

Character analysis of puck

Literature, William Shakespeare



Considered one of William Shakespeare's greatest plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reads like a fantastical, imaginative tale; however, its poetic lines contain a message of love, reality, and chance that are not usually present in works of such kind. All characters in the play are playful, careless and thoughtless, and Puck: one of the central characters in the play: is significant to the plot, tone, and meaning of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, thus becoming a representative of the above-mentioned themes. The plot in this one of Shakespeare's plays is comical and, at times, ironic. As summarized by Puck in the last stanza of the play: If we shadows have offended Think but this, and all is mended: That you have but slumb'ring 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. (Shakespeare 89) Puck suggests to both the watchers and, consequently, to the readers, that if they did not enjoy the tale, they should pretend it was a dream: a notion so convincing that at times the audience is left bewildered; this effect of his works made Shakespeare seem so cunning, like Puck. The lines above formulate the ending of the play to be ironic and humorous, much in the same way as the rest of the story was told. The general plot, with certain characters implementing stresses on puns more than others, also contributed to the wit in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Such cunning manner that Shakespeare had developed was often found in the play in ironic forms when one character in the book says something that

is a pun on words, or has several meanings, such as when Puck states, “[a]nd, as I am and honest Puck/ Else the Puck a liar call: (Shakespeare 90).” In Shakespeare’s time the Puck was never honest and always lied in order to play his pranks on people. Therefore, the audience was deceived into believing that the story was a dream. Many stanzas were woven into the plot that contained deep critical thoughts behind them that made the scenario of the scenes intricate and deceptive. Puck’s important role contributed to these situations is obvious in the unfolding of his character to seem illusory and fanciful. Puck also tied up the story in parts where the plot was getting serious to make them clever and amusing to watch. The plot of this play contained many different phrases that made the story line intriguing and Puck helped emphasize the comedic side of characters in the tale and of Shakespeare’s writing of the play. The tone of the entire play is slightly satirical, but overall good-natured toward the characters. Historically, Puck has been part of English folklore for a long time, even before Shakespeare. His other name of Robin Goodfellow meant that “[t]he spirit was not actually good by nature, but was called Goodfellow as a sort of appeasement, meant to deflect the spirit’s pranks towards other people” (Bulfinch). Puck during Shakespeare’s time was a mischievous creature that was known for his evil-like, unserious, playful ways. His other name, Hobgoblin, suggests the true meaning of his nature. In the second half of the play, the characters undergo a change in attitude towards each other, because of the antics Puck administered. Puck wanders around dispensing a love potion into mortal’s eyes, making them fall in love with the unsuitable member of the opposite sex. Shakespeare, as an author, is playing with the

characters and because of Puck, the roles of the characters are switched, making the play more appealing in a comical sense of view. To make the manner of the play pay off with deep meaning despite the comical plot, metaphors were said by many of the characters such as this one, “ I go, I go; look how I go/ Swifter than arrow from the Tarter’s bow” (Shakespeare 45). The Tartars were people whom fought with the Mongol hordes, and had bows that contained a special power, to make them faster than a bolt of lightning. The excerpts connotation demonstrates that Puck was meandering around the forest so fast that he causes the characters in the play many harms, like a bow. The ironic, playful tone that the play embodies is accomplished through the adventurous mishaps of Puck. Many meanings can be deciphered from this play, and can be interpreted in numerous ways; one of them revealing the extent to which human beings are too easily swayed and subjected to non-reality, chance, and love by appearance and emotions. “ What fools these mortals be!” (Shakespeare 46) expresses Puck, his one line hinting at several possible interpretations. One reads in the above line Shakespeare’s idea that humans become too readily affected by their feelings. Puck states with exclamatory emphasis that mortals are fools because they cannot control their emotions properly and are never sure on what they feel in their inner self. Chance is too often taken as shown in “ A Midsummer Nights Dream” by Puck, when Puck states “[t]his is the women, but not this the man” (Shakespeare 43). Oberon has taken a chance with love when he describes the Athenian man Puck is to distribute the love potion on, and that chance was wrongfully took, for Puck put the potion onto some other man, who was not supposed to be emitted with it. This also

shows that there is some mockery to Pucks statement for not do only mortals fool around with love, so do pixies. Reality is often mixed up with, mystical thoughts as well as feelings. Shakespeare must have realized this because he often showed implications in his plays of this type, for example: when Titania expresses her love for a mortal with an asses head on him and she says " Come, sit thee down upon this flow'ry bed, While I thy amiable cheeks do coy, And stick musk roses in thy sleek smooth head, And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy" (Shakespeare 62). This exemplifies the type of ridicule Shakespeare had his characters go through so that he could express a point, thus he had to make other characters such as Puck help contribute to these happenings. Therefore, the deep meaning of the play is much more intricate than the eye can see, and because of Pucks actions these imperative meanings came out to be. Overall, the play A Midsummer Night's Dream contains many important features that are represented by Puck. The in-depth analysis of every character depends on the actions and attributes of other characters and Puck helps contribute to deceitful aura of the play. Another key factor of this play were its many inclinations toward a comical relief and Puck's involvements of making mishaps occur. The mood, implication, and scheme are all carefully weaved together in the play, with Puck being a symbol or a catalyst for nearly every one of them.