

Male dominance in a midsummer's night dream essay sample

[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



To what extent is Shakespeare trying to portray male dominance over the female characters, in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*. Almost in every play of Shakespeare we can see the dominance of males over women. In his plays women have no right to say what they think or what they want. They are always expected to be faithful to their fathers and husbands. They don't have any freedom about their lives. However we know that this attitude of men against women in Shakespeare's plays is a reflection of Renaissance society. We can see the most remarkable examples of male dominance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The play opens with a tragic event. Hermia who is in love with Lysander is forced to marry with Demetrius because of her father's wish. According to her father Demetrius is richer and nobler than Lysander and he wants his daughter to marry with Demetrius. From the beginning of the play male dominance can be easily realized in the speeches of Egeus who is the father of Hermia. He goes to Theseus and complains about all that happens. He clearly talks about his daughter as if she was a commodity and he claims to be the owner of Hermia.

There is no chance for Hermia to choose her own husband. If she doesn't marry with Demetrius, her life will be turned into a torture under the ancient Athenian laws, that says a daughter has to marry the man of her father's choice otherwise she comes face to face the consequences of death or nunnery. Hermia's life and happiness depend on the words that will be uttered by his father and the Duke. The speech of Theseus also underlines the importance of father for a daughter one more time. He says that she has to act as if her father was her God. This means she has to do everything for the sake of her father and her father is the ultimate power over her.

Throughout the play, we find many references to the assigned roles of men and women. One of the themes of the play is male dominance and the objectifying of women. The women are made to feel forced and obligated to do as the men say. They accept their expected behaviours or roles set by the men. The play pokes fun at the ever-changing relationship between a man and a woman. The love and trust between them is not enduring. This is typical of the relationships in our society.

The men are also the authority figures in a relationship. The many feminist criticism questions are elaborated in this essay. In *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, male dominancy not only exists between couples, but also between father and daughter. "As she is mine, I may dispose of her: Which shall be either to this gentleman or to her death, according to our law." A woman's entire existence is controlled by a powerful male figure, as illustrated by Egeus's possessiveness toward his daughter Hermia. The men in *A Midsummer's Night Dream* are often seen treating women like objects. "To you your father should be as a god," "Either to die the death or to abjure For ever the society of men." Theseus, the character portrayed as the top of the hierarchy in the play, and by association the most power, agrees with Egeus, and is content with the Athenian law of male dominance. Theseus shows pride in taming the female warrior in the battle with the Amazons, and marrying her. The king of fairies also expects women to be dominated by men.

The argument between Titania and Oberon arises from Titania's loyalty to her recently deceased friend, in protecting her son. Oberon uses his

authority as her husband to force Titania to give up the boy, and he is shocked when she disobeys him and leaves. Oberon refuses to accept defeat and tricks Titania with the magic love potion into giving the boy to him. This shows the need that men have to win over women in order to prove their sense of self. Lysander and Demetrius' objectifying of women are more evident. Demetrius had sworn his love to Helena before the play began. Now he hates her and wants to marry Hermia despite Helena's devotion to him. Shakespeare tries to show how men play with love, promising eternal love to different women, as Lysander and Demetrius do. Women in this play see themselves as weak once they are married or once they have sworn their love to a man. Hippolyta, the warrior Queen, seems deflated with the fact that Theseus has captured her and wants to marry her.

When Theseus proudly talks about how he had taken her by war, and how he couldn't wait to get married, her only reply is that the days will pass by quick, demonstrating a lack of enthusiasm. Throughout the play, she doesn't say much, and her opinion or preference is also not asked for, despite the fact that she, in her own right, is of extreme importance and influence. Helena is shown as a faithful lover, but her dedication is at times, irritating. Helena chases Demetrius relentlessly, despite his cruel treatment of her. She appears, not mad at Demetrius for leaving her; but rather she blames herself for not being attractive enough. When Lysander and Demetrius turn their affection towards Helena, she begins to think they are mocking her. This presents to the audience her lack of self-esteem. " And will you rent our ancient love asunder, to join with men in scorning your poor friend? It is not

friendly, 'tis not maidenly: Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it, though I alone do feel the injury”

Hermia and Helena are best friends and Helena explains their relationship as having two bodies but sharing one heart, ‘ Like to a double cherry, seeming parted, but yet an union in partition, two lovely berries moulded on one stem’. But they let their men and jealousy come in between their friendship. Helena betrays their friendship, and Hermia accuses Helena of stealing her love. These two women do not even realize that the men that have destroyed their trust in each other are the ones that are hurting them.

Titania in the other hand appears in control. She has set her mind on keeping this little Indian boy whose mother was her friend and she wasn't going to give in to Oberon's demands. However, after Oberon tricks her, Titania's centre of focus becomes Bottom, the ass-headed man she falls in love with. After Titania, wakes from this trance, she reconciles with Oberon, not caring about the fact that he had taken the boy away from her. At the end she too lets men over rule.

The relationship between men and women in A Midsummer's Night Dream, is based on love, the main theme of the play. However, it seems to be false love that they are after. They swear true and eternal love to each other, but their love is actually temporary. In this play, the men are the authority figures in women's lives, the fathers control the females before marriage and later their husbands. The play also implies that the jealousy between Oberon and Titania had adversely caused disruption in the world, as without their argument the potion that disrupted the lives of the Athenian lovers would not

of been brought in to play. After they reconcile, order seems to be restored in nature and world. In Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, the gender roles are very obvious and it portrays how women in Shakespearean society were expected to behave. The men take pride in dominating their women and setting the rules for them. Although there's love between a man and a woman in a relationship, it is often short lived, or so Shakespeare portrays.