

What are some examples of this inversion in a midsummer night's dream? essay



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Although there is no definite evidence, historians say that the original production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" will have probably been performed at either The Globe Theatre or alternatively, The Rose Theatre in around 1596, the year of Thomas Barkley and Elizabeth Carey's wedding. Carey was Queen Elizabeth's god-daughter, meaning that the reception and celebrations after the ceremony would probably have been of the highest-class. Because Shakespeare was creating this play especially for Elizabeth's god-daughter, he added a strong reference to her delivered by Oberon in Act 2 Scene 1 as he says, Fair vestal, throned in the West. "

At this point William Shakespeare was one of the most famous playwrights around and to have him write a play for a special occasion would have been something that only royalty could do. It would have probably been written between autumn 1594 and spring 1595. We know that it was definitely not written before 1594 as there are two passages in the play that refer to this very year. Firstly, Titania's speech on the foul weather in Act 2 Scene 1. The summer was more boisterous and wet than "the agedst man of our land is able to recount.

The second is by Bottom in Act 3 Scene 1 as he remarks, "to bring in (God shield us) a Lion among Ladies is a most dreadful thing. For there is not a more fearful wild fowl than you Lion living" as this would have made the courtiers who attended Prince Henry of Scotland's baptism on 30th August 1594. It is expected that Shakespeare used many other sources to complete this play, but there is no direct evidence to other playwrights involved, although there is evidence that he worked with Marlowe, another famous dramatist, in previous plays.

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A lot of the mysterious supernatural concepts used by Shakespeare in “ A Midsummer Night’s Dream” were part of Elizabethan life and common-cultural life. Most people in England in the late 16th century would live rurally and all of the folk legends and mythical characters within the play, for example Theseus and Hippolyta of famous Greek legends would be part of their everyday life and educational upbringing. Puck, who can also be referred to as ‘ Robin Goodfellow’ is a famous sprite from folk tales and he is part of the supernatural strand of characters.

To these ‘ supernatural’ characters who the Elizabethan audience could relate to after their nurture, there was a dark side if you like, except for The Fairies, who were open to interpretation. For centuries fairies have been renowned for their wonderful magic and beauty, but some directors of the play may see them as devilish and menacing, like Michael Grandage, director of the play seen at The Crucible Theatre in Sheffield. Over the past 300 years directors have altered and edited the play and have had new interpretations to, “ A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

However; the basic plot and characters’ quality and features have remained very similar to Shakespeare’s original. The reasons for going to a play in Elizabethan times are far different from what they are now, as a typical audience would have gone to listen to the play as opposed to watch it, therefore the majority of the plots aspects and concepts would have been conveyed via dialogue. Nowadays, we would expect many sound effects, lighting, and special effects features. As a modern-day audience, we would go to watch and experience the play as opposed to purely listening to it.

Also, for a younger audience watching a Shakespeare play in modern times, it would be difficult to understand the dialogue and language so the method in which the plots and themes are put across have had to change over the past 300 years. Because the audience would understand the play more back then, they would have obviously had a closer relationship with the characters on-stage. As well as this, many of the audience would have been peasants paying just one penny to sit just below the stage, and consequently been in a similar social and financial position to The Mechanicals and brought that character-audience relationship closer.

Puck or Robin Goodfellow's final speech directly engages and communicates with the audience. This, once more brings the characters and audience closer together, although it shatters the 'dream' that Shakespeare builds up all the way through the dream when the audience once more acknowledge that it is just a play. In our time, it would be considered highly rude and offensive to shout out during a play and make your opinion clear. Back in Elizabethan times, this was the norm and people would even pay extra to actually sit on-stage and say directly to the actors what they thought about the play.

They could speak as loud as they wished as they had paid more money and give a running commentary throughout the play if they wished. This social group were known as 'Nobility.' The final scene in the play is very similar to Elizabethan life, as all of the courtiers and the lovers sit on stage whilst watching the Mechanicals' play that they have prepared for the wedding. At one point Theseus and Demetrius speak out and comment on the play and

Bottom sticks up for himself and says, " No, I assure you, the Wall is down that parted their fathers.

This would have probably happened too. Society has wildly changed since the 16th century. Back then, women were given no opportunities whatsoever. Only men would act as their position in society was far higher than that of women. Shakespeare would still include ladies' parts in his play example, but in Elizabethan times, they would have been played by young men, whose voices were yet to break. Women were completely looked down on and dominance of men over women was just a way of life.

In most plays, women were played as docile and subservient, but in " A Midsummer Night's Dream," when Titania rebels and refuses to keep her place, things begin to go wrong. In fact everything that does go wrong, or any quarrels or action all happens after Titania's dissent towards Oberon. This perhaps outlines a sociological state and maybe even conveys Shakespeare's views on the matter. Also, when Titania gives in to Oberon again, everything becomes back to normal and even natural aspects of the play are positive once more.

The Elizabethans felt apparently that order was absolutely necessary in the natural and the human world. They felt that your place in life and death was determined by God and God only. As mentioned previously, The Mechanicals represented the Elizabethan working class. In many of the interpretations up until the last century, these scenes starring the Mechanicals were ridden, as they were so unlike the others and signified everyday life. However; this was the lower class' way of understanding the play as they could relate to the

prose that they spoke in and they were all in manual labour like the majority of this lower class.

The Mechanicals would have been played by amateur actors originally to add realism. In conclusion, the social state of the country has changed in terms of sexism and discrimination and fewer and fewer people now live rurally, therefore these folk tales are less popular amongst society today. Culture has also changed as mentioned before about manners and politeness within a theatre. Interpretations of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" have been changing for the past 3 centuries and will probably continue to do so for another few more.