

Dramatic irony in a midsummer night's dream

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The relationship between characterisation and the audience's response in Shakespeare's play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is evident throughout the whole play. There is a main emphasis on dramatic irony, juxtaposition, the confusion between the characters, the characters talking directly to the audience and having a play within a play. Shakespeare relies heavily on dramatic irony throughout his play. Dramatic irony is a technique that is used to help maintain the audience's interest in the play and the confusion between characters.

It is a way of getting the audience involved as they know more than the characters themselves. An example of this is evident in Act 3, scene 1, when Bottom's head is transformed into that of an ass's. Bottom has no idea about what happened but the audience and the other characters are aware of this. The other characters run away in fear when they see Bottom, Bottom is annoyed and the audience laugh. There are many characters in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' but there are three main groups; the Athenian Court, the mechanicals and the fairies.

Shakespeare is using the technique of juxtaposition. In the court the language is in verse. It is formal and stately. "Now fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour draws on apace." The audience see the formality of the court. The lovers speak in poetry but it is not as formal. It is emotional "Call me fair? That fair again unsay." This shows that all the characters are sophisticated and civilised. The Mechanicals speak in prose. They identify themselves to the audience as rude labourers and so contrasting them with the world of the court and lovers.

It is also a form of crude comedy. It is clear from the start that Bottom is boorish, pushy and he seeks to lead the group. This is shown in act 1, scene 2 “ first good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow a point. ”. Puck talks directly to the audience. He speaks in verse “ If we shadows have offended, think of this and all is mended”. Although Puck is not the main character Shakespeare uses him to link the fairy world to the real world. The audience also like Puck which makes them listen more intently to the play.

It would be fair to say that without Puck this play would not succeed. Bottom also talks directly to the audience when his head becomes that of an ass’. The audience become an integral part of the play and they know what Bottom is thinking. One technique that Shakespeare uses to break up the play is the use of a play within a play; this is most obvious when the mechanicals perform ‘ Pyramus and Thisbe’. This is done to maintain the audience’s interest. It also provides comic relief. Overall, ‘ A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ is a telling and very intriguing play that includes the audience and provides comic relief.