



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Setting and History**

Objective: Researching the historical setting of the play

Activity

Despite a few distinct English elements in the play's setting, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* takes place in the Greek city of Athens, an ancient center of art, literature, science, and philosophy.

Using the library, the Internet, or both, research the setting of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Your research should not only include facts about Athens, but also facts about the world at the time in which *A Midsummer Night's Dream* takes place.

Use this research to complete the **Setting Chart** on the next page.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act I**Characterization****Objective:** Recognizing character traits**Activity**

A Midsummer Night's Dream is entertaining to read, but drama is really designed to be watched. Viewers at a play can see for themselves how the characters look and behave. This is why the text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, like most plays, lacks the physical descriptions common to standard literature.

When reading drama, one must pay close attention to the script in order to construct the best mental picture of the characters. Without descriptions, readers must obtain many of the clues indirectly; for example, by interpreting the actions of characters, or by noting one character's observations of another character.

Use the **Character Chart** on the next page to reveal your assessment of characters in Act I. In the appropriate spaces, briefly describe each character and determine whether—at this point in the play—you think he or she is a major character. When you finish the chart, review the characters that you designated as major ones. Select the two who are most similar and write one paragraph comparing them. Next, select the two least similar characters and write another paragraph, this time contrasting them.

The first part of the **Character Chart** has been completed for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act II

Journal Writing and Characterization

Objective: Writing character journals

Activity

World history and ancient legends were frequent sources of inspiration for Shakespeare. Many of his plays, if not most, are at least based on historical people, events, or literature. The characters in *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, are based on the lives—or at least the existence—of real people and events.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is also based on history and myth. Take this fact one step further and imagine that the play is a true story (fairies and all), and that all the characters maintained personal journals that are now on display in a museum in Greece.

Consider the characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and then choose a character that interests you the most. Choose wisely, because you will be writing the personal journal of the character. The journal will cover your character's thoughts and experiences for the duration of the play.

The journal entries must be written in the first person, as though the character actually wrote them. Write a single half-page entry for each act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. If you choose a character that does not appear in every act, maintain the journal as though the character is still aware of events in the play.

Pay attention to the thoughts, actions, and words of your character in order to write the most accurate and believable journal. It should reflect his or her behavior, speech patterns, and personality. Use your creativity to fill any gaps. Feel free to create any necessary filler, such as personal thoughts or experiences that would be believable for the character. Also, try to keep the dialect similar to Shakespeare's Elizabethan English (avoid modern expressions or slang).

Begin with an entry for Act I. You will have a total of five entries. We have provided an example:

An excerpt from the personal journal of Theseus, Duke of Athens (Act I):

Oh, why must I deal with such rascals? In the zenith of my wedding anticipation, the red-faced Egeus, moveable as beeswax, interrupts me to demand the blood of his own descendent. What good, I ask, is it to his daughter to learn only spite for her father? Alas, my compassion must bow to the plight of the father; my civic duty necessitates I yield to the laws of ancient Athens. The young Demetrius may have his unwanted prize or watch it expire.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts I – II**Metaphor****Objective:** Recognizing and interpreting metaphors**Activity**

In contrast to many of Shakespeare's plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contains relatively few instances of metaphor. The **Metaphor Chart** lists six examples of metaphor. For each example, explain the metaphor.

The first metaphor is completed for you. Keep this chart and, when you locate a memorable metaphor, add it to the blank chart supplied.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act III**Emotions****Objective:** Finding quotes that portray emotions**Activity**

A Midsummer Night's Dream might not contain the array of negative emotions found in tragedies, but *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play about love, and many of the emotions associated with love are negative.

The **Emotion Chart** on the next page contains a list of emotions depicted in Act III. Find the source of each emotion, identify the corresponding characters, and quote them on the chart. If the quote does not adequately portray the emotion, explain the context of the emotion.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts I – III**Simile****Objective:** Recognizing a simile**Activity**

Shakespeare's drama is usually laden with simile. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, some of the similes are easily interpretable, but others provide a challenge because they contain allusions to people and events that people in the present time may not recognize; for example, "as black as Acheron" refers to the mythical, Acheron River in Hades.

Identify seven instances of simile in Acts I through III. List them on the **Simile Chart** that follows and then interpret them. For each interpretation, try to include a modern simile that bears the same message as the original.

The first example has been completed for you. You may want to continue identifying other similes in the play. We have supplied a blank chart for that purpose.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act V**Interviewing****Objective:** Interviewing a main character**Activity**

You are now a talk-radio host who is popular for your interviews with people involved in scandals. Your interviewing skills often lead to the exposure of new details to controversial events. The public is very curious about the circumstances surrounding the triple wedding in Athens. Most of the rumors surrounding the wedding include the supposition that supernatural forces are at work.

The mortals of the play have all agreed to an interview, and, to your pleasure, so have Oberon, Titania, and Puck. Before the interview, you will need to compile a list of questions that you will cover. You will also be taking calls from listeners throughout the show. Remember, it is your job to pry the most interesting information from your guests so that listeners will continue to support you. Do not be afraid to employ controversial questions that will draw phone calls.

If a question is for a specific character, include that character's name before the question. A potential first question has been supplied for you.

1. (Theseus) Why did you so readily enforce the ancient law of Athens?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts I – V**Motif****Objective:** Identifying motifs**Activity**

The primary motif in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is that of opposition. Nearly every aspect of the story—the characters, the action, even the emotion—has an opposite.

One example of the opposition motif is the conflict between day and night. During the play, Puck and the fairies only use their magical powers at night. Puck worries about finishing before daylight, and Oberon, though not in any danger, agrees that the pair needs to repair the damage before dawn.

The **Opposition Motif Chart** supplies you a list of oppositions found in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and scenes in which they occur. Use the references to find support for each instance of opposition.

Your answers may include quotes from the text, descriptions of specific events, or descriptions of situations. If you find an example of an opposition in a location other than the listed scene, you may use it as your answer if you list the act and scene in which you found it.

The first motif is completed for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts I – V**Plot**

Objective: Relating conflicts and characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to contemporary conflicts

Activity

Shakespeare's drama is often described as universal, which means that it appeals to all audiences and cultures, past and present. Shakespeare achieves this universal appeal by using age-old themes to which anyone can relate, regardless of time or place.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is largely a story about the problems that accompany love. This theme could easily be placed in a modern context.

Consider the storyline of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and think of how and where it could occur in the present day. Begin by thinking of people who share the same type of lifestyle, responsibilities, or power as the major characters in the play—especially those who make decisions that initiate conflict.

We have begun some plot elements that you need to complete. Then you can make up a situation from modern times that would fit. Once you have constructed a situation that reasonably parallels that of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, fill in the supplied chart, **The New Midsummer Night's Dream**, with the equivalent events and characters. Several examples have been completed for you. These need be only short comments.