

Bottom's dream

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



Bottom's speech at the end of Act 4, Scene 1 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* marks a transition from a dream world to reality. In it, Bottom struggles to make his dream of an encounter with Titania the fairy queen into something concrete. Bottom's speech suggests that he has had an experience more substantive than a dream, but still not clearly real. Bottom decides to attempt to transform his vision into art, as art is flexible and can thus depict events which defy reality. When Bottom awakens from his dream, the last of the effects of the fairies' mischief is cast off. While he recovers his senses the audience experiences a sort of awakening as well, as the setting transitions from the dreamy woodland back to the real world of Athens. Bottom still struggles to make sense of the division between real and unreal. Bottom remembers what happened in the woods, but he recognizes it would sound ridiculous to tell his companions that he had actually consorted with the fairy queen Titania. Thus he convinces himself that he must have been dreaming: "Methought I was- there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had- but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had" (IV. i. 202-204). Bottom concludes that if presented as an actual event in normal narrative form, his account of the night with Titania would sound fantastic and unbelievable. He also recognizes that if presented as art, as "Bottom's Dream," the story becomes acceptable. Shakespeare is surely familiar with this manner of thinking. He must have recognized that some people would find his strange comedy offensive or ridiculous but wanted to make the point, through Bottom, that art gives license to even the most fantastic stories. If someone was still skeptical or offended about the tale, the play eventually ends and "all is

mended," as Puck states. In sum, Bottom's speech highlights the play's theme of tension between the dream and real worlds. Also, Shakespeare seems to be telling the audience that playwriting is more difficult than they may believe - that creating a play is beyond the reach of common folk like Bottom, whose play, after all, is never produced. In any case, the inspiration that made Bottom decide to communicate the unbelievable through writing is one that he and Shakespeare clearly share.