

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare

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Item No. 200906

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the students will be able to:

1. define, identify, and explain the various literary devices that Shakespeare utilizes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
2. Develop a character profile for each of the following:
 - Bottom
 - Demetrius
 - Helena
 - Hermia
 - Lysander
 - Oberon
 - Puck
 - Titania.
3. analyze the examples of irony within the play and explain the role that irony plays in comedy.
4. analyze and explain Shakespeare's uses of allusion to enhance the storyline.
5. identify, trace, and explain the following motifs throughout the play:
 - eyes and seeing
 - moonlight
 - dreams
 - flowers.
6. identify the two geographical locations within the play and explain the effect each has on the various characters.
7. summarize the storyline for:
 - the four lovers
 - Oberon and Titania
 - the rehearsal and production of *Pyramus and Thisbe*
 - Theseus and Hippolyta.
8. identify which characters speak in prose, poetry, or blank verse and explain the rationale for having them do so.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Explain the significance of the play's title.
2. Analyze the characteristics and elements of modern day romantic comedies and soap operas. In term of these characteristics, point out instances that make *A Midsummer Night's Dream* timeless.
3. Compare and contrast the characterization of all the lovers. In what ways can they be viewed as universal figures?
4. One of the play's universal themes deals with how the various aspects of romantic love affect the characters. Analyze the different manifestations of love throughout the play. What commentaries about love does each seem to make?
5. Critics note that Shakespeare always embedded some stock characters and comedic elements in his plays to appeal to the masses, which were not always familiar with his rich intellectual, cultural elements. How does he do so in this play?
6. Find and analyze some of Shakespeare's allusions in this play. How do they enhance the characterization and storyline?
7. Compare and contrast the settings of Athens and the woods. In doing so, consider the effect each has on various characters.
8. Analyze each character's speech patterns. Which characters speak in blank verse, poetry, or prose and when? Why do you think Shakespeare makes this distinction?
9. Examine the compliments characters issue when their relationships are in harmony and then analyze the insults they issue when they are in discord.
10. Trace and analyze the motifs of eyes and sight. What role do they play in developing the themes of love and reality?
11. Identify and analyze Shakespeare's varied uses of irony in this play. Why is it a vital element in comedy?
12. Analyze the treatment of moonlight throughout the play. What role does it play in the plot?
13. Consider Shakespeare's use of flowers within the play. With what characters are they utilized and why? How do they function symbolically?

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Act I, Scene I (Athens, the Duke's Palace)

Vocabulary

avouch – to declare
bated – excepted
beguiled – tricked; cheated
belike – probably
beteem – to give
cloister – a convent or monastery
counsel – inmost thoughts
dote – to idolize; to be infatuated with
dowager – widow who enjoys the assets of her deceased husband
edict – a law; a declaration
ere – before
errs – goes astray
extenuate – lessen or change
forswear – to swear falsely
gawds (gauds) – trinkets
hawthorn – a flowering shrub
livery – clothing or uniform
lode-stars – guiding stars, such as the north star
melancholy – sadness
mirth – merry-making; festivity
nuptial – marriage; pertaining to marriage
pert – lively
pomp – ceremony
primrose – a common wildflower of varying color
revelling (reveling) – celebrating
steep – to plunge
sweetmeats – fruits preserved with sugar
tempest – a storm
thither – there
transpose – to change
vexation – agitation
waggish – playful
wanes – fades; vanishes
wont – accustomed

Act I, Scene II (Athens, a laborer's home)

Vocabulary

bellows – a flexible chamber used for producing a current of air, as for drafting a fire
condole – to lament
devices – plans
interlude – short play or period of entertainment between main shows

1. Why does Bottom command our attention and what effect does he have on the audience?

2. What is humorous about Snug's reaction to playing the lion?

3. Why do the actors not want Bottom playing the part of the lion and what literary device do they use to emphasize why this would be disastrous? What does this suggest about their after of reality versus illusion in the theatre?

3. Who awakens Lysander?

4. How is Lysander different, and how does he explain his transformation to Helena?

5. What is Helena's reaction to this admission? Why?

6. What is the setting for this act? Based on the behaviors of the characters, with what can we associate this setting?

Act IV, Scene I

Vocabulary

amiable – lovable
amity – friendship and goodwill
coronet – a garland or wreath
discord – disharmony; cacophony
dotage – infatuation
expound – to explain
forester – an official responsible for the forest land
peck – one quarter of a bushel (8 quarts)
provender – food; provisions
swain – a young man living in the country; a bumpkin
vaward (vanguard) – the first or leading part of a group
vexation – aggravation; turmoil
visage – face or facial expression

1. As the act opens, what is ironic about Bottom's behavior?

2. With whom do flowers seem most associated and what could they represent?

3. Why has Oberon softened in his attitude toward Titania?

4. How do Lysander and Demetrius explain their behavior after waking?
