romantic hardship and confusion.

Act 5

• Is it possible that Shakespeare is making an anti-censorship statement in this play? (In Shakespeare's time, the Puritans felt that playgoing was evil.)

During Shakespeare's time, the Puritans thought that plays were sinful and they wanted to close down the theaters, thus censoring all plays. In Act 5, Shakespeare seems to be arguing against censorship. Certainly, there is nothing harmful in the play within a play. Shakespeare makes the point that the audience can distinguish between illusion and reality by having Snug point out that he is not a real lion, but

a man portraying a lion. The fears of Snug and of the Puritans are pointless.

Act 5

• When the members of the upper-class audience make comments about the play "Pyramus and Thisby," do they do so in such a way that the actors don't hear them, according to the evidence of the text?

It is quite clear that when the members of the upper class make their comments, which are often rude, the actors hear them. There are a number of reasons for believing this:

1) When the members of the upper-class audience make their comments, the play "Pyramus and Thisby" stops.

The actors have to wait for the upper-class audience to stop talking before they are able to proceed with the play. This is supported by the text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Nowhere do the actors and the upper-class audience speak at the same time. Instead, the lower-class actors wait for their upper-class audience to stop speaking so that the play may continue.

2) Clearly, the upper-class audience interferes with the Moon's attempt to speak his lines.

They keep interrupting with comments until finally this exchange occurs:

> **Moonshine**
>
> This lanthorn doth the horned moon present; —
>
> **DEMETRIUS**
>
> He should have worn the horns on his head.

THESEUS

He is no crescent, and his horns are
invisible within the circumference.

Moonshine

This lanthorn doth the horned moon present;
Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be.

THESEUS

This is the greatest error of all the rest: the man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else the man i' the moon?

DEMETRIUS

He dares not come there for the candle; for, you see, it is already in snuff.

HIPPOLYTA

I am aweary of this moon: would he would change!

THESEUS

It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

LYSANDER

Proceed, Moon.

Moonshine

All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the

lanthorn is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this

thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog.

Although Moonshine has few lines to say, it takes a long time for him to say them because of all the interruptions.

3) Not once, but twice, Bottom hears the comments of the audience and responds.

The first occurs when Thisby misses her cue (77):

THESEUS

The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

Pyramus

No, in truth, sir, he should not. 'Deceiving me'

is Thisby's cue: she is to enter now, and I am to

spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will

fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

The other time occurs at the end of the "Pyramus and Thisby," when the audience members remark that the moonshine, lion, and wall are "left to bury the dead" (83):

THESEUS

Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEMETRIUS

Ay, and Wall too.

BOTTOM

[Starting up] No assure you; the wall is down that

parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the

epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two

of our company?

However, does this mean that we should pity the poor actors (poor in more than one sense)? No, for Bottom is so dense that he is unable to know that the audience members are mocking the actors and the play. When Theseus remarks, "The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again" (5.1.182), Bottom takes the remark completely seriously and explains why the wall should not curse again.

Act 5

• When the Athenian workmen present their play, is the upper-class audience rude? Do any members of the audience react to the play with understanding and charity?

The audience members are rude (in my opinion), constantly making jokes and talking. However, some of the characters do react to the play with understanding and charity.

1. Theseus orders that the play be presented. This can be interpreted as charity. The workmen have labored to prepare the play, and Theseus does them the honor of watching it.

On the other hand, both Philostrate and Hippolyta worry that Theseus wants to watch the play so that he can laugh at the workmen who present it.

Theseus is sure that he wants to hear the play, and he apparently does not intend to laugh at it (73):

THESEUS

I will hear that play;

For never anything can be amiss,

When simpleness and duty tender it.

Go, bring them in: and take your places, ladies.

When Hippolyta says that she does not want to see workmen attempt to do something that they are incapable of, Theseus says that the audience can take what they mistake. This means that the audience can supply in their imagination whatever it is that the workmen lack.

On pp. 73-74, we read:

THESEUS

The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.

Our sport shall be to take what they mistake:

And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect

Takes it in might, not merit.

Where I have come, great clerks have purposed

To greet me with premeditated welcomes;

Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,

Make periods in the midst of sentences,

Throttle their practised accent in their fears

And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,

Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,

Out of this silence yet I pick’d a welcome;

And in the modesty of fearful duty

I read as much as from the rattling tongue

Of saucy and audacious eloquence.

Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity

In least speak most, to my capacity.

2. Later, when Hippolyta says that the play is the "silliest stuff" she has even, Theseus says a few things that reveal great understanding.

On p. 78, we read:

HIPPOLYTA

This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

THESEUS

The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

HIPPOLYTA

It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

THESEUS

If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

3. We should note that the audience does pay attention to the play throughout — although the audience also talks throughout the play.

On p. 80, we read:

HIPPOLYTA

I am aweary of this moon: would he would change!

THESEUS

It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

*4. The audience does have some praise for the actors***.**

On p. 80, we read:

DEMETRIUS

Well roared, Lion.

THESEUS

Well run, Thisby.

HIPPOLYTA

Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace.

The Lion shakes Thisby's mantle, and exit

THESEUS

Well moused, Lion.

5. Theseus knows that the play is bad, but he also knows that it has passed the time well, which was its purpose.

On p. 84, we read:

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve:
Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.
I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn
As much as we this night have overwatch'd.

This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled

The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.

We should note that the other entertainments on tap would not have been half as entertaining as this "palpable-gross play" (5.1.369).

Act 5

• In what other ways does Theseus show sensitivity toward the craftsmen and the craftsmen's play in his words in Act 5?

Theseus shows a great deal of sensitivity.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we see the power of the nonrational — music, dance, comedy, beauty, sex, love, and poetry. Theseus is in many ways rational, but he is so overcome by the badness of the "Pyramus and Thisby" play and its actors that he has to laugh at it. This demonstrates the nonrational overwhelming the rational.

Theseus' remarks do show a great deal of sensitivity. When Philostrate says that the play "Pyramus and Thisby" is not for him, Theseus replies (73):

THESEUS

I will hear that play;

For never anything can be amiss,

When simpleness and duty tender it.

Go, bring them in: and take your places, ladies.

Even if the play and the actors are bad, Theseus says that he will remember that the source of the play comes from "simpleness and duty" (5.1.83).

And when Hippolyta says that she does not want to see the lower-class craftsmen attempt to do something that is beyond their ability, Theseus has a good reply (73):

HIPPOLYTA

I love not to see wretchedness o'er charged

And duty in his service perishing.

THESEUS

Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

HIPPOLYTA

He says they can do nothing in this kind.

THESEUS

The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.

Our sport shall be to take what they mistake:

And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect

Takes it in might, not merit.

Even if the play is nothing, Theseus shall give them thanks for nothing, and so be kind.

Theseus also remarks that many people have come to him to welcome him, but have been so overcome by his presence that they have been unable to speak and welcome him. In such cases, Theseus pretends that they have given him a proper welcome, taking the intention for the deed. So shall he do for this play.

Even though Hippolyta has stated that she did not want to see the lower-class craftsmen make fools of themselves by attempting to do something that is beyond their ability, she has to admit (78):

> This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

Theseus replies (78),

> The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

Here, he says two things. One, the audience can amend matters by pretending that the play is better than it is. Two, even the best plays are "but shadows." The second statement is certainly one that we can disagree with, for we may believe that "the best in this kind" (5.1.212) are among the greatest works of the human imagination.

Theseus also says,

> If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men.

Once again, we have the theme of the imagination. The audience can pretend that the actors are better men than they are.

Despite these comments of great sensitivity, Theseus often talks during the play, showing horrible manners for a member of the audience. For example, about the actor portraying moonlight while holding a lanthorn and saying that he must be the man in the moon, Theseus says (79-80):\,

> This is the greatest error of all the rest: the man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else the man i' the moon?

Act 5

• How can we reconcile Theseus' comments of great sensitivity with his behavior of great insensitivity?

One possible opinion is to simply believe that Theseus is a Duke and a member of the royal family and therefore he can say whatever he likes about the actors. True, but why then does he make the remarks of great sensitivity?

I think the answer is that Theseus is not a hypocrite. He means what he says in his remarks of great sensitivity, but he is unable to act as properly as he speaks simply because the play and the actors are so bad (in a funny way).

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we see the power of the nonrational world over the rational world. The rational world is represented by the court and by Theseus. The nonrational world is represented by the wood and by the fairies.

In the craftsmen's play, we see nonrational comedy as being more powerful than the rationality of Theseus.

Three terms must be defined here:

> *Rational*: Things are rational if they are in accordance with reason. Logic is rational. Mathematics is rational. Law and government should be rational.
>
> *Irrational*: Things are irrational if they are against reason. An example of an irrational act is sticking your hand in a blender and turning it on just to see what it feels like. Another example is shooting yourself and blowing your head off because you can't stand the pain of a splinter in your finger.
>
> *Nonrational*: Things are nonrational if they are neither in accordance with reason nor against reason. We see many examples of nonrational things in *A*

> *Midsummer Night Dream*: falling in love, dancing, singing, speaking poetry, laughing at comedy, and having sex on your wedding night.

When Theseus laughs at the play despite his good intentions of treating the actors and the play with respect, we see the victory of the nonrational over the rational. Theseus knows the proper way to act. Theseus knows how to behave with the proper etiquette. However, the play is so bad (in a funny way) that he can't do it. Instead, he has to laugh and to join in by making jokes.

Act 5

• What practical function do Theseus and the other members of the upper class have while watching the play? What ought they to be doing while watching the play (and not speaking)?

Theseus and the members of the upper-class audience have a very important practical function on stage during "Pyramus and Thisby." They are laughers; they start the real audience members laughing. A modern-day stand-up comedian will sometimes plant friends in the audience to start laughing. Often, once the friends laugh, the other audience members will join in. Shakespeare has Theseus, Hippolyta, and the four lovers on stage as the audience for "Pyramus and Thisby." It would be odd if he didn't use them to provide a laugh track for the play within a play.

Act 5

• What are the themes of the Pyramus and Thisby play and how are they relevant to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?

In the Pyramus and Thisby play, we see once again the romantic confusion that plagued the four young Athenian lovers.

In the Pyramus and Thisby play, as funny as it is, we see a reminder that love can have serious outcomes as well. We remember, of course, that Shakespeare also wrote *Romeo and Juliet* at about the same thing time that he wrote *A Midsummer Night's Night*.

Act 5

• What does Puck say in his Epilogue?

In a play about the nonrational, it is fitting for fairies to have the last words.

The play ends with all the newly married couples going to bed. As Puck speaks the final words of the play, we can imagine what all the newly married couples are doing in bed.

The time is midnight, or "almost fairy time" (5.1.366). Theseus says (84),

> The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve:
>
> Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.

Puck then enters, carrying a broom. According to folklore, fairies would sweep houses at night. A little later, Oberon and Titania and other fairies enter.

The fairies get the last word in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as they should. They sing and dance, and they bless the offspring of the newly married couples. The children that the newly married couples are busily creating will not be marred by birth defects (85):

> **OBERON**
>
> Now, until the break of day,
>
> Through this house each fairy stray.
>
> To the best bride-bed will we,

Which by us shall blessed be;

And the issue there create

Ever shall be fortunate.

So shall all the couples three

Ever true in loving be;

And the blots of Nature's hand

Shall not in their issue stand;

Never mole, hare lip, nor scar,

Nor mark prodigious, such as are

Despised in nativity,

Shall upon their children be.

With this field-dew consecrate,

Every fairy take his gait;

And each several chamber bless,

Through this palace, with sweet peace;

And the owner of it blest

Ever shall in safety rest.

Trip away; make no stay;

Meet me all by break of day.

Puck asks for applause. He also asks that if the actors have offended anyone, that the audience members think that they have been dreaming, not attending a play. Puck says (86),

PUCK

If we shadows have offended,

Think but this, and all is mended,

That you have but slumber’d 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, good night unto you all.

Give me your hands, if we be friends,

And Robin shall restore amends.

The love ends with sex as the newly married couples retire to bed. As Puck speaks the epilogue, a lot of bedsprings are bouncing (at least, they would be if bedsprings had been invented at the time). Sex is nonrational.

Appendix A: Bibliography

Holman, C. Hugh, and William Harmon. *A Handbook to Literature*. 6th edition. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company; London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1992.

Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. New York: Signet Classic, 1998. Edited by Wolfgang Clemen.

Appendix B: Paper Topics

Paper Topics

• The comic target of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the silly ways that being in love makes us behave. Discuss.

• Discuss the characters of the four lovers — Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius — in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Why are these characters so interchangeable?

• Men are dominant in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Discuss.

• Write a detailed character analysis of Bottom. Is he a sympathetic character, or is he simply a fool?

• Write a detailed character analysis of Puck.

• Compare and contrast Bottom and Puck.

• Write an analysis of the "Pyramus and Thisby" play in Act 5. Why does it appear in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?

• Compare and contrast Oberon and Titania with Theseus and Hippolyta.

• Two worlds appear in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: The rational world of Theseus and the nonrational world of the fairies. Discuss. Is it possible to enjoy both worlds, or must one choose between them?

Appendix C: Paper Hints

The comic target of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the silly ways that being in love makes us behave. Discuss. (For example, love makes a distinction where no real distinction exists.)

• Love can make us make a distinction where no real distinction exists.

• Love can make us desire someone who is totally unsuitable for us.

• Love can make us blind to the loved one's faults.

• Love can make us jealous.

• Love (and jealousy) can make friends enemies.

• Love can make us quarrelsome.

• Love can make us fickle.

• If we are rejected, love can make us have low self-esteem (e.g., Helena).

• Love can make us chase after someone who hates us.

• Love can make us attempt to use reason to explain love although love is a nonrational emotion. (Lysander does this.)

Note: We are sometimes taught that a good way to begin a paper is to open with a definition, but it is not a good idea to define a word whose definition is commonly known. In other words, do not begin your paper by defining "love," whose meaning we already know. (It is OK to define, when relevant, words whose meanings are not commonly known, such as "nonrational.")

• Love is not irrational, although it can make people act in silly ways. Love is nonrational.

• One of the best comments on the nonrationality of love is made by Bottom: "And yet, to say the truth, reason / and love keep little company together nowadays" (3.1.144-145).

Let's say that you will write a paper about the silly acts that love makes the characters in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* do. Here is a sample outline you could use. (Modify it as needed.)

I. Intro.

A. Thesis statement: William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* shows that love makes people act in silly ways.

II. Topic sentence: Love can make people see a distinction where there is no real distinction.

A. Lysander and Demetrius are interchangeable male lovers.

B. Hermia and Helena, despite superficial differences, are interchangeable young female lovers.

III. Topic sentence: Love can make people desire someone who is totally unsuitable for them.

A. Theseus falls in love with the Queen of the Amazons.

B. Titania falls in love with the ass-headed Bottom.

IV. Topic sentence: Love can make people blind to the loved one's faults.

A. Titania ignores Bottom's crudities.

V. Topic sentence: Love can make people jealous.

A. Oberon and Titania are jealous.

B. Helena is jealous of Hermia's beauty, although Hermia and Helena are thought to be equally beautiful by people in Athens.

C. Hermia is jealous of Helena's height, and she thinks that Helena has used her height to lure Lysander.

VI. Topic sentence: Love can make people quarrelsome.

A. Lysander and Demetrius want to fight with swords.

B. Hermia wants to fight Helena, a childhood friend.

VII. Topic sentence: Love can make people fickle.

A. Demetrius loves Helena, then Hermia, and then Helena again.

B. Lysander loves Hermia, then Helena, and then Hermia again.

VIII. Topic sentence: Love can make people have low self-esteem if they are rejected.

A. Helena has low self-esteem because Demetrius has rejected her.

IX. Topic sentence: Love can make people chase after someone who hates them.

A. Helena chases after Demetrius even after he tells her that he does not and cannot love her.

X. Conclusion

A. Quotation by Bottom: "And yet, to say the truth, reason / and love keep little company together nowadays" (3.1.144-145).

Discuss the characters of the four lovers — Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius — in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Why are these characters so interchangeable?

• Demetrius and Lysander are very, very alike except for their names and who loves them. They are wealthy young men, they are members of the upper class, they live in Athens, and they are in love. However, Demetrius is more fickle — he loved, then he did not love Helena.

• Helena and Hermia are also very, very much alike. They are young women, they are members of the upper class, they live in Athens, and they are in love.

• Helena and Hermia do have minor differences. Helena is lighter (skin and hair color), taller, and gentler than Hermia.

• These characters are so interchangeable because Shakespeare is showing that love makes a distinction where no real distinction exists. Many people would say that the male lovers are so alike that they are interchangeable and that the female lovers are so alike that they are interchangeable. However, the lovers see vast differences among each other. At one point, Demetrius thinks that Hermia is beautiful but that Helena is so ugly that she makes him sick. However, to the people of Athens (who are not in love with either woman), both Helena and Hermia are beautiful.

• To help the audience differentiate the two couples, directors will sometimes dress the couples in different-colored clothing or give the couples different-colored hair. For example, since we know that Hermia is shorter and darker than Helena, a director can make Hermia and

Lysander short and brunette, while making Helena and Demetrius tall and blond. And one couple can wear red while the other couple wears blue.

• One of the best comments on the four young lovers is made by Puck: "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" (3.2.115).

Males are dominant in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Discuss. (Egeus, Oberon, and Theseus all have much power.)

• Egeus has power over Hermia.

• Theseus has power over Hippolyta and Hermia and the other citizens of Athens.

• Oberon has power over Titania and meddles with the four young lovers.

• Theseus and Oberon both cause and resolve problems.

• Theseus has the political power in Athens.

• A man plays the part of Thisby. (Only men perform in the play within a play. Women aren't allowed to be on stage at the time that Shakespeare wrote.)

• When Oberon and Titania quarrel, nature is severely affected. (Note that Titania is perfectly happy with Ganymede; apparently, Oberon's unhappiness causes the problems in nature.)

• Theseus' first speech with its reference to a "stepdame" (1.1.5) can be interpreted as a negative view of women.

• However, Hippolyta seems to be reconciled to marriage with Theseus by the beginning of Act 5. She refers to him as "my Theseus" (5.1.1).

• The women remain in love with the same men, but the men are fickle.

• The young male lovers don't seem concerned about the feelings of the young female lovers; the young male lovers are mainly concerned about their own feelings.

• Lysander attempts to seduce Hermia in the woods.

• The young female lovers show some strength. Hermia stands up to Egeus and to Theseus. Hermia declines to be seduced in the woods. Helena declines to stop loving Demetrius.

Write a detailed character analysis of Bottom. Is he a sympathetic character, or is he simply a fool?

• Bottom is a fool.

• Bottom is loveable.

• Bottom has many friends.

• Bottom's enthusiasm for experiencing life is shown by his encounter with Titania.

• Bottom's enthusiasm for experiencing life is shown by his rehearsing and acting in the play about Pyramus and Thisby.

• Bottom is the only human character who interacts directly with the fairies.

• Bottom participates in each of the societies depicted in the play: 1) the craftsmen, 2) the court (where the craftsmen present their play), 3) the play within a play, and 4) the woods where the fairies live.

• Bottom misuses words and mixes up the senses.

• In writing an analysis of one character (for example, Bottom in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), you may use several characteristics to describe that character. For example, your thesis and forecasting statement may say, "Bottom is a fool, but he is a likeable

fool with many friends and an enthusiasm for experiencing life."

Intro.

Thesis Statement: Bottom is a fool, but he is a likeable fool with many friends and an enthusiasm for experiencing life.

Characteristic #1: Bottom is a fool.

Characteristic #2: Bottom is likeable.

Characteristic #3: Bottom has many friends.

Characteristic #4: Bottom's enthusiasm for experiencing life is shown by his encounter with Titania.

Characteristic #5: Bottom's enthusiasm for experiencing life is shown by his rehearsing and acting in the play about Pyramus and Thisby.

Conclusion

Write a detailed character analysis of Puck.

• Puck is a fairy.

• Puck is a prankster.

• Puck's pranks are annoying but harmless to the people he plays them on.

• Puck is mischievous, but he is not evil.

• Puck is famous.

• Puck regards mortals as fools.

• Puck speaks excellent poetry.

• Puck speaks the last words of the play. He is the only character who speaks directly to the audience.

• Puck serves Oberon.

• Puck has supernatural powers.

Two worlds appear in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: The rational world of Theseus and the nonrational world of the fairies. Discuss. Is it possible to enjoy both worlds, or must one choose between them?

• Because many people don't know what "nonrational" means, it's a good idea to define this term at the beginning of your paper.

> • Rational: in accordance with reason (logic and math).
>
> • Irrational: totally against reason (e.g., sticking your hand in a blender and turning it on just to see what it feels like).
>
> • Nonrational: neither in accordance with reason nor against it (falling in love, humor, music and dance, beauty, having fun).

• At the beginning of the play, we see an over-reliance on law. Egeus is willing for his daughter to be executed if she will not marry the man he has chosen for her.

• As the ruler of Athens, Theseus is usually a very rational man. However, he is not immune to the power of the nonrational. He falls in love, and he laughs at a very bad play.

• The fairies are nonrational creatures. They speak very good poetry, they are spirits of love, they sing and dance, and usually it's fun to be a fairy.

• Human beings can be both rational and nonrational, and this is good. A mathematician can fall in love, and that is a good thing. A student can study hard each weekday, then have fun on Saturday night. A mathematician can fall in love and laugh at a Jim Carrey movie on a date. A mixture of the rational and nonrational makes for a good and happy life. (We should, however, avoid being irrational; a totally irrational person is insane.)

• Fairies don't exist, but the nonrational world (as in the world of feelings and emotions) does exist. Shakespeare uses the woods to represent the nonrational world. Shakespeare uses things that aren't real (fairies) to talk about things that are real (things that are nonrational such as love and music and poetry really do exist). Note: Don't take the word "world" literally; it does not refer to a physical place, such as the woods or Athens.

Note: Ignoring the nonrational can be dangerous, as is shown in Euripides' *Bacchae*. We need to have fun as well as to be capable of reason.

Appendix D: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Anecdotes

• Constance Benson (1860-1946) was an actress who toured with a company that frequently hired local actors as needed to swell its ranks. Unfortunately, these actors, including child actors, were often not very clean. When Ms. Benson played Titania in Shakespeare's *Midsummer's Night's Dream*, she used to unobtrusively sprinkle flea powder around the stage before her character fell asleep.

• Joe E. Brown was a vaudeville actor for many years, but he played in a star-studded movie version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a performance for which the movie studio did not want to pay him in money, but instead give him a car. His agent asked, "What would my commission be, a bicycle?"

• Director Max Reinhardt (1873-1943) was serious about his Shakespeare productions. In 1933, he created a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Oxford University Dramatic Society. He looked over the countryside — it was an outdoor production — then said, "Very nice, but [here he pointed at the village of Headington in the distance] that village over there must be removed." The effects he devised for the play were remarkable. For example, at the beginning of the play, the actors simply stepped out from behind the trees where they had been hiding, and at one point Puck runs across the field, then vanishes — by jumping into a pit that was hidden from the audience.

• Actor Patrick Macnee once received this telegram inviting him to star in a production of *A Midsummer's Night Dream*: "Doing a production of 'The Dream.' Hear you've become a fat lush. Lose weight and you're in."

• Sir Ralph Richardson once toured in Shakespeare's *Midsummer's Night's Dream* in Quito, Ecuador, where the dancing fairies had a rough time because of the high attitude

and the lack of oxygen. Quickly, the company learned to put oxygen tanks behind the trees, so the fairies could breathe extra oxygen before dancing.

• In the early 1960s Royal Shakespeare Society production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, actress Judi Dench appeared nearly nude as Titania. She wore pointed ears, a strand of ivy, green body makeup, a chamois leather G-string, and two small chamois patches over her nipples. While filming at the lake in Compton Verney, the director wanted rain to appear to be falling on the lake, so a fireman was hired to train a hose on the lake. However, the fireman saw Ms. Dench's lack of costume, did a double-take, and accidentally trained the hose on her, propelling her into the lake. Getting out of the lake, Ms. Dench fell in the mud, which removed most of her green body makeup, as well as the patches covering her nipples. No filming was done that day.

• Critics denounced actor Arthur Wood's performance as Bottom in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, so Mr. Wood wrote an angry letter to a newspaper. The editor printed the letter, but added this note: "Mr. Wood seems rather thin-skinned about his Bottom."

Appendix E: List Of Major Characters

Theseus

The Duke of Athens. He has conquered the Amazons (a tribe of warrior women) and will marry their queen, Hippolyta.

Hippolyta

The Queen of the Amazons, whom Theseus has defeated in battle. In Act 1, Theseus is eagerly looking to marrying her; in Act 5, he does marry her.

Hermia

She is in love with Lysander, but her father wants her to marry Demetrius.

Lysander

He is in love with Hermia, but a trick by Puck makes him fall in love with Helena instead.

Helena

She is in love with Demetrius, who in Act 1 no longer loves her.

Demetrius

He loved Helena, but at the beginning of Act 1, he is in love with Hermia.

Note: Lysander and Demetrius are virtually indistinguishable, except for their names. One way to keep the couples straight is according to the alphabet. Alphabetically, Demetrius comes before Lysander, and Helena comes before Hermia. Demetrius and Helena are one couple; Lysander and Hermia are another couple.

Oberon

King of the Fairies, he has become angry at his Queen, Titania, because of an Indian boy named Ganymede.

Titania

Queen of the Fairies, she no longer sleeps with Oberon, because he wants (not necessarily sexually) an Indian boy whom she wishes to raise.

Puck, aka Robin Goodfellow

A trickster, Puck regards mortals as fools. He is greatly delighted when Oberon's plans for reuniting the young lovers goes wrong.

Nick Bottom

A weaver, Bottom is to play the role of Pyramus, a lover, in the play of the craftsmen.

Francis Flute

Despite having a beard growing, Flute is to play the role of the young woman Thisby in the craftsmen's play.

Peter Quince, Snug, and Robin Starveling

More craftsmen who will put on the play "Pyramus and Thisby" for Theseus and Hippolyta on their wedding day.

Egeus

Hermia's father. He insists that Hermia marry Demetrius instead of Lysander for no discernible reason other than he prefers Demetrius to Lysander.

Philostrate

The Master of the Revels, he does not want Theseus to see the "lamentable comedy" of "Pyramus and Thisby."

Appendix F: Scene Summaries

ACT 1

Scene 1

Theseus eagerly anticipates marrying Hippolyta, but Egeus interrupts with a problem. He wants his daughter, Hermia, to marry Demetrius, but she insists on marrying Lysander, whom she loves, instead. Theseus tells Hermia that according to the law of Athens, she must either marry Demetrius or remain an unmarried virgin for the rest of her life. Lysander and Hermia decide to run away from Athens to a place where they can marry, and they tell Helena, whom Demetrius used to love. Helena tells Demetrius, and so all four young lovers will be in the woods that night. Lysander and Hermia will run away from Athens, Demetrius will run after Hermia, and Helena will run after Demetrius.

Scene 2

The craftsmen meet in Quince's house to discuss their play, "Pyramus and Thisby," and to assign the parts. Nick Bottom, who is a weaver (and an enthusiastic ham actor), wishes to play *all* the parts.

ACT 2

Scene 1

The audience is introduced to the fairy world as Puck, aka Robin Goodfellow, arrives, is recognized by another fairy, and Puck and the other fairy describes the tricks Puck likes to play on human beings. The King and Queen of the Fairies, Oberon and Titania, have had a falling out over an Indian boy named Ganymede, and their quarrel is causing disturbances in Nature. Oberon orders Puck to find a flower with magical properties: Put its juice on someone's eyes and that person will fall in love with the next being that person

meets. Demetrius and Helena enter, Oberon learns that Helena loves Demetrius although Demetrius does not love her, and he orders Puck to charm the eyes of the man so he falls in love with the maid. Unfortunately, Oberon does not know that Lysander and Helena are also in the woods.

Scene 2

Oberon charms Titania's eyes while she is asleep, so that she will fall in love with the next being she sees when she wakes up. Puck charms Lysander's eyes, and Lysander falls in love with Helena. This greatly delights Puck, who loves mixups of this kind. Now Demetrius and Lysander are in love with Helena, and neither loves Hermia. Lysander runs after Helena, and Hermia wakes up, alone.

ACT 3

Scene 1

The craftsmen arrive in the woods to rehearse, and Puck puts the head of an ass (donkey) on Bottom. His friends run away, and Bottom sings. The singing awakens Titania, who falls immediately in love with the ass-headed Bottom.

Scene 2

Because of the magic flower, the four lovers share a scene of confusion, with Demetrius and Lysander both claiming to love Helena. Helena is convinced that the three other lovers are mocking her, and Hermia becomes convinced that Helena has used her tallness to steal Lysander from her. Oberon orders Puck to put things to rights again, and Puck does.

ACT 4

Scene 1

Titania loves the ass-headed Bottom, which Oberon regrets now that she has given him the Indian boy Ganymede. Now Oberon is ready to set all to rights. He orders Puck to remove the ass's head from Bottom, while he will remove the charm from her eyes. Titania awakes as from a dream and is astonished to realize that she has been in love with the ass-headed Bottom. Titania and Oberon are reconciled. Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus come across the four lovers in the woods, and Theseus overrules Egeus' will and declares that Hermia will marry Lysander. In addition, Demetrius, who is still charmed by magic, will marry Helena. All three weddings, including Theseus' own, will occur that night.

Scene 2

Bottom's friends are lamenting that he has been "transported" (4.2.4) because they believe that his acting skill could have earned him a pension of sixpence a day for the rest of his life. Indeed, they believe that they all would have earned pensions. Bottom enters, and they all go to the palace to present their play.

ACT 5

Scene 1

The craftsmen put on their play. Theseus has good intentions of respecting the efforts of the craftsmen, but the play is so bad (in a funny way) that he can't help laughing at it. The newly married couples retire to their bedrooms, and the fairies arrive to bless their unions. The actor playing Puck asks the audience to applaud. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a comedy, and it has a happy ending.

Appendix G: Notes on Acts and Scenes of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Act 1, Scene 1

• This scene introduces us to the royal court of Athens.

• Theseus is very eager to marry Hippolyta, but Hippolyta is perhaps not so eager to marry Theseus. For Theseus, the time until their marriage passes slowly. For Hippolyta, it passes much more quickly.

• Theseus and Hippolyta speak blank verse. The young lovers start out by speaking blank verse, but they also speak rhymed couplets.

• The theme of the power a father has over a daughter is shown by Egeus' wanting his daughter, Hermia, to marry Demetrius, although she wants to marry Lysander. Egeus wants Hermia to be put to death if she does not obey his wishes. However, Theseus says that an alternate punishment is virginity forever in a nunnery.

• Hermia shows a lot of spunk in this scene. She declines to marry Demetrius although her father orders her to marry him.

• The four lovers are much alike. Demetrius is very similar to Lysander. Helena is very similar to Hermia. A person producing the play needs to figure out how to help the audience to identity which male lover goes with each female lover. Some ways to do this are through height, color of hair, and color of clothing.

• We read that Demetrius "made love to" (1.1.107) Helena; however, "made love to" in Shakespeare's day did not mean "have sex with." Instead, it meant "wooed" or "pursued" or "flirted."

Act 1, Scene 2

• This scene introduces us to the craftsmen. They speak prose, which is a major contrast to the poetry spoken by the other characters in the play.

• The craftsmen provide very broad comedy.

• No one can doubt that Bottom is a fool, but the reader will have to decide if he is a likeable fool. (He has friends, so there is evidence that he is a likeable fool.)

• Bottom is an enthusiastic ham actor with bad taste in poetry.

• Quince is a bad playwright and a bad poet.

• None of the craftsmen is competent with words. Quince writes a "lamentable / comedy" (1.2.11-12), and Bottom misuses words constantly.

Act 2, Scene 1

• The fairies speak a dazzling variety of poetry. Meters and rhyme schemes vary enormously.

• Shakespeare keeps his audience interested through the use of variety and contrast. A scene with the down-to-earth, working-class Bottom and his friends is followed by a scene with the magical fairies.

• One theme of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is love out of balance, and we see that enacted in the quarrel between Titania and Oberon over the Indian boy named Ganymede. Their quarrel has caused disturbances in nature such as the flooding of rivers.

• The fairies are not evil, although they can be mischievous — Puck is certainly mischievous when he plays practical jokes.

• The fairies are associated with flowers, which are things of beauty. The fairies live in a world that is nonrational. They don't work, but they do such things as dance and sing. Poetry is their normal mode of speech.

• Titania and Oberon are spirits of love. They have come to the wood to bless the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta.

• The size of the fairies as described in the play is very tiny. They can hide in the top of an acorn. A snakeskin is wide enough to wrap a fairy in. The wings of a bat can make a coat for a fairy. On stage, Titania and Oberon are played by normal-sized adults, but the minor fairies such as Cobweb, Peaseblossom, and Mustardseed are often played by children.

• Helena needs some feminist education. She tells Demetrius that he can treat her like a Spaniel — a dog (a cocker spaniel) — if he likes, just so he doesn't ignore her.

• Demetrius makes an important pun in this scene. He says that he is "wood within this wood" (2.1.192). That means that he is insane within this wood.

• Because of his quarrel with Helena, Oberon can empathize with Helena. He orders Puck to anoint the eyes of the Athenian gentleman with the juice of a magic flower so that he will fall in love with the maid. (Puck, of course, will mess up the command.)

Act 2, Scene 2

• Lysander tries to seduce Hermia, but she resists his advances. Hermia is more assertive than Helena.

• Because of Puck's mistake (he anoints the eyes of Lysander, not Demetrius), comic confusion ensues. Lysander falls in love with Helena, and out of love with Hermia.

• Lysander is convinced that reason makes him fall in love with Helena:

> Who will not change a raven for a dove?
>
> The will of man is by his reason sway'd;
>
> And reason says you are the worthier maid.
>
> Things growing are not ripe until their season
>
> So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
>
> And touching now the point of human skill,
>
> Reason becomes the marshal to my will
>
> And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
>
> Love's stories written in love's richest book. (2.2.114-122)

This is not true. Lysander falls in love with Helena because of a magic plant.

• People in love justify their love by saying that they are using their reason. Lysander says that now he has come to his senses, he loves Helena and not Hermia. Actually, love is divorced from reason. We don't fall in love for rational reasons — love is nonrational. (If we fell in love for rational reasons, we would all in love with someone rich.)

• Of course, we don't need to believe in magic flowers and love potions. Shakespeare is saying something true in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; he is saying that love can make us do silly things. However, Shakespeare can and does use non-realistic devices such as magic flowers to make a point about reality.

Act 3, Scene 1

• The craftsmen don't understand that the audience will realize that a man in a lion costume is not really a lion. They don't know about the willing suspension of disbelief that members of the audience have while watching a play. Of course, we members of the audience know that we are watching a play and that we are not really seeing fairies on stage, but we members of the audience are willing to suspend our disbelief while the play is going on.

• Bottom tends to look out for ways to enlarge his role. For example, he wants Quince to write a Prologue that explains that the sword is not real, that Pyramus is not dead, and that Pyramus is really Bottom, the weaver. This helps to get Bottom's name before the public.

• Bottom continues to misuse words. For example, he (as Pyramus) refers to "odious savours sweet" (3.1.83) instead of "odors savours sweet" (3.1.85). Thisby also calls Ninus' tomb "Ninny's tomb" (3.1.98).

• We see how bad the writing of the play "Pyramus and Thisby" is. For example, Thisby (played by Flute) describes Pyramus as being both "most lily-white of hue" (3.1.94) and "of colour like the red rose" (3.1.95). So Pyramus' coloring is both white and red. (Maybe Pyramus is Scottish. Scots sometimes have faces that are a mixture of red and white.) In addition, Pyramus is compared to a true horse (3.1.97).

• Bottom is not aware that he has the head of an ass, although he does find himself craving hay and oats and he does find his face very hairy (there's nothing wrong with that, of course, said the bearded man).

• Oberon's trick works out better than he could imagine, for Titania wakes and falls in love with an ass.

• Shakespeare's satiric target is that love makes us do silly things. We certainly see that in Titania's love for the ass-headed Bottom. The craftsman and the fairy Queen are totally unsuited as mates.

• Although he is a fool, Bottom ironically says the wisest thing in the play: "to say the truth, reason / and love keep little company together nowadays" (3.1.144-145).

• Bottom is bossy. He treats the attendant fairies well, but he also orders them to do favors for him. He is enthusiastic about experiencing life, and now he is enthusiastic about having servants.

Act 3, Scene 2

• This scene focuses on the lovers, and it shows us that love can quickly change its object. We can fall in and out of love with one another very quickly. In addition, love makes a distinction between two people when there is really very little distinguishing them.

• In this scene, the men are fickle, but the women remain constant in their love for the men. (This is not always the case. My nephew in the 5th grade had his heart broken by a young girl who loved him for two days, but then fell in love with someone else. According to my nephew, love in the 4th grade is puppy love, but in the 5th grade love is serious business.)

• The changes in objects of love cause a lot of hate and discontent between the two women, who were friends previously. Hermia becomes convinced that Helena has used her tallness to make Lysander fall in love with her.

• We discover that Hermia and Helena differ a little physically. Helena is tall and fair, while Hermia is short and dark.

• Hermia and Helena also differ psychologically. Hermia is assertive and can become very angry, while Helena lacks self-confidence and is very weepy.

• One way that love can affect us is to make enemies of friends. Hermia and Helena are best friends, but because of love (and jealousy), Hermia tries to scratch out Helena's eyes.

• The men are interchangeable in this scene, as are for the most part the women. They are alike in the important particulars, and many people in the audience have trouble telling them apart. However, Shakespeare does this on purpose. Love makes us see a major distinction between two people even when they are almost exactly alike.

• We find out that the fairies are not spirits of the night. They are not evil spirits, and they can go about in daylight if they wish.

• Throughout all the confusion in this scene, Puck is happy. This is the kind of mischief in which he delights.

• At the end of the scene, Puck is able to set things right. He charms the eyes of Lysander so he will fall again in love with Hermia. Note, however, that Demetrius' eyes remain charmed, so that he stays in love with Helena.

• The most famous line in the play is probably Puck's "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" (3.2.115). Once upon a time, the top of the comic page in newspapers depicted Puck saying these words.

Act 4

• Act 4 is the shortest act in the play. In it, difficulties are ironed out. The four lovers are divided into two couples, the members of whom love each other, and Bottom is reunited with his friends. This sets up the happy and comic act of Act

5. Of course, the other acts have been comic, but the four young lovers — especially in Act 3 — did experience unhappy emotions.

• Theseus and Hippolyta bookend the play. They appear at the beginning, in Act 1, and at the end, in Acts 4 and 5.

• Act 4 makes a transition from sadness to joy. Of course, Act 3 was comic, but the four lovers experienced some upsetting emotions in it — jealousy, anger, and hate.

Act 4, Scene 1

• Oberon may be jealous of Bottom. Previously, Oberon was jealous of the Indian boy because Titania was paying so much attention to him. Now, Oberon may be jealous of Bottom because Titania is paying so much attention to him.

• Bottom is a fool, but a likeable fool. He treats his servant fairies well, but orders them to do such favors for him as scratch his head, which is marvelously hairy.

• Bottom and Titania are incompatible — something that Titania immediately realizes when her eyes are uncharmed by Oberon. Their differences are shown in the fact that Bottom continues to speak prose, while Titania continues to speak rhymed poetry.

• The tastes in music of Titania and Bottom are different. When Titania asks for music — meaning the music of the fairies — Bottom asks for the tongs and the bones. The tongs are struck by metal and the bones are bone clappers held between the musician's fingers. This is rustic music. The difference between the two kinds of music is like the difference between classical music and country music. (Tongs: "a grasping device consisting of two arms joined at one end by a pivot or hinge." — *The American Heritage Dictionary*.)

• Theseus greets the four lovers with a bawdy remark when he asks:

> Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past:
>
> Begin these wood-birds but to couple now? (4.1.142-143)

Birds were thought to begin to have sexual intercourse on St. Valentine's Day, and Theseus implies that the four lovers have gone into the woods to have sex.

• Theseus does exactly the right thing when he overrules Egeus and allows Hermia to marry Lysander. In Act 1, he said that he could not go against the law of Athens, but in Act 4, he does exactly that. The difference that justifies this, of course, is that Demetrius does not now love Hermia, but now loves Helena.

• Titania's eyes are uncharmed by Oberon, and the King and the Queen of the fairies are reunited and in love again. In this play, men have supremacy over women. When Oberon gets what he wants, good things happen. When Titania resists Oberon, bad things happen — nature becomes unnatural, and she is punished. This is a sexist play — or at least it reflects a sexist society.

• Even when Hermia resists marrying Demetrius and takes action by running away from Athens with Lysander, it is a man — Duke Theseus — who has power over her. Fortunately, he allows her to marry Lysander.

• Bottom is the only mortal in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* who has direct interaction with the fairy world. The lovers never see Puck, but Bottom sees Titania. Bottom interacts with all the worlds of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He is working class, he goes to the court to put a play, he interacts with the fairies in the woods, and he participates in art (the nonrational world) by acting in a play.

• Bottom and the craftsmen continue to make malapropisms. Bottom also has much self-confidence and a very high opinion of himself. He half-remembers what happened in the woods, and he says that he will request Peter Quince to write a "ballet" (4.1.218) of his dream — he means ballad. Bottom hopes to recite it before Duke Theseus.

• Bottom garbles a passage in 1 Corinthians about Humankind's inability to understand God's will when he says:

> The eye of man hath not heard,
>
> the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not
>
> able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart
>
> to report, what my dream was. (4.1.214-217)

Characteristically, Bottom mixes up the senses.

Act 4, Scene 2

• The craftsmen continue to make malapropisms. Quince says that Bottom "is a very paramour for a sweet voice" (4.2.12) — he means paragon. (Paragon: "A model of excellence or perfection." Paramour: "A lover, esp. one in an adulterous relationship." Definitions are from *The American Heritage Dictionary*.)

• Bottom's friends like him, and he likes his friends. We can tell this by what they say about each other. Bottom's friends not only like him, but they also think that he is a good actor.

• Bottom insists that the actors not eat onions or garlic before performing their play. Since Bottom likes to overact and vigorously proclaim his words, we can see how the actors would realize that this is good advice.

Act 5, Scene 1

• By the end of Act 4, all of the lovers are paired correctly: Oberon with Titania, Demetrius with Helena, and Lysander with Hermia. (And Theseus with Hippolyta.) However, one unfinished piece of business is left: the play by the craftsmen.

• At this time, Hippolyta seems reconciled to being married to Theseus. She refers to "my Theseus" (5.1.1), and she laughs at the craftsmen's play, which she probably would not do if she hated the idea of spending a wedding night with Theseus. (We should not be surprised that Theseus and Hippolyta will have a happy marriage; this is a romantic comedy, after all.)

• Theseus does not believe the "dream" the lovers have related, but Hippolyta wonders if it is real. After all, all four lovers relate the same dream, and the consistency of their story is some evidence that the "dream" is real.

• Theseus is a very rational man who equates the madman, the lover, and the poet. All of them see things that are not there, according to Theseus. A madman sees more devils than are in Hell. A lover looks at the face of a gypsy and sees the beautiful face of Helen of Troy. A poet has a busy imagination that sees things that don't exist, and his pen gives them business and shape. However, Theseus is not immune to the nonrational — he is in love with Hippolyta. We of course regard the madman as being irrational, while the lover and the poet are nonrational.

• In Elizabethan times, a poet is a playwright. Certainly, Shakespeare put lots of poetry in his plays, and he wrote sonnets. As Theseus says, Shakespeare sees things that don't exist and puts them in the plays — for example, magic love potions. However, we can add that Shakespeare also writes about true things. It is true that people can fall in and out of

love very quickly. It is true that a man can love one woman for a while, then love a different woman for a while, and then fall in love with the first woman again. Shakespeare uses magic love potions as a plot device to write about true things.

• Theseus is right to be rational. He is a head of state, and we want our heads of state to be rational. For example, we want our laws to be rational. However, there is more to life than reason, and if one is rational all the time (which is probably an impossibility), one misses out on a lot. (Cf. Mr. Spock in *Star Trek* and Data in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.)

• Readers interpret the character of Theseus in two ways. 1) He is too rational and is not open to many important things in life — the nonrational things that are represented by the fairy world. 2) He is rational — as a head of state ought to be — but he is sympathetic to art.

• The lovers are happy at the beginning of Act 5, and Theseus is happy that they are happy.

• Philostrate gives Theseus a list of entertainments to choose from, but many of the entertainments are clearly unsuitable for entertainment before a wedding night — anything involving a eunuch is unsuitable before a wedding night, in my opinion.

• Theseus is intrigued by the oxymora in the craftsmen's title for their play:

> 'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
>
> And his love Thisby; very tragical mirth.' (5.1.56-57)

The oxymora are "tedious brief" (5.1.56) and "tragical mirth" (5.1.57). As Theseus says, this is like "hot ice" (5.1.59).

• Philostrate does not recommend the play.

• Theseus wants to hear the play, but he intends to take into account the intent of the actors in it. In other words, he knows that the play will be bad, but he also knows that the intentions of the actors are good.

• Hippolyta is concerned that the actors will make fools of themselves, but Theseus assures her that as the audience they can treat the play as if it were better than it is.

• Theseus understands etiquette. He is a mighty personage, and people start to welcome him but become nervous in his presence and stop, unable to speak. In such cases, Theseus simply pretends that he has been welcomed. He does have respect for people.

• When Quince speaks the Prologue, he does exactly what other people do in Theseus' presence — he becomes discombobulated and says his Prologue badly, not stopping for periods when he should and inserting periods when he should not. The Prologue is meant to be respectful, but comes out insulting. However, Theseus, true to his word, considers the intention of Quince and recognizes that the Prologue is meant to be respectful.

• Some changes have been made in the play. There are no parts for Thisby's father and Pyramus' father. This is not a problem. Many plays change before being performed for the first time.

• Of course, the play is badly written. Pyramus repeats words because they are needed to fill the line with the necessary number of syllables:

O night, O night! alack, alack, alack, (5.1.172)

• Bottom occasionally steps out of character. For example, he hears Theseus say that the wall should curse Pyramus, so Bottom tells Theseus that Thisby's cue has been spoken and so she will appear.

• According to Theseus, even the best plays are but shadows. We can disagree with him. The best plays are monuments of human achievement.

• Numerous mistakes are made in the play. Pyramus refers to "Ninny's tomb" (5.1.203). He thanks the Moon for its "sunny beams" (5.1.274-275). There is way too much alliteration and silly wordage:

> gracious, golden, glittering gleams, (5.1.275)

and

> O dainty duck! O dear! (5.1.280)

• In addition, Pyramus takes a long time to die. After he rises from the dead, Pyramus mixes up human senses, asking if Theseus would like to hear a dance.

• One theme of the play within a play is the same as one theme of the play: romantic hardship and confusion.

• The audience members are rude (in my opinion), constantly making jokes and talking.

• Some critics think that the craftsmen don't hear the remarks of the audience, but clearly they do hear at least some of the remarks.

• In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we see the power of the nonrational — music, dance, comedy, beauty, sex, love, and poetry. Theseus is in many ways rational, but he is so overcome by the badness of the "Pyramus and Thisby" play and its actors that he has to laugh at it. This demonstrates the nonrational overwhelming the rational.

• The fairies get the last word in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as they should.

Appendix H: Shakespeare Checklist

Check to make sure that you are not making these common errors.

• Make sure that the titles of plays are underlined or italicized.

Macbeth

Hamlet

Romeo and Juliet

• Make sure that you use numbers to refer to acts and lines that you cite in your paper.

(5.14-15) = Act 5, lines 14-15

• Make sure that you use MLA style when quoting Shakespeare.

• Make sure that you use a dash — not a hyphen — when a dash is needed.

Dashes are longer than hyphens.

— is longer than -

• Make sure that you use a hyphen when a hyphen is needed (as when you put two words together to form an adjective that appears before the noun it modifies).

Epic poems are thought-provoking literature.

• Make sure that you use a comma after an introductory element.

Although Macbeth begins the play as a morally good hero, he ends the play as a morally evil tyrant.

• Make sure that you put commas and periods inside quotation marks — this is the American style.

"Hi," said Sally. George replied, "Hello."

• Make sure you proofread well. Make sure you spell words correctly (double-check difficult-to-spell names) and use apostrophes, commas, etc. correctly.

• Make sure you do a spelling check one final time before printing your paper. Often, a writer will misspell a word during revision.

Appendix I: How Should I Quote Poetry in Shakespeare?

Notes

1) For information about the MLA style of using quotations, see almost any English handbook.

2) Your major papers will be double-spaced.

3) Use a Works Cited list.

Identify the Act, Scene, and Line Number(s)

For example, 2.2.2-3 means Act 2, scene, lines 2-3.

For example, 3.1.64-70 means Act 3, scene 1, lines 64-70.

A Note on How to Tell Poetry from Prose in Shakespeare

Shakespeare uses both poetry and prose in his plays. A quick way to differentiate between the two is to look at capitalization. If each line of a passage begins with a capital letter, it is poetry; if it does not, it is prose. This is true of the Signet Classic edition.

How to Quote Short Passages of Poetry (Three Lines or Fewer)

• When quoting three or fewer lines of poetry, run them in with your text.

• Use a slash mark to separate the lines of poetry.

• Use a blank space before and after the slash mark.

• Quote poetry correctly, both in content and in style. (Quote every word accurately, and use the punctuation that appears in the original quotation.)

• Tell the reader where the passage is located. Use numbers to indicate act, scene, and lines of the passage.

• Use quotation marks.

For example:

When Romeo first sees Juliet in the Capulets' garden, he says, "But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks? / It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!" (2.2.2-3).

How to Quote Long Passages of Poetry (Four Lines or More)

• When quoting four or more lines of poetry, indent the lines a little more than you indent the paragraphs. (This is MLA style.)

• Do not center the lines of poetry.

• Do not use quotation marks unless they appear in the original lines of poetry.

• Be aware that some dialogue in plays by Shakespeare is poetry and must be quoted as poetry.

• Quote poetry correctly, both in content and in style. (Quote every word accurately, and use the punctuation that appears in the original quotation.)

• Tell the reader where the passage is located. Use numbers to indicate act, scene, and lines of the passage.

For example, the below quotation is correct. It is quoted as poetry — the lines break exactly where they break in the poem.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Titania says,

> Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;
>
> Then, for the third part of a minute, hence;
>
> Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,

> Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,
>
> To make my small elves coats, and some keep back
>
> The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
>
> At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep;
>
> Then to your offices and let me rest. (2.2.1-8)

Another correct quotation:

Macbeth says,

> No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,
>
> For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;
>
> For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered;
>
> Put rancors in the vessel of my peace
>
> Only for them, and mine eternal jewel
>
> Given to the common enemy of man,
>
> To make them kings, the seeds of Banquo kings! (3.1.64-70)

• Be sure capitalization remains the same as in the original source. If the original source capitalizes the beginning of each line, your quotation should do the same.

• Note that no quotation marks are needed unless they appear in the original source. The indentation shows that the passage is a quotation.

• Look up the quotation to see that it is quoted correctly, with no words left out. Make sure that the poetry is quoted as poetry, not as prose. (Each line of the poem should be indented, as above.)

• Note: You may want to also tell the reader the page number of the quoted passage.

Appendix J: How Can I Identify Very Long Lines of Poetry as Being One Line?

Occasionally, a line of poetry is too long to be set as a single line in a copy of one of William Shakespeare's plays, so the last word or two is printed below the first, long line. However, you may still quote it as a single line.

For example, the Signet Classic edition of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has this:

> Call you me fair? That fair again unsay.
>
> Demetrius loves your fair. O happy fair!
>
> Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue's sweet
>
> air
>
> More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,
>
> When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear. (1.1.181-185)

The word "air" is printed on a line of its own because the width of the page it is printed on is not long enough for the whole line. How do we know this? We can count the lines. Immediately preceding this quotation, Hermia says, "God speed fair Helena! Whither away?" That line is marked 180. If we count out the lines of Helena's speech, we discover that "Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue's sweet air" is line 183. If "Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue's sweet" was line 183, and if "air" was line 184, we would have too many lines. After all, "More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear" would have to be line 185, but the book clearly identifies "When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear" as line 185.

In your papers, you may quote it as a single line.

When Hermia calls Helena fair, Helena replies,

Call you me fair? That fair again unsay.

Demetrius loves your fair. O happy fair!

Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue's sweet air

More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,

When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear. (1.1.181-185)

Appendix K: How Do I Quote Shakespeare's Prose?

Quote prose with line breaks the way you quote poetry in Shakespeare's plays. To make it easy for scholars to refer to passages in Shakespeare's plays, passages of prose have also been given lines. Therefore, use the line breaks that appear in the play and cite the passages of prose just like you do with poetry.

Here is an example of a short quoted passage of prose from the Signet Classic edition of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*:

When Mercutio has been fatally wounded by Tybalt, he makes a final joke: "Ask / for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave / man" (3.1.98-100).

Here is an example of a longer passage of quoted prose from the Signet Classic edition of *Romeo and Juliet*:

When Mercutio has been fatally wounded by Tybalt, he makes a final joke even as he calls down a plague on both the House of Capulet and the House of Montague:

> No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide
>
> as a church door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve. Ask
>
> for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave
>
> man. I am peppered, I warrant, for this world. A
>
> plague a both your houses! Zounds, a dog, a rat, a
>
> mouse, a cat, to scratch a man to death! A braggart,
>
> a rogue, a villain, that fights by the book of arith-
>
> metic! Why the devil came you between us? I was hurt
>
> under your arm. (3.1.97-105)

• Note: You may want to also tell the reader the page number of the quoted passage.

Appendix L: Short Reaction Memos

The questions in this short guide to William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* can be used in discussions; however, they can also be used for short reaction memos. For example, I do this at Ohio University. See below for the assignment and sample short reaction memos.

How Do I Complete the Reaction Memo Assignments?

During the quarter, you will have to write a series of short memos in which you write about the readings you have been assigned.

Each memo should be at least 250 words, not counting long quotations from the work of literature. Include a word count for each memo, although that is not normally part of the memo format.

Following the memo heading (To, From, Re, Date, Words), write the question you are answering and the part of the book that the question applies to.

You may answer one question or more than one question. I will supply you with a list of questions that you may answer

Note that a Works Cited list is needed if you use quotations.

For examples from my Great Books courses at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, see below.

To: David Bruce

From: Jane Student

Re: *Odyssey*, Book 12 Reaction Memo

Date: Put Today's Date Here

Words: 323

***Odyssey*, Book 12: Is Odysseus a bad leader?**

This is an important question in the *Odyssey*. After all, Odysseus leads 12 ships and many men to Troy, but the ships are all destroyed and all of his men die and he returns home to Ithaca alone. Who is responsible for the deaths of Odysseus' men? Is Odysseus responsible for their deaths, or do the men bear some responsibility for their own deaths? Many readers prefer Odysseus, the great individualist, to Aeneas, the man who founds the Roman people, but then they realize that all of Odysseus' men died, while Aeneas succeeded in bringing many Trojans to Italy. When readers think of that, they begin to have a greater respect for Aeneas.

From the beginning of the *Odyssey*, this has been an issue. The bard says that the men perished because of the "recklessness of their own ways" (1.8). However, we notice that Odysseus is asleep at odd times. In Book 10, Aeolus gives Odysseus a bag in which the contrary winds have been tied up. This allows Odysseus to sail to Ithaca safely. However, they reach the island and see smoke rising from the fires, Odysseus goes to sleep and his men open the bag, letting the contrary winds escape, and the ship is blown back to King Aeolus' island. Similarly, in Book 12, on the island of the Sun-god, Odysseus is asleep when his men sacrifice the Sun-god's cattle.

It does seem that Odysseus does not bear the blame for his men's death. In many cases, they do perish through their own

stupidity. In other cases, of course, they die during war or during adventures, but in those times, Odysseus was with them, and he could have died, too.

One other thing to think about is that Odysseus is telling his own story. Could he be lying? After all, some of the adventures he relates are pretty incredible. (Probably not. The gods vouch for some of what he says.)

Works Cited

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Books, 1996. Print.

To: David Bruce

From: Jane Student

Re: *Inferno*, Canto 1 Reaction Memo

Date: Put Today's Date Here

Words: 263

***Inferno*, Canto 1**

• What do you need to be a member of the Afterlife in Dante's *Inferno*?

To be a member of the afterlife in Hell, you must meet a number of criteria:

1) You must be dead.

2) You must be an unrepentant sinner.

3) You must be a dead, unrepentant sinner by 1300.

Of course, only dead people — with a few exceptions such as Dante the Pilgrim — can be found in the Inferno.

Only unrepentant sinners can be found in the Inferno. Everyone has sinned, but sinners who repented their sins are found in Purgatory or Paradise, not in the Inferno.

Dante set his *Divine Comedy* in 1300, so the characters who appear in it are dead in 1300.

***Inferno*, Canto 1**

• What does it mean to repent?

A sinner who repents regrets having committed the sin. The repentant sinner vows not to commit the sin again, and he or she does his or her best not to commit the sin again.

Inferno, Canto 1

• What is the geography of Hell? In *The Divine Comedy*, where is Hell located?

Hell is located straight down. We will find out later that when Lucifer was thrown out of Paradise, he fell to the Earth, ending up at the center of the Earth. The center of the Earth is the lowest part of Hell. Lucifer created the Mountain of Purgatory when he hit the Earth.

To: David Bruce

From: Jane Student

Re: *Candide*, Ch. 26-30

Date: Today's Date

Words: 368

Ch. 30: Write a brief character analysis of the old man and his family.

When Candide and his friends meet the old man, the old man is "sitting in front of his door beneath an arbor of orange trees, enjoying the fresh air" (119). The old man basically ignores politics that he cannot influence. Some people have recently been killed in Constantinople, and the old man does not even know their names. However, the old man does enjoy some material things, including good food, and he enjoys hospitality.

The old man invites Candide and his friends to enjoy some refreshments inside his house. They are served with "several kinds of fruit-flavored drinks" and "boiled cream with pieces of candied citron in it, oranges, lemons, limes, pineapples, pistachio nuts, and mocha coffee" (119). The old man and his family have an abundance of food, but although Candide wonders if the old man has an enormous farm, the old man tells him, "I have only twenty acres of land, which my children and I cultivate. Our work keeps us free of three great evils: boredom, vice, and poverty" (119).

From this brief encounter, we learn several things:

• The old man and his family are content — even happy.

• The old man and his family ignore the wars and murders and crimes that happen elsewhere.

• The old man and his family have enough. They work hard on their little farm, and they have plenty of food and good things to eat.

• The old man and his family have only 20 acres, but 20 acres are enough.

Candide and his friends decide to emulate the old man and his family. Each of them begins to work hard on their little farm. Cunegonde learns to make pastry, Paquette begins to embroider, and the old woman does the laundry and repairs the linen. Brother Giroflée becomes a carpenter, and Candide and the others grow "abundant crops" (120). At the end of the short novel, the group of friends seem to have come the closest they can to happiness in a world filled with evil, but it does take an effort on their part. As Candide says in the short novel's last words, "… we must cultivate our garden" (120).

Works Cited

Voltaire. *Candide*. Trans. Lowell Bair. New York: Bantam Books, 1981. Print.

To: David Bruce

From: Jane Student

Re: *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Ch. 1-4 Reaction Memo

Date: Put Today's Date Here

Words: 286

CH. 3: "KNIGHTS OF THE TABLE ROUND"

• What hints do we have of the relationship between Queen Guenever and Sir Launcelot?

Some hanky-panky is going on between Sir Launcelot and King Arthur's wife, Queen Guenever. Some six or eight prisoners address her, and they tell her that they have been captured by Sir Kay the Seneschal. Immediately, surprise and astonishment are felt by everybody present. The queen looks disappointed because she had hoped that the prisoners were captured by Sir Launcelot.

As it turns out, they were. Sir Launcelot first rescued Sir Kay from some attackers, then he took Sir Kay's armor and horse and captured more knights. All of these prisoners were actually captured by Sir Launcelot, not by Sir Kay at all.

Two passages let us know that something is going on between Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenever:

1. The first is subtle; she looks disappointed when Sir Kay says that he captured the knights: "Surprise and astonishment flashed from face to face all over the house; the queen's gratified smile faded out at the name of Sir Kay, and she looked disappointed …" (503).

2. The other is much more overt and occurs after Guenever learns that the knight who really captured the prisoners was Sir Launcelot: "Well, it was touching to see the queen blush

and smile, and look embarrassed and happy, and fling furtive glances at Sir Launcelot that would have got him shot in Arkansas, to a dead certainty" (503).

Works Cited

Twain, Mark. *Four Complete Novels*. New York: Gramercy Books, 1982. Print.

Appendix M: About the Author

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine's brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka "The Joker," decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn't been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don't often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for "sounds like" and "two words," then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn't let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor's degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Dance*, *Homer's* Iliad: *A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare's* Othello: A *Retelling in Prose*.

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

Appendix N: Some Books by David Bruce

Discussion Guides Series

Dante's Inferno*: A Discussion Guide*

Dante's Paradise*: A Discussion Guide*

Dante's Purgatory*: A Discussion Guide*

Forrest Carter's The Education of Little Tree*: A Discussion Guide*

Homer's Iliad*: A Discussion Guide*

Homer's Odyssey*: A Discussion Guide*

Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice*: A Discussion Guide*

Jerry Spinelli's Maniac Magee*: A Discussion Guide*

Jerry Spinelli's Stargirl*: A Discussion Guide*

Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal": A Discussion Guide

Lloyd Alexander's The Black Cauldron*: A Discussion Guide*

Lloyd Alexander's The Book of Three*: A Discussion Guide*

Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*: A Discussion Guide*

Mark Twain's The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*: A Discussion Guide*

Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*: A Discussion Guide*

Mark Twain's The Prince and the Pauper*: A Discussion Guide*

Nancy Garden's Annie on My Mind*: A Discussion Guide*

Nicholas Sparks' A Walk to Remember*: A Discussion Guide*

Virgil's Aeneid*: A Discussion Guide*

Virgil's "The Fall of Troy": A Discussion Guide

Voltaire's Candide*: A Discussion Guide*

William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV*: A Discussion Guide*

William Shakespeare's Macbeth*: A Discussion Guide*

William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream*: A Discussion Guide*

William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*: A Discussion Guide*

William Sleator's Oddballs*: A Discussion Guide*

(*Oddballs* is an excellent source for teaching how to write autobiographical essays/personal narratives.)

Philosophy for the Masses Series

Philosophy for the Masses: Ethics

Philosophy for the Masses: Metaphysics and More

Philosophy for the Masses: Religion

Retellings of a Classic Work of Literature

Ben Jonson's The Alchemist: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Case is Altered: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Catiline's Conspiracy: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Epicene: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humor: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The New Inn: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Staple of News: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Volpone, or the Fox: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: Retellings

Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: *Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text*

Christopher Marlowe's Edward II: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's The Rich Jew of Malta: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: *Retellings*

Dante's Divine Comedy: *A Retelling in Prose*

Dante's Inferno: *A Retelling in Prose*

Dante's Purgatory: *A Retelling in Prose*

Dante's Paradise: *A Retelling in Prose*

The Famous Victories of Henry V: *A Retelling*

From the Iliad *to the* Odyssey*: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's* Posthomerica

George Peele: Five Plays Retold in Modern English

George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris: *A Retelling*

George Peele's The Battle of Alcazar: *A Retelling*

George's Peele's David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: *A Retelling*

George Peele's Edward I: *A Retelling*

George Peele's The Old Wives' Tale: *A Retelling*

George-A-Greene, The Pinner of Wakefield: A Retelling

The History of King Leir: *A Retelling*

Homer's Iliad: *A Retelling in Prose*

Homer's Odyssey: *A Retelling in Prose*

Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica

The Jests of George Peele: *A Retelling*

John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English

John Ford's The Broken Heart: *A Retelling*

John Ford's The Fancies, Chaste and Noble: *A Retelling*

John Ford's The Lady's Trial: *A Retelling*

John Ford's The Lover's Melancholy: *A Retelling*

John Ford's Love's Sacrifice: *A Retelling*

John Ford's Perkin Warbeck: *A Retelling*

John Ford's The Queen: *A Retelling*

John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: *A Retelling*

John Webster's The White Devil: *A Retelling*

King Edward III: *A Retelling*

The Merry Devil of Edmonton: *A Retelling*

Robert Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: *A Retelling*

The Taming of a Shrew: *A Retelling*

Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling

The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems

Virgil's Aeneid: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's 2 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 2: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's As You Like It: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Coriolanus: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Cymbeline: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Hamlet: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Henry V: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Henry VIII: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's King John: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's King Lear: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Love's Labor's Lost: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Macbeth: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Measure for Measure: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Othello: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Pericles, Prince of Tyre: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Richard II: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Richard III: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's The Tempest: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Timon of Athens: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's The Two Noble Kinsmen: *A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale: *A Retelling in Prose*

Children's Biography

Nadia Comaneci: Perfect Ten

Personal Finance

How to Manage Your Money: A Guide for the Non-Rich

Anecdote Collections

250 Anecdotes About Opera

250 Anecdotes About Religion

250 Anecdotes About Religion: Volume 2

250 Music Anecdotes

Be a Work of Art: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

Boredom is Anti-Life: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

The Coolest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in the Arts: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes

Create, Then Take a Break: 250 Anecdotes

Don't Fear the Reaper: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Dance: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 4: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 5: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 6: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Music: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Music, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Music, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Neighborhoods: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Relationships: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Sports: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Sports, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Television and Radio: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Theater: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 1: 250 Anecdotes

The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

Maximum Cool: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Religion: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Sports: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

Reality is Fabulous: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

Resist Psychic Death: 250 Anecdotes

Appendix O: Except from *William Shakespeare's* A Midsummer Night's Dream: *A Retelling in Prose* by David Bruce

— 1.1 —

In his palace, Duke Theseus of Athens was talking with Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, whom he had defeated in battle, fallen in love with, and was soon to marry.

Theseus said to Hippolyta, "Our wedding day is drawing near. Four happy days will bring in the new Moon, but how slowly the old Moon wanes! She prevents what I want most. She is like a stepmother or a widow who lives on a young man's inheritance when the young man wants to spend, spend, spend."

"Four days will quickly become four nights," Hippolyta replied. "We will quickly dream away the four nights. And then the Moon, resembling a silver bow newly bent in heaven, shall behold the night of our wedding."

Theseus said to Philostrate, his Master of the Revels, aka Director of Entertainments, "Go, Philostrate, encourage the Athenian youth to be merry. Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth. Let melancholy be reserved only for funerals. Melancholy, a pale companion, must not be present at our celebration."

Philostrate left to carry out Theseus' orders.

Theseus said, "Hippolyta, I wooed you with my sword, and I won your love, despite my doing you injuries, but I will wed you in another key, with pomp, with triumph, and with revelry."

But Theseus was the Duke of Athens, and he had duties to attend to. Egeus, the father of Hermia, walked into the room with his daughter and the two young men who loved her.

Egeus started well with a greeting to Theseus: “Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke!”

Theseus, who knew Egeus, a respected citizen of Athens and a member of its aristocracy, well, replied, “Thanks, good Egeus. What is new with you?”

“I have a problem,” Egeus replied. “Full of vexation come I, with a complaint about my child, my daughter Hermia.”

Egeus said, “Stand forth, Demetrius.”

Demetrius came forward.

Egeus said to Theseus, “My noble lord, this man has my consent to marry my daughter, Hermia.”

Egeus said, “Stand forth, Lysander.”

Lysander came forward.

Egeus said to Theseus, “My gracious duke, this man has bewitched the bosom of my child.”

To Lysander, Egeus angrily said, “You, you, Lysander, you have given Hermia rhymes and love poetry, and you have interchanged love-tokens with my daughter. You have by Moonlight at her window sung, with your feigning voice singing verses of feigning love. You have made her fancy you with locks of your hair, rings, gaudy toys, trinkets, knickknacks, trifles, nosegays, and sweetmeats. All of these things can strongly influence an impressionable and inexperienced young woman. With cunning you have stolen my daughter’s heart. You have turned her obedience, which is due to me, into stubborn harshness. Because of you, Lysander, Hermia will not consent to marry Demetrius.”

To Theseus, Egeus said, “Therefore, my gracious Duke, I want you to enforce the ancient privilege of fathers in Athens. That privilege is my right to dispose of my daughter

as I wish. And that will be either to this gentleman, Demetrius, or to her death. This is in accordance with our Athenian law."

Theseus wanted daughters to obey their fathers. He said, "What do you say, Hermia? Fair maid, to you your father should be as a god. He is your parent and so gave you your life. It is as if you are his figure that he sculpted in wax. He can either leave the figure alone or disfigure it as he wishes."

Theseus paused, and then he said, "Demetrius is a worthy gentleman."

"So is Lysander," Hermia replied, hotly.

"In himself he is," Theseus said, "but he lacks your father's approval, and therefore Demetrius must be considered the worthier of the two young men."

Hermia said, "I wish that my father looked at Demetrius and Lysander with my eyes."

"No," Theseus said. "Instead, you must look at Demetrius and Lysander with your father's eyes."

Despite being angry, Hermia was polite. She said to Theseus, "Please pardon me. I know not by what power I am made bold, and I worry that I may compromise my reputation for modesty when I plead my thoughts in your presence. But please tell me what is the worst that can happen to me if I refuse to wed Demetrius."

Theseus thought, *The law of Athens says that Hermia must die if she disobeys her father and refuses to wed Demetrius, but the law is too harsh.*

He told Hermia, "You must either be executed or become a nun and remain a virgin forever. Therefore, fair Hermia, think carefully. You are young. You feel passion. Think whether, if you do not obey your father and do not marry

Demetrius, you can endure wearing the habit of a nun and be caged forever in a shady cloister. Can you live as a barren, virgin sister all your life and chant hymns to the cold, fruitless Moon? Nuns are three times blessed because they master their passion, and their maiden pilgrimage is rewarded in Heaven. But a married woman is happier on Earth and does not lack a man. She is like a rose whose essence is distilled into perfume and brings happiness. She is unlike a rose that grows, lives, and dies alone on a branch and is never enjoyed."

"I prefer to grow, live, and die alone on a branch rather than marry someone whom I do not love," Hermia said. "I prefer to remain single rather than give my virginity to someone whom I do not love."

"Take some time to think this matter over, Hermia," Theseus said. "By the next new Moon — when Hippolyta and I shall wed and be one forever — you will give me your final answer. At that time, you will either die because of your disobedience to the will of your father, or you will marry Demetrius, or you will become a nun and remain a virgin forever."

Demetrius said, "Yield to your father's will, Hermia, and marry me. And, Lysander, stop pursuing Hermia and allow her to marry me."

Lysander replied, "You have her father's love, Demetrius, so let me have Hermia's. If you want to marry someone, marry Hermia's father."

"Scornful Lysander!" Egeus said. "True, Demetrius does have my love. And whatever is mine my love shall give to him. Hermia is my daughter, and I do give her to Demetrius."

Lysander replied, "Egeus, my family is as good as the family of Demetrius. I have as much wealth as Demetrius. I love Hermia more than he does. My prospects are as good as

those of Demetrius, if not better. And what is more important than anything that I have said so far is that Hermia loves me, not Demetrius. So why shouldn't Hermia and I marry?"

He added, "What's more — and I say this to Demetrius' face — he pursued Helena, the daughter of Nedar, and he won her heart. Helena loves him. She loves him, devoutly loves him, loves him to the point of idolatry. She loves Demetrius, this morally stained man who is unfaithful to those who love him."

Theseus said, "I must confess that I have heard that Demetrius pursued Helena and that she loves him. I have been busy with my own personal affairs and forgot about it; otherwise, I would have spoken to him about it. Still, that does not change the law. Demetrius and Egeus, both of you come with me. I want to talk to both of you. In the meantime, Hermia, make up your mind to obey your father and marry Demetrius, or else the law of Athens — which I can by no means extenuate — will either sentence you to death or to a single life in perpetuity."

Theseus then said, "Come, my Hippolyta."

Hippolyta had listened to the young lovers and did not look happy about Theseus' ruling. Theseus noticed this and asked her, "Is something wrong?" She turned her back on him and did not answer him.

Theseus turned to Demetrius and Egeus and said, "Come with me. I must employ you in some business related to our wedding and also talk to you about some business of your own."

"With duty and desire, we follow you," Egeus replied.

All except Lysander and Hermia left the room.

“How are you, my love?” Lysander said, “Why is your cheek so pale? Why do the roses there fade so fast?”

“Perhaps because of lack of rain,” Hermia replied. “But I can well water the roses in my cheeks with my tears.”

“From everything that I have ever read or heard from tale or history, the course of true love never did run smooth,” Lysander said. “Either the lovers were different in family…”

“Too high a class to be in love with someone from a lower class.”

“Or else the lovers were mismatched in age.”

“Too old to be engaged to young.”

“Or else the marriage match was to be arranged by relatives.”

“Oh, Hell! To choose a lover by another’s eyes.”

“Or,” Lysander said, “if there were a sympathy in choice, then war, death, or sickness did lay siege to it, making it as momentary as a sound, as swift as a shadow, as short as a dream, as brief as the lightning in the blackened night, that, in a flash, reveals both Heaven and Earth, and before a man has time to say ‘Behold!’ the jaws of darkness do devour it. So quickly do bright things that are full of life come to ruin.”

“Since true lovers have always been opposed in their love, such opposition must be a rule of fate and destiny — and therefore, since our love is opposed, our love must be true. Let us then be perseverant and enduring as we confront our trial because the trial we face is customary for true lovers. Opposition is as necessary to true love as are thoughts and dreams and sighs and wishes and tears. All of these things accompany true love.”