

A Midsummer Night's Dream Study Guide

Characters

Theseus: Duke of Athens, set to wed Hippolyta

Hippolyta: Queen of the Amazons, set to wed Theseus

Egeus: Hermia's father

Philostrate: Servant

Hermia: In love with Lysander, Helena's childhood friend

Lysander: In love with Hermia

Helena: In love with Demetrius, Hermia's childhood friend

- Hel-eh-nuh

Demetrius: In love with Hermia

Bottom: A weaver, later becomes a donkey head

Quince: A carpenter

Flute: A bellows-mender

Snout: A tinker

Starveling: A tailor

Snug: A joiner

Oberon: King of the Fairies

Puck: Oberon's attendant

Titania: Queen of the Fairies

Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed: Titania's attendants

Show Summary: The show is a culmination of three different stories happening simultaneously.

Plot A: Set in ancient Athens, Theseus and Hippolyta are planning their wedding. Egeus arrives with his daughter, Hermia. Athenian law states that a woman has to marry the man her father picks for her; Egeus wants Hermia to marry Demetrius, despite her being in love with Lysander. Theseus declares that Hermia has to follow the law and marry Demetrius, or else she would be executed. Lysander and Hermia decide to elope and tell Hermia's childhood best friend, Helena. However, Helena, who is in love with Demetrius, tells him they are running away together in order to sway his love for her instead of Hermia.

Plot B: A group of laborers—Bottom, Quince, Flute, Snout, Starveling, Snug—prepare a ridiculous play for the upcoming Athenian wedding.

Plot C: In the forest, King Oberon and Queen Titania of the Fairies, are fighting for the ownership of Titania's changeling boy (a child in Titania's care). Oberon sends his mischievous attendant, Puck (or Robin Goodfellow), to bring him a flower that he will use to trick Titania and get the changeling. The love-in-idleness flower juices will cause the person to fall in love with the first thing they see. When Oberon sees Helena and Demetrius fighting in the forest while chasing after Lysander and Hermia, he tells Puck to put the flower's love juice on the eyes of the Athenian man.

Meanwhile, Lysander and Hermia get lost in the forest and fall asleep. Puck, seeing Lysander as an Athenian man, puts the flower love juice on him instead of Demetrius. Now, Lysander sees Helena, and immediately falls in love with her, neglecting any thought of Hermia.

As the actors are practicing for their play in the forest, Puck watches them. He turns Bottom's head into the head of a donkey, while the others run away. Bottom, unaware that he is now a donkey, continues with his performance and sings. All the while, Queen Titania was sleeping nearby; when she wakes, she falls in love with the donkey Bottom because Puck put the love juice on her.

When Oberon finds out about Puck's mistakes, he tells him to bring Helena back to Demetrius and put the love juice on his eyes. Now, both Demetrius and Lysander are madly in love with Helena (remember, this is the complete opposite of the show's beginning!). Helena, unaware and believing they are cruelly joking with her, is followed by the two men. Hermia finds Lysander, who now scorns her. Lysander and Demetrius go off to fight over Helena, as Hermia chases her down. To fix the mess made, Oberon sends Puck to get them all to fall asleep. Puck puts the love juice on Lysander's eyes so he will love Hermia again.

While Titania is still in love with donkey-head Bottom, she gives the changeling boy over to Oberon. When she sleeps, Oberon and Puck remove the spell and donkey head.

Now, Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus find the four lovers asleep. Hermia and Lysander admit their plans to run away together, and, despite the law, Theseus agrees to let Lysander and Helena get married at his wedding. Because Demetrius and Helena now love each other, they will also get married.

The actors perform their plays and the Fairies bless all three marriages. Just as the lovers are convinced that the events of the day were all a dream, the audience asks if the entire show was a dream as well.

The Lovers	The Laborers/Actors	The Fairies	The Athenians
Hermia–Lysander Helena–Demetrius *At the beginning of the show, Demetrius is in love with Hermia	Bottom, Quince, Flute, Snout, Starveling, Snug	Oberon–Titania Puck Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed	Theseus–Hippolyta Egeus (Hermia's father) Philostrate