

A midsummer's night dream essay

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



This is a play that was written by renowned playwright, William Shakespeare, in a period believed to be in the late 16th century. A Midsummer's Night Dream illustrates happenings based on the marriage of Theseus, and Hippolyta.

These happenings include the adventures of four youthful Athenian lovers and a number of amateur actors, who are controlled by the fairies that live in the forest in which most of the scenes occur. This is one of Shakespeare's most popular literary plays and has been adapted and performed in many theatres across the globe.

A Midsummer's Night Dream is thought to have been written around 1590 and 1596. The play is set in ancient Athens and comprises three interlocking plots, ultimately joined at the Duke's wedding ceremony. The other two plots are situated in the woods, and in the fairyland.

The play draws on a myriad of cultures and mythologies from the Athenian society, for example, Theseus is loosely associated with a Greek hero with a similar name, and the play mentions a number of Greek gods and goddesses. The play also borrows from the English fairy lore, the example of which is Puck, whose character was common in 16th century fables, the craftsmen were also common in London theatres.

Theseus- He is the Duke of Athens and is getting ready to marry Hippolyta at the beginning of the play.

Hippolyta- She is the queen of the Amazons and is Theseus' fiancée.

Lysander- He is Hermia's lover and in the end of the play, the two marry.

Demetrius- He loves Hermia, but she does not love him back. He previously loved Helena but ditched her when he met Hermia. In the woods, Puck uses the magical flower juice to make Demetrius love Helena, and the two marry together with the duke.

Helena- Is treated meanly by Demetrius, her former lover, and she does many things to win back his love. With Puck's help, she wins him and the two eventually marry.

Oberon- Is the fairies' king. He is fighting with Titania over the young Indian boy, he instructs Puck to use the magical flower juice on her and he succeeds in having the boy. He also assists Helen in her quest to win back Demetrius' love.

Titania- She is Oberon's wife and they have an argument over the custody of the Indian boy. She releases the boy under Puck's spell after which the spell is lifted and the couple is united again.

Puck- He is used by Oberon to influence both his wife and Demetrius using the magical flower juice.

Nick Bottom-He is a craftsman and is a member of cast team rehearsing the play Pyramus and Thisbe in the woods. Titania falls in love with him momentarily while she was under the influence of Puck's spell.

Egeus is Hermia's father.

Philostrate is the man in charge of entertainment during Theseus' wedding.

Peter Quince is a carpenter and directs the group that performs a play at the wedding.

Francis Flute is a bellows-mender and is part of the Pyramus and Thisbe cast.

Tom Snout, Snug and Robin Starveling are also members of the Pyramus and Thisbe cast

Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed are fairies.

The play illustrates the dark side of love and how finding it can be difficult. Lysander says "the course of true love never did run smooth", stressing this important theme (Huke and Perkins, 1981).

Although the play focuses on the conflicts arising out of love, or the lack of it, it is not actually a love story and instead, it distances us from the emotions of love in order to mock the torments and pain of those in love. The fairies also joke about love by confusing the lovers through the use of a magical flower juice, thereby implying how winning a person's love can be difficult, except through magical powers.

Love's difficulty is frequently explored through misplaced love, in this instance, it is shown through the four youthful Athenians: Hermia, Demetrius, Helena, and Lysander. Hermia is in love with Lysander, Lysander is also in love with Hermia, Helena loves Demetrius but he does not love her back, and instead, loves Hermia. The love scene creates a complex web of misplaced love as Helena and Demetrius' love are misplaced.

The situation is only reversed by Puck while the two lovers are in the woods. We encounter a similar situation between Titania and Oberon. The latter's coveting of the young Indian prince exceeds his love for the former, and this makes him to place a spell on her, which leads to her being in love with ass-headed Nick Bottom.

The play is about dreams, evidenced by both the title, the events in the play, and in the final act when Puck informs the audience that the play might be nothing but a dream. The play exposes the often illogical and magical nature of dreams. The magic is illustrated through the idea of transformation, both personal and in general terms.

For instance, Helena wishes she would be ' changed' to Hermia, but, more generally, she mentions that love ' changes' everything it falls upon. While the play is set in mid summer, there are numerous references to May Day. For instance, Helena and Hermia are apparently doing " observance of a morn in May" (Shakespeare, 2008).

A Midsummer's Night Dream presents several instances of symbolism. The craftsmen's play in Act V represents the main plot, but in an abridged form. The act of the craftsmen satirizes the theatrical Athenian lovers and gives the play an enjoyable, comedic end. Pyramus and Thisbe experience parental condemnation in their pursuit of love, similar to Hermia and Lysander. Romantic confusion as exhibited by the young Athenian lovers is also exhibited in the play as Pyramus wrongly believes that Thisbe has been killed by a lion.

The magical flower juice that acts as a love potion creates confusion in Acts II, III, and IV. The fairies are not careful in their handling of the potion and this causes a chaotic situation in Demetrius and Lysander turn their love to Helena, almost leading to a physical confrontation while Titania amusingly humiliated. The flower juice represents the illogical, erratic, and unquestionably powerful nature of love, which can lead to weird acts that are inexplicable.

The concept of contrast is a major feature in A Midsummer's Night Dream. The whole play is based on groups with opposite attributes, and almost all characters have their opposites. Helena is tall, Hermia is short; Puck plays jokes, Bottom is the casualty; and Titania is beautiful while Bottom is ugly. Besides, the three main categories of characters contrast significantly: the fairies are graceful and magical while the craftsmen are ungainly and simple; the craftsmen are cheerful, while the lovers are always serious.

Huke, Ivan and Perkins, Derek. A Midsummer Night's Dream: Literature Revision Notes and Examples. Celtic Revision Aids. 1981.

Shakespeare, William, A Midsummer's Night Dream. Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing, 4th Compact Ed., Edgar V. Richards. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2008. 1099-1152.