

# A midsummer nights dream: battle of the sexes

War



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Option #1 Battle of the Sexes In Shakespeare's play titled A Midsummer Nights Dream, there are a few underlying themes throughout the play. The one I will be focusing on is the battle of the sexes that occurs in the play between the couples in the fairy world, and in the "real world." We see unusual styles of courting women, and paradoxical qualities of love dramatized with the battle of the sexes that occurs throughout the play. Shakespeare is able to portray a battle of the sexes through Oberon's jealousy of Titiana's new love, and through Helena's desperate determination to have Demetrius love her as much as she loves him.

We are first confronted with this battle for love when Titiana and Oberon meet and begin to discuss who will have "custody" of the changeling child. We see Titania show extreme affection for the boy, and I believe that is out of jealousy and anger toward Oberon who has been sleeping with other women like Phillida and Hippolyta "Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love, to amorous Phillida" (Riverside Shakespeare, 1997, pg. 261 lines 67-68). The boy is a child to one of Titania's worshippers that has passed away and seems to be of interest to Oberon.

Shakespeare ties this battle between the two fairies to the change of the weather and the winter coming. Oberon mentions that this bad weather that is created and the entire fight could be stopped if he could have the changeling boy as his henchmen "Do you amend it then; it lies in you. Why should Titania cross her Oberon? I do but beg a little changeling boy, to be my henchmen" (Riverside Shakespeare, 1997, pg. 262 line 118-121). Titania responds by saying, "The fairy land buys not the child of me" (Riverside

Shakespeare, 1997, pg. 262 line 123). This infuriates Oberon and causes him to act drastically.

Oberon knows he has to win Titania's love back to get what her wants and Shakespeare makes it very interesting the way he approaches Oberon's courtship. Instead of winning back her love with flowers and attention, Oberon intends on drugging his Queen and has her fall drastically in love with the next object or creature she lays her eyes on. The battle of the sexes that Shakespeare has started is just starting to heat up. Oberon cannot stand that he is not getting his way with this changeling that Titania is obsessing over and that she does not obey her King.

This situation may be compared to a husband and wife fighting over the possession of a child when going through a rough point in his or her relationship. Although currently, I do not believe that a magical flower exists that can drastically change a person's affection level toward you. In Shakespeare's world, this item does exist and causes more bad than good in this play. Titania is ready to brawl over the possession of the boy and Oberon does not like it " Titania: We shall chide downright, if I longer stay. Obe: Well; go thy way. Thall shalt not from this grove. Till I torment thee for this injury" (Riverside Shakespeare, 1997, pg. 262 lines 145-147).

It is obvious that the two are at each other's throat and need some fairy marriage counseling. We can see a superiority complex form here in Oberon where is willing to try drastically to get what he wants even if he has to drug his own queen. This is an aggressive way to court your lady if you ask me and would not fly by today's standards of courting a woman. The next couple we see participating in the battle of the sexes is Helena and Demetrius.

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Demetrius has been given Hermia's hand in marriage from her father and becomes enraged when she runs away with her true love Lysander.

Helena, who loves Demetrius, tells him Hermia is running away with Lysander in hopes he will pay more attention to her and love her for telling him of the event that is taking place. This does not turn out the way Helena plans and Demetrius runs after Hermia cursing at Helena the whole time " I love thee not; therefore pursue me not" (Riverside Shakespeare, 1997, pg. 262 line 189). Helena shows desperation here and chases after Demetrius love while saying, " I am your piel; and Demetrius, the more you beat me, I will fawn on you" (Riverside Shakespeare, 1997, pg. 263 lines 203-204).

Through this line, it is obvious that Helena will stop at nothing to have Demetrius's love. This battle of the sexes in both couples's situations was stemmed from jealousy in my opinion. Helena seems to blame Hermia's beauty as the reason behind all this trouble with Demetrius and we can see a comparison between Helena and Hermia happen in Act. 2 scene 2 " Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies, for she hath blessed and attractive eye. How come her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears; If so, my eyes are oft'ner wash'd than hers. No, no; I am as ugly as a bear;" (Riverside Shakespeare, 1997, pg. 264 line 90-95).

The jealousy displayed by the fairy couple is slightly different from that of Helena and Demetrius. Oberon displays jealousy toward Titania because she is in control of the changeling and will not allow Oberon to make him his henchmen. Oberon displays this jealousy through frustration and anger that he cannot get what he wants. " Well; go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove. Till I torment thee for this injury" (Riverside Shakespeare, 1997, pg. <https://assignbuster.com/a-midsummer-nights-dream-battle-of-the-sexes/>

261 lines 67-70). Oberon is not the only one either; Titania displays jealousy and anger toward Oberon for not being faithful to her “ Why art thou here?

Come from the farthest steep in India but that, forsooth, the bouncing amazon, Your buskin'd mistress, and your warrior love” (Riverside Shakespeare, 1997, pg. 261 line 67-70). Titania is jealous at the other women in Oberon's life and angry with Oberon for not being faithful and disregards any of his requests as a way of getting back at him. Shakespeare can work these themes into his play through the main characters ever so beautifully and touch on many areas of love. Shakespeare does in fact bring in a few paradoxical qualities of love into his plays and seems to add moral value to this play by doing so.

Through the characters in the play, Shakespeare can instill these moral values and touch on them throughout the play. Shakespeare discusses how love is blind to some, and mainly men in this situation by using the characters in his play. We have Helena speaking of how one should not look for love not with your eyes but with your mind “ Love can transpose to form and dignity. Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind” (Riverside Shakespeare, 1997, pg. 259 lines 233-234). Later in the paragraph, we also see Helena say that Demetrius made an oath to her to only be faithful to Helena but when he saw Hermia, those oaths seemed to melt away.

Almost as if love is a game to him which Helena hopes to win. What seems to be a constant theme in this play is that men are asses and are attracted only to physical beauty not true love even when true love comes chasing after them in the woods. We see bottom back this up with his recollection of his “ dream” “ I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was.

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Man is but an ass if he go about expound this dream" (Riverside Shakespeare, 1997, pg. 275 lines 205-206). Shakespeare seems to be playing with the idea that true love always prevails by making the end of the play end where Helena is paired with Demetrius finally.

Oberon gets what he wants but realizes the issues he has created because of his ignorance and fixes the mess he created. The moral values that are instilled in this play such as true love is not in the eyes but in the mind and that true love will always prevail are instilled and displayed through the characters of the play. Shakespeare can portray the battle of the sexes in this play through the themes of jealousy, true love, and desperation that the couples in the battle of the sexes display.