

# Example of love and marriage in a midsummer nights dream literature review

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



A Midsummer Night's Dream has many things to say about the themes of love and marriage; it is mostly portrayed as something foolish and impetuous, with youthful lovers making rash decisions and falling into literal spells. This is most acutely displayed with the subplot wherein theatrical fool Nick Bottom is turned into an ass and wanders into the forest. Titania, having been exposed to a magic potion on her eyelids, looks upon Nick, who now has an asses' face. The two characters meet, and Titania showers him with affection, including the efforts of Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mustardseed and Mote, several fairies who are tasked to provide him with every desire. Bottom is unfazed by this, to Titania's assertion that "thou art as wise as thou art beautiful," Bottom merely replies "Not so, neither: but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn" (III. i. 136-138). Bottom still has no idea that he has a different head than he normally does, chalking this attraction by a beautiful women merely up to his own natural charisma and handsomeness. This comedic juxtaposition showcases the foolishness of love, Shakespeare making light of the concept of love. When Oberon comes along and lifts the spell in their slumber, Titania awakes to believe that it was all a dream: "My Oberon! what visions have I seen! Methought I was enamour'd of an ass" (IV. i. 76-77). This is in stark contrast to what Bottom thinks of himself; instead of being disgusted, he believes that Titania is fiercely in love with him. This is not due to some divine intervention, or even in spite of his head being that of an ass, but merely due to his perceived incredible nature and charm. By presenting this reality, it helps to provide more and more of a cognitive dissonance between what Bottom perceives to be true and the reality of his situation (Hale,

1985). This further illustrates how foolish love can be, according to Shakespeare, as his idea of what real love is does not gel with reality. Love is continually portrayed as being difficult to understand and navigate - Lysander says at one point, "The course of true love never did run smooth" (I. i. 34). This is most definitely true and applicable to the four Athenians in the story, who all love the wrong person. While Hermia is in love with Lysander, Demetrius does as well (while Helena pines after Demetrius) - the whole thing results in a strange tangle of lovers struggling for balance. The happily married couple Hippolyta and Theseus seem to watch on in bemusement as the young lovers attempt to find their way through their own amorous entanglements. Helena, at one point, complains that love can blind people to the faults of others: "Love can transpose to form and dignity. Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind, And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind" (I. i. 233-235).

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, love and marriage are shown as two decidedly different things - Hippolyta and Theseus's relative stability is counterbalanced by the constant back and forth between the young Athenians, and the relationship between Nick Bottom and Titania happens under false pretenses. To that end, Shakespeare seems to say that, while in youth, love can be a rocky road, something that young people have to figure out for themselves.

## References

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