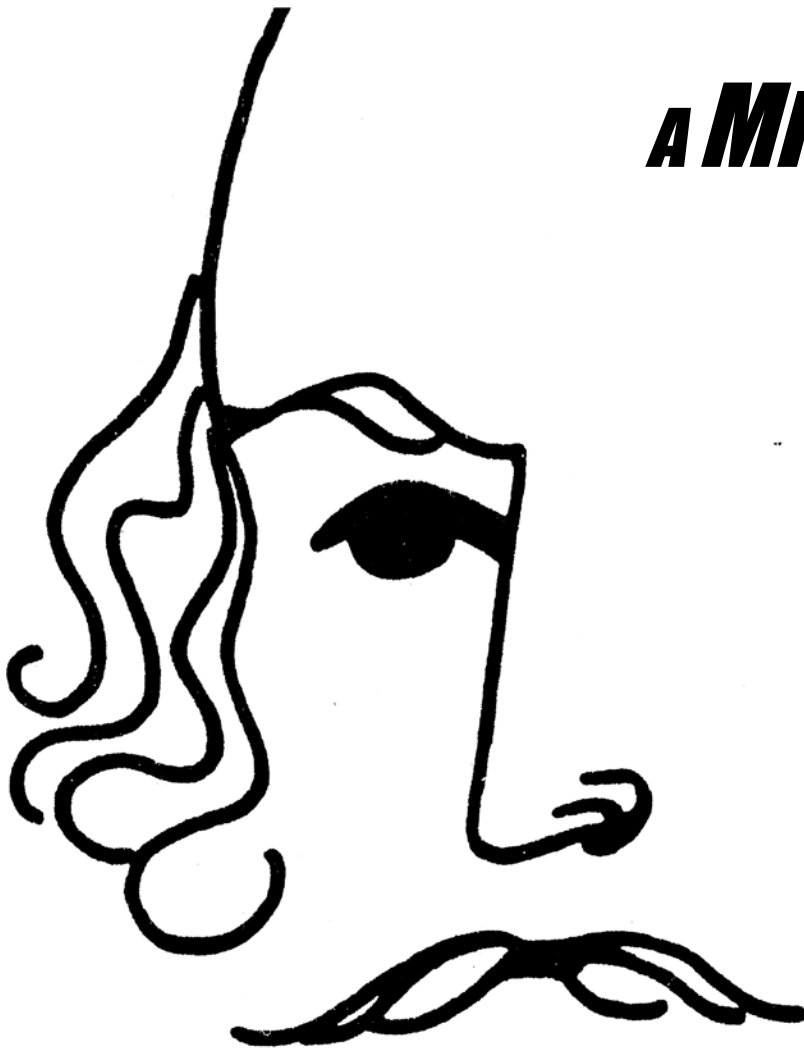


A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM



a study guide

**compiled and arranged by
the Education Department of
The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey**

The
SHAKESPEARE
Theatre of
New Jersey



The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's

Shakespeare LIVE!

2010 educational touring production

A Midsummer Night's Dream
a study guide

a support packet for studying the play
and attending The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's **Shakespeare LIVE!** touring production

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CLASSROOM

FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

What we hear most from educators is that there is a great deal of anxiety when it comes to Shakespeare; seeing it, reading it and especially teaching it. One of the principal goals of the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's Education Programs is to demystify Shakespeare, take him "off the shelf" and re-energize his work for students and teachers alike. Towards these goals, this Study Guide provides educators with tools to both allay their own concerns and to expand the *Shakespeare LIVE!* experience for their students beyond the hour spent watching the production.

The information included in the study guide and activity book will help you expand your students' understanding of Shakespeare in performance, as well as help you meet many of the newly adopted New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. We encourage you to impart as much of the information included in this study guide to your students as is possible. The following are some suggestions from teachers on how you can utilize elements of the study guide given limited classroom time.

Many teachers have found that distributing or reading the one-page "BRIEF SYNOPSIS" has greatly increased students' understanding and enjoyment of the production. It provides the students with a general understanding of what they will be seeing and what they can expect. Some teachers have simply taken the last five minutes of a class period to do this with very positive results.

When more class time is available prior to seeing the play, we recommend incorporating the background information on William Shakespeare and the play itself. One teacher divided her class into groups and assigned each group research topics based on the divisions found in the study guide. Using a copy of the corresponding study-guide page as a launch pad, the students had one week to research the topics. The students then presented their information to the class in three- to five-minute oral reports. Including the questions that evolved from the presentations, the entire project took only one class period. I am told that the reading of Old English and Middle English texts was "quite entertaining and very informative."

Using the questions found in the "TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION," many teachers will opt to take a class period after the presentation to discuss the play with their students. The questions help keep the comments focused on the production, while incorporating various thematic and social issues that are found in the play.

One school spent two days working through performance-based activities (a few of which are suggested in the "FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES" section) with a particularly "difficult and rowdy" class. They were astounded with the results. Their students took the opportunity to "ham it up," and discovered a great joy and understanding from performing Shakespeare.

ACTIVITIES

"What's My Line?" Promoting Active Listening

Teacher-tested, student-approved! Try this exercise with your students:

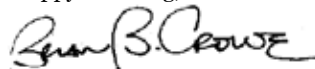
Before attending the production, give each student one line from the play to listen for. Discuss the meaning of the line and encourage their input in deciphering what Shakespeare meant by the line. How would the student perform the line? Why is the line important to the play? Does it advance the plot, or give the audience particular insight into a character or relationship?

Following the production, discuss the line again. Did the actor present the line in the way your student expected? If not, how was it different?

Several schools have brought members of the *Shakespeare LIVE!* company and the Theatre's education staff into their classrooms to run workshops, either on school time or after school. Workshop topics include Shakespeare in Performance and Stage Combat, but we are also happy to design a workshop to meet your needs.

To learn more about these and many other suggestions for engaging your students, I encourage you to join us this summer for our acclaimed summer professional development institute for teachers, *ShakeFest*. Again, we hope you will incorporate as many portions of this study guide as you are able into your classroom experience. If you have any suggestions for activities or topics not already found in the study guide, please contact our education department. We are always interested in hearing new ways to excite young people (and teachers) about Shakespeare and live theatre.

Happy Teaching,



Brian B. Crowe, Director of Education

Shakespeare: Helpful Tips For Exploring & Seeing His Works

“Just plunge right in

(to Shakespeare). See a play, read it aloud, rent a video, listen to a tape. It's up to you. When you look at Shakespeare close up, he's not as intimidating as when he's seen from afar.”

Norrie Epstein
The Friendly Shakespeare

Tragedy can have humor, and
great comedy always has
elements of the tragic.

Eighteenth-century critics complained that Shakespeare's tragedies weren't consistently serious enough. According to the classic rules, tragedy should be uniformly somber. Shakespeare's use of humor in his tragedies prevents us from becoming washed away in a dense fog of emotion. Rather, it forces us out of the “tragic” long enough to appreciate the level to which the play's passions have taken us.

“Some of the plays have taken on mythic proportions. By myths, I mean we grow up knowing certain things about [Shakespeare's] characters but we don't know how we know them.

There are lots of
SHAKESPEAREAN MICROCHIPS
lodged in our brains.”

Charles Marowitz, director

“It was Olivier's *Henry V*
that made me realize that

Shakespeare is
about real
people

and that his language
wasn't simply beautiful
poetry.”

Robert Brustein, director



“My advice to anyone seeing Shakespeare:

Don't worry so much!

Just make sure your ears are clean and your eyes are sharp. Listen and look and watch. Look at the distance people stand from each other; look at the relationships being developed.

Stay with it.

Don't negate the move that Shakespeare will make toward your gut, toward your soul-- because he will touch you there, if you allow yourself to be touched.”

David Suchet, actor

“There are some parts of the plays you'll never understand. But excuse me, I thought that's what great art was supposed to be about.

DON'T FREAK OUT OVER IT!”

Peter Sellars,
Director

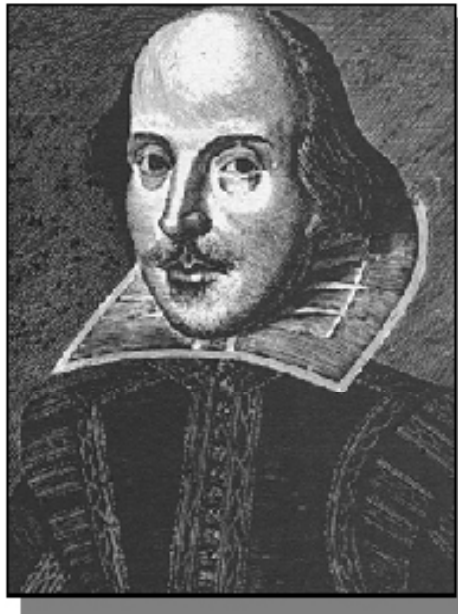
Don't be afraid to
LISTEN, WATCH AND REACT;
laugh, cry, and be moved.

Shakespeare wrote for
a live and active audience.
Both audience and actor
must be involved to create
a truly winning performance.

The Life of William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare, recognized as the greatest English dramatist, was born on April 23, 1564. He was the third of eight children born to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden of Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire, England. Shakespeare's father was a prominent local merchant, and Shakespeare's childhood, though little is known about it for certain, appears to have been quite normal. In fact, it seems that the young Shakespeare was allowed considerable leisure time because his writing contains extensive knowledge of hunting and hawking. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer. She was eight years his senior, and the match was considered unconventional.

It is believed that Shakespeare left Stratford-on-Avon and went to London around 1588. By 1592 he was a successful actor and playwright. He wrote 38 plays, two epic poems, and over 150 sonnets. His work



was immensely popular, appealing to members of all social spheres including Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. While they were well-liked, Shakespeare's plays were not considered by his educated contemporaries to be exceptional. By 1608 Shakespeare's involvement with theatre began to dwindle, and he spent more time at his country home in Stratford. He died in 1616.

Most of Shakespeare's plays found their first major publication in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, when two of his fellow actors put the plays together in the First Folio. Other early printings of Shakespeare's plays were called quartos, a printer's term referring to the format in which the publication was laid out. These quartos and the First Folio texts are the sources of all modern printings of Shakespeare's plays.

Shakespeare's London

London, in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, was a bustling urban center filled with a wide variety of people and cultures. Although most life centered around making a living or going to church, the main source of diversion for Londoners was the theatre. It was a form of entertainment accessible to people of all classes. The rich and the poor, the aristocrats and the beggars all met at the theatre. Though often appeasing the church or the monarchy, theatre at this time did experience a freedom that was unknown in previous generations. Evidence of this can be found in the numerous bawdy and pagan references found in Shakespeare's plays. This relative artistic license and freedom of expression made theatre extremely unpopular among certain members of society, and it was later banned entirely by the Puritans. Not until the reign of Charles II (1660-1685) was the theatre restored to the status it held in Shakespeare's day.

The Globe Theatre, the resident playhouse for Shakespeare's company of actors, was easily accessible to Londoners and an active social center. Actors and performers were also regularly brought to court or to private homes to entertain. Despite their social popularity, actors maintained a relatively low status, sometimes no better than a common beggar or rogue. Most performers were forced to earn a living doing trade work. The aristocracy's desire for entertainment, however, did spur the development of numerous new theatre pieces. Often a nobleman would become a patron to an artist or company of actors, providing for their financial needs and sheltering them to some degree from official sanctions. In return, the company would adopt the name of the patron. Shakespeare's acting company was originally named "Lord Chamberlain's Men" after their patron, Henry Carey, Lord Chamberlain. Later,

under the patronage of King James I, they were known as "The King's Men," an unprecedented honor at the time.

Despite the flourishing of the arts at this time, London was sometimes a desolate place. Outbreaks of the Black Plague (the bubonic plague) frequently erupted, killing thousands of citizens. Theatres, shops, and the government were all shut down during these times in hopes of preventing the spread of the disease. Elizabethans were unaware that the disease was being spread by the flea and rat populations, which well outnumbered the human population of London.



The Sonnets

You might have thought that Shakespeare wrote the sonnets earlier in his career, as a type of "stepping stone" to his plays. However, Shakespeare actually penned most of his sonnets during the various outbreaks of the plague in London, when the theatres were closed.

Are You SURE This Is English?

Contrary to popular belief, Shakespeare and his contemporaries did not write in Old English, or even Middle English. **PLAYWRIGHTS OF THE 16TH AND EARLY 17TH CENTURIES WROTE IN MODERN ENGLISH.** Shakespeare spoke (and wrote in) the same language which we speak today. It is possible to be thrown a bit by grammatical “carry-overs” from earlier English [“thee” and “thou” instead of “you”] and the poetic liberties that Shakespeare took, but there is no doubt that the words and syntax used in his plays can be understood today without any “translation.” To help clarify this point, here are some examples of Old, Middle and Modern English.

Old English (500 - 1150 CE)

When Julius Caesar invaded Britain in BC 55-4, the Celtic (pronounced KEL-tic) tribes lived in the British Isles. Their languages survive today in the forms of Gaelic (Scotland and Ireland), Welsh (Wales) and Manx (Isle of Man). The Romans brought Latin to Britain. However, early English developed primarily from the language of tribes which invaded and settled England from what is now Germany. This language, known as Old English, was also influenced by the Latin spoken by Catholic missionaries from Rome as well as the Scandinavian dialects of Viking raiders and settlers.

selection from *Beowulf* author unknown, ca 800 CE

Oft Scyld Scefing sceaðena prëstum,
monegum mægðum meodo-setla oftëah,
egsode eorlas. Syððan ærert wearð
fëasceaft funden, hë hæc frofre gebåd,
wëox under wolcnum, weorð-myndum þah,
oð-þæt him aeghwylc ymb-sittendra
ofer hron-råde hýran scolde,
gomban gyldan. þæt wæs god cyning!

IN MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

*Often Scyld the Scefing from squadroned foes,
from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore,
awing the earls. Since first he lay
friendless, a foundling, fate repaid him:
for he waxed under welkin, in wealth he throve,
till before him the folk, both far and near,
who lived by the whale-path, heard his mandate,
gave him gift: a good king he!*

Middle English (1150 - 1500 CE)

The conquest of England by the Norman army in 1066 brought great changes to English life and the English language. The Old French spoken by the Normans became for many years the language of the Royal Court and of English literature. Over time, the spoken English still used by the lower classes borrowed about 10,000 words from French, as well as certain grammatical structures. By the time English reappeared as a written, literary language in the 14th century, it only distantly resembled Old English. This German-French hybrid language is known as Middle English.

selection from *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer, ca 1390 CE

But natheless / while I haue tyme and space
Er that I ferther / in this tale pace
Me thynketh it acordant to resoun
To telle yow / al the condiciun
Of eeche of hem / so as it seemed to me
And whiche they weere / and of what degree
And eek in what array / that they were inne
And at a knyght thanne wol I first bigynne.

IN MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

*But nonetheless, while I have time and space
Before I continue in this story
I think it appropriate to speak of,
To tell you, the condition
Of each of them, as it seemed to me.
And who was who, and of what degree,
And in what fashion each was dressed.
And with a knight then I will begin.*

Modern English (1450 - present day)

With the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, the English language began to develop and mutate at an unprecedented rate. Books, previously a precious and expensive commodity, were now widely available to anyone with basic literacy. Works in Latin, Italian, Spanish, French and Portuguese were being translated by the hundreds, and the translators found it necessary to borrow and invent thousands of new words. English trade and exploration fueled even more cultural and linguistic exchange. The English of Shakespeare and his contemporaries has been referred to as “English in its adolescence”: daring, experimental, innovative and irreverent.

selection from *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, ca 1595 CE

Well, you have made a simple choice; you know not how to choose a man: Romeo! No, not he; though his face be better than any man's, yet his leg excels all men's; and for a hand, and a foot, and a body, though they be not to be talked on, yet they are past compare...

What did Shakespeare sound like?

While we may associate Shakespeare with the “refined” British accent of an Ian McKellen or Judi Dench, linguistic scholars say that the closest approximation to the London accent of Shakespeare’s day is the English spoken by “hill-billies” in the Appalachian Mountains of the United States.

Shakespeare's Verse

Shakespeare's plays are written predominantly in "blank verse," a poetic form preferred by English dramatists in the 16th and early 17th centuries. It is a very flexible medium, which, like the human speech pattern, is capable of a wide range of tones and inflections. The lines, which are usually unrhymed, are divided into five "feet," each of which is a two-syllable unit known as an "iamb." Each iamb is made up of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Blank verse is technically defined as unrhymed iambic pentameter.

Here is a selection of blank verse from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with the stressed syllables in bold type:

Theseus: To **you**, your **father should** be as a **god**;
 One **that compos'd** your **beauties, yea**, and **one**
 To **whom** you **are** but as a **form** in **wax**
 By **him** **imprinted**, and within his **pow'r**
 To **leave** the **figure**, or **disfigure** it.
Demetrius is a **worthy gentleman**.

Hermia: **So** is **Lysander**.

Theseus: **In himself** he **is**;
 But **in this kind**, **wanting** your **father's voice**,
 The **other must** be **held** the **worthier**.

In this short selection, you can see a variety of speech tones indicated by the verse. The regularity of the rhythmic pattern and the use of full lines to complete his thoughts give Theseus a sense of calm and authority. Hermia's brief response, which breaks the iambic pattern, is only a fraction of a line, suggesting that she is impassioned and saying only a portion of what she is thinking. Theseus, however, completes her line and restores the iambic pattern, indicating his authority and the fact that he is, at this point in the play, literally overbearing her will.

Notice that while the blank verse pattern is generally iambic, even in this short passage there are instances where the pattern of stress is broken. The play would quickly become monotonous if the characters truly spoke in nothing but perfect iambic pentameter—fortunately for audiences, Shakespeare's rhythms often become jagged and jarring to reflect the tension and conflict among his characters. Trying to determine where the rhythm of a line is regular or irregular provides important clues for the actor trying to understand what the character is thinking or feeling. As in real life, choosing to change the stress-bearing syllable may radically alter the meaning of what is being said.

Other clues are provided by word order and punctuation. There were few established rules for either in Shakespeare's time, so he was free to experiment with unusual syntax. As in our daily speech, the sentence structure (as indicated by both word order and punctuation) helps the reader or listener understand both the literal meaning of the sentence and the emphasis. A comma may indicate a new portion of the same idea, while a dash breaks into the sentence to insert a new idea, and a period suggests the completion of one idea and the start of another. Editors of Shakespeare over the years have quarreled bitterly about what punctuation the Bard "meant" to use or "should" have used. As an actor or reader of Shakespeare, it is up to *you* to decide if a comma, dash, or period makes the meaning of the line most clear.

Hearing a Play

The Elizabethans were an audience of listeners. They would say, "I'm going to *hear* a play," not "I'm going to *see* a play." The Elizabethan audience would pick up on words and their various meanings that we wouldn't.

Marjorie Garber

Speaking in rhyme is not natural to us, but it was to the Elizabethans, so we have to understand what language meant to them, and what language does not mean to us today. If I were an Elizabethan and I wanted to impress you as a lover, I wouldn't send you flowers. I would come and woo you at your feet and recite to you a sonnet I had written just for you— no matter how bad it was. Elizabethan England was a world where people sang, talked and breathed language.

David Suchet



The Heart of the Poetry

The alternating unstressed-stressed pattern of blank verse has often been compared to the rhythm of the human heartbeat. When a character in Shakespeare is agitated, confused or upset, the rhythm of their verse often alters, much in the same way a heartbeat alters under similar conditions.

Midsummer: An Introduction

Considered Shakespeare's most successful popular comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has something for everyone. From the regal elegance of the Athenian court to the lowbrow antics of the "rude mechanicals," from the passion-filled plights of the lovers to the mischievous magic of the fairies, *Midsummer* is sure to please almost any audience. It is the most often produced of Shakespeare's plays today, and, some say, it is in performance somewhere in the world every day of the year.

Midsummer's Eve

Midsummer Eve, the Vigil of St. John the Baptist, June 23, was traditionally a time of magic, when spirits supposedly walked abroad and played their tricks upon mortals. It was a time for certain traditional rites, such as the burning of bonfires, which go back to the fertility celebrations of pre-Christian Britain. By power of certain magical charms, maidens on Midsummer Eve might have dreams of who their true loves were to be. In general, the season was associated with love and marriage, and it is appropriate that Shakespeare would choose such a title for a marriage play.

George Lyman Kittredge

In creating this hilarious, silly, and sometimes deeply moving play, Shakespeare pulled situations and ideas from many diverse sources: merging Greek myth, European folklore and his own firsthand knowledge of English country life into a tightly-woven rollercoaster ride of a production.

At the heart of the play, as in most Elizabethan comedies, are issues of love and marriage. "Midsummer madness" was a colloquial phrase to refer to someone sick with love, and the play can be seen as a celebration of love's magic (and madness) in many forms: as adolescents, by the two pairs of young Athenians; as adults, by Theseus and his captive bride-to-be, the Amazon queen Hippolyta; and from the perspective of a long-married couple struggling with their less-than-perfect relationship, by Oberon and Titania.

Like many of Shakespeare's plays, there is a movement from chaos, conflict and danger to a restoration of harmony in the human and natural worlds. At the opening of the play, Hermia is given a choice between marrying a man she does not love or being put to death. Helena is desperately in love with a man who now refuses her. On a more cosmic scale, the feud between Titania and Oberon over the custody of a human child has turned the weather

itself topsy-turvy. When the fairies begin to intervene in the dilemmas of the humans, this already-troubled world falls further into chaos and disarray. The delusions of love are compounded by the illusions of magic.

But just as the chaos reaches its peak, Shakespeare magically resolves the dilemmas of humans and fairies alike, and returns the world to a state of blissful, primordial harmony. As Puck puts it:

*Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill;
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall
be well.*



Critic's Corner

Shakespeare uniquely took pains to work out a fairly elaborate and outrageous plot for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Inventing plot was not a Shakespearean gift; it was the one dramatic talent that nature had denied him. I think he prided himself on creating and intertwining the four different worlds of character in the *Dream*.

Harold Bloom

Midsummer: A Short Synopsis

The story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* may be best explained by dividing it into its three basic units: the Royals and Lovers, the Mechanicals, and the Fairies.

The Royals and the Lovers:

As Theseus, the Duke of Athens, and Hippolyta prepare for their wedding, Egeus, a nobleman of the town, comes before them to seek assistance with his disobedient daughter, Hermia. Egeus wants her to marry Demetrius, but she wants to marry Lysander. According to the law of Athens, she must marry the man her father chooses or die. Theseus acknowledges that Egeus has the law on his side, but offers Hermia the alternate choice of becoming a nun. Lysander and Hermia decide to run away so that they can be married. Before they leave, they see Helena, Hermia's best friend, and tell her of their plans. Helena is in love with Demetrius and, in hopes of proving her loyalty to him, tells him of Hermia's escape. As Lysander and Hermia travel through the woods the following night, Demetrius attempts to track them down with the love-sick Helena close in tow. While in the woods, fairies play tricks on the young lovers. Through magic, Demetrius and Lysander both suddenly fall madly in love with Helena. This confusion leads to a quarrel, which Oberon, King of the Fairies, stops. Oberon shortly puts the relationships as they should be; Demetrius is in love with Helena, and Lysander is in love with Hermia. When they wake the next morning, the Duke decides to allow Lysander and Hermia to marry. Demetrius, transformed by the evening in the woods, proclaims his renewed love for Helena. They joyously return to Athens and are married alongside Theseus and Hippolyta.

The Mechanicals:

Several of the workers of Athens have decided to perform a play for the Duke on his wedding day. Peter Quince, a local carpenter, gathers the four craftsmen thought best skilled to perform the play; Nick Bottom, Francis Flute, Snout and Snug. Bottom, a weaver with great aspirations to be an actor, is cast as Pyramus, a noble young man. Flute, a young man with a high voice, is cast as Thisbe, the girl that Pyramus loves. The group decides to rehearse in the woods outside town so that they won't be disturbed. When they meet to rehearse, they too are subjected to fairy pranks. Puck, a very mischievous spirit, replaces Bottom's head with that of a donkey. This sight frightens the other craftsmen so badly that they run home to Athens, leaving Bottom alone in the forest. Titania, who has been sleeping nearby, awakes and, through a spell cast by Oberon, falls madly in love with the donkey-headed Bottom. Later, when Titania and Bottom are released from the fairy spells, Bottom believes that he has simply had a fascinating dream and rushes off to find his friends. Reunited once again, the Mechanicals hurry off to the palace and perform their play for the Duke and Duchess.

The Fairies:

When the play begins, Titania and Oberon, Queen and King of the Fairies, are feuding because Titania refuses to give Oberon a human child left in her care. Oberon, furious that Titania will not give him the boy, uses a magical flower to place a spell on her. The spell will make the Fairy Queen fall in love with the first creature that she sees when she wakes, no matter how hideous it might be. When she awakes, the first creature she sees is Nick Bottom, a mortal on whom Puck has placed a donkey's head.

She falls madly in love with the transformed man, and orders her fairies to be wait on her new love, feeding and entertaining him. Before releasing her from his spell, Oberon takes custody of the changeling boy. No longer fighting, Titania and Oberon then go with the rest of the fairies to celebrate Duke Theseus' wedding day.



Beware the Midsummer Madness

Saying that someone is suffering from "midsummer madness" was a proverbial way of saying that they are sick with love.

Isaac Asimov notes that "there is a folk belief that extreme heat is a cause of madness (hence the phrase 'midsummer madness') and this is not entirely a fable. The higher the sun and the longer it beats down, the more likely one is to get sunstroke, and mild attacks of sunstroke could be conducive to all sorts of hallucinatory experiences. Midsummer, then, is the time when people are most apt to imagine fantastic experiences."

Sources & History of the Play

Scholars estimate that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written between 1595 and 1598, because the play was mentioned by Francis Meres in his book *Palladis Tamia*, published at that time. Other evidence that helps to establish the date when the play was written is found in the play itself: the lion and the wedding celebration.

The Mechanicals' concern over depicting a lion on stage was probably inspired by a pamphlet published in 1594, which de-



scribed a Scottish feast where plans to bring in a live lion as part of the evening's entertainment were cancelled when the organizers realized that the ladies would be frightened by the beast.

The elaborateness with which the play is framed around the royal wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta suggests that it was composed for a real-life wedding of great significance, probably at court. Many historians believe that *Midsummer* was first performed at the 1598 wedding of Elizabeth Gray, Queen Elizabeth's goddaughter, although no record of this has been found.

The sources of *Midsummer* are scattered and diverse, derived from both literature and popular folklore. The love story of Theseus and Hippolyta was told in the Knight's Tale of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and more facts about Theseus seem to be drawn from Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*, which was used as source material for other Shakespeare plays. The tale of Pyramus and Thisbe is one of the stories in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

The fairy world is both literary and traditional in its sources. Tales of goblins and sprites were common in Elizabethan England, and indeed, Shakespeare had probably heard stories of Robin Goodfellow while he was a child in Stratford. Oberon, the King of the Fairies, was a widespread figure in folklore who had already appeared in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and in other stage and literary works. Titania and the other fairies seem to have been invented by Shakespeare from bits and pieces of the beliefs about fairies that were common in his time. The Mechanicals were probably drawn from

life— mocking depictions of the “hard-handed” men who made up blue-collar London at the time.

A Midsummer Night's Dream first appeared in print in a quarto edition in 1600, probably printed from Shakespeare's own manuscript. In 1623, seven years after Shakespeare died, it was reprinted in the First Folio, with some editorial changes that seem to have their source in a theatrical manuscript of the play— one that had been used in production.

While it is not known exactly how often this play was performed in Shakespeare's lifetime, the title page of the 1600 quarto boasts that it had been “sundry times publicly acted.” When Parliament reversed the Puritan ban on theatre, *Midsummer* was one of the first plays to be revived,

as a lavish musical spectacle. Samuel Pepys, who attended this 1662 production, was less than impressed, calling it “the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life.” Other audiences and directors continued to return to the play however, and it enjoyed a long and varied production history. The opportunity to depict a magical forest often led early directors and designers to pull out all the stops— a production in 19th-century London featured “real rabbits.” Ballets, operas, and artwork based on the play have abounded in England and beyond.

In the 20th century, *Midsummer* began to be adapted to motion pictures. The 1935 Max Reinhardt movie, featured spectacular costumes, flocks of extras, and James Cagney and Olivia DeHavilland as Bottom and Titania. More recently, in 1999, director Michael Hoffmann brought together another all-star cast, with Kevin Kline as Bottom and Michelle Pfeiffer as Titania.

Aspects of *Midsummer*

Transformations:

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity.
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind.
Midsummer, I.i

Love transforms ordinary people into rare and perfect beings. When we fall in love, we suspend reason and overlook the flaws of our beloved.

Laurie Rozakis
The Complete Idiot's Guide to Shakespeare

Transformations, whether induced by magic or inspired by love, abound in *Midsummer*. There are the obvious transformations, such as Puck's prank on Bottom and the effects of the love charms cast on Lysander, Demetrius and Titania, but there are also subtler and more profound changes that the characters experience during their night in the forest.

Helena enters the woods lonely, dejected and self-pitying, then finds herself suddenly the object of two men's affection. Through this experience, she becomes aware of how unattractive such an excessive (and obsessive) affection can be— one of the factors that has made her undesirable to Demetrius. In confronting Demetrius, Lysander and Hermia, she seems to find a personal strength and inner beauty that she seemed unaware of before entering the woods.

Lysander and Hermia flee Athens in hopes of finding a “happy-ever-after” life somewhere else. Their bright-eyed naiveté makes them ill-prepared for the challenges they must face starting life together, even a challenge as seemingly simple as a walk in the woods. Their experience in the forest gives them a taste of worldly pain and tests the strength of their love. In the end, they awake as a more mature couple, one ready to face the real world together as adults.

Several other characters experience similar transformations. Demetrius, a selfish, “disdainful youth” at the beginning of the play, awakes from the “dream” with a voice of quiet maturity and responsibility. Theseus, who in Athens has insisted on the letter of the law, has a change of heart in the woods and allows love to take its course. Even the self-absorbed actor, Bottom, seems quieter and more awe-struck when he awakes, more aware of the world around him.

Shakespeare's use of transformations in *Midsummer* guides the audience not only through a series of playful hijinks, but also down a road of personal enlightenment for the characters and, through them, for us.

Fairy Evolution 101:

The Elizabethans had a very different image of fairies than we do today. When modern audiences picture fairies in their minds (under the influence of the Victorians and especially Barrie's *Peter Pan*), they are most often tiny winged creatures, glowing with magic, but frail, beautiful and kind to humans. This was far from the Elizabethan idea of the Fairy Kingdom, although Shakespeare's play itself played a significant role in creating a more romantic and benevolent image of fairies.

For centuries, fairies were a source of fear and anxiety for many communities. These beings were believed to be forces of nature, fiendish creatures that at their worst were little different than the demons of hell. Fairies were blamed for all kinds of mishaps, from a freak storm that destroyed the crops to a “spooked” horse that threw its rider. At best, their behavior towards humans was prankish, at its worst, malicious and frightening, such as the belief that fairies would steal human babies away by night and replace them with grotesque “changelings.”

The Elizabethan fairies evolved from several traditions: Celtic tales of nature spirits and “little people,” Germanic legends of kobolds, gnomes and dwarves, and the Greco-Roman myths about satyrs, fauns and nymphs. These remnants of pre-Christian mythologies survived particularly in folktales and oral traditions, but the belief in them, especially in the countryside (such as Shakespeare's native Stratford) was often real and intense.

Elizabethans had a number of methods for warding off the wrath of fairies: farmers would leave a small amount of fruit or grain unpicked in their fields; others would leave a saucer of cream or a slice of bread out at night. These food offerings were supposed to help placate hungry fairies. Various plants, metals, and symbols were also supposed to provide protection from fairy magic.

We have William Shakespeare to thank, in part, for the “cute” depiction of fairies today. For *Midsummer*, he invented a completely new type of fairy. Titania's attendants are depicted as tiny, almost insect-like sprites associated with flowers, music and dancing. The *Midsummer* fairies may be mischievous, but they intend no real harm to the humans they encounter. Indeed, the intervention of the fairies ultimately restores peace, love and harmony in the human world of the play.



Commentary & Criticism

“Modern audiences tend to resist the idea of magic, but many Elizabethans still believed in fairies, only their creatures were much darker and more sinister than the bland images manufactured by Walt Disney. Their traditional habitat, the dark forest where confused travelers lost their way, belongs more to the strange tales of the Brothers Grimm. Shakespeare’s moon-drenched fairy world is a symbolic dreamscape where traditional distinctions blur and disappear.”

Norrie Epstein
The Friendly Shakespeare

“Every single person goes into the woods at night and encounters fairies. The question depends upon what you think of a fairy. What sinks most productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the notion of a fairy as a nineteenth-century silly thing. Anytime you walk in the woods alone, they're there. Or when you dream. If a voice comes to you and says something you don't understand... that's what Shakespeare means by fairy.”

Peter Sellars, director

“Love and marriage is the central theme: love aspiring to and consummated in marriage, or to a harmonious partnership within it. Three phases of this love are depicted: its renewal, after a breach, in the long-standing marriage of Oberon and Titania; adult love between mature people in Theseus and Hippolyta; and youthful love with its conflicts and their resolutions, so that stability is reached, in the group of two young men and two girls.”

Harold F. Brooks, editor
The Arden Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream



He Said, She Said

“The most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life.”
-Samuel Pepys

“*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a jolly holiday from reality.”
-Laurie Rozakis

“Nothing by Shakespeare before *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is its equal, and in some respects nothing by him afterward surpasses it. It is his first undoubted masterwork, without flaw, and one of his dozen or so plays of overwhelming originality and power.”

Harold Bloom
Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human

“Shakespearean comedy raises the same issues as Shakespearean tragedy, only in a different key and, of course, with a different conclusion. The tragic tale of *Romeo & Juliet* becomes comedy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*... On one level, you can uncritically accept the comedies, simply enjoying them for their silliness; on another, you can look further and see how Shakespeare uses comic absurdities to suggest profound human values and concerns.”

Norrie Epstein
The Friendly Shakespeare

What's So Funny?

The Elizabethans had a slightly different definition of “comedy” than we do today. Though often quite funny, comedies of that period were not always what we would consider slap-stick laugh riots. Sometimes, in fact they were only *slightly* distinguishable from the tragedies. So, how was one to tell the difference? Quite simply, actually. Comedies ended with a marriage, while the tragedies ended with a death.

Boy, Oh Boy

In Shakespeare’s England, it was against the law for women to perform on the public stage. For this reason, the female roles in plays were always performed by males, usually teenage boys who were of slighter stature than the other actors, had higher voices and no beards. (Shakespeare jokes about this in *Midsummer*, when Flute tries to be excused from playing Thisbe on the grounds that his beard has begun to come in). The text also leads us to believe that a short boy in the company would have played Hermia, while a taller young man took the role of Helena.

Midsummer: Food For Thought

What's In A Name?

The name "**Titania**" in reference to the Fairy Queen was not used prior to this play. In the writings of the ancient Greek poet Ovid, Titania is used as a name for the moon. Shakespeare may have intended to present his Fairy Queen as an incarnation of the classical moon goddess, Phoebe.

Oberon, on the other hand, was a well-known character from folklore and medieval literature. French authors even went so far as to explain his lineage, stating that he was the son of the Roman conqueror Julius Caesar and Morgan le Fay, the great fairy queen of Arthurian legend.

Artistic License

Theseus is thought to have been an actual historical ruler of Athens around 1230 BCE. Most of the information about him comes only from legend, which presents him as a great warrior and conqueror, as well as a recreational seducer of women. One of the stories about him tells of his conquest of the Amazons, a tribe of fierce women warriors, and his capture of their queen, Antiope. Eventually, Theseus persuaded his captive to marry him, and she bore him a son, Hippolytus. For this reason, Antiope is also referred to as Hippolyta (the feminine form of her son's name). The marriage did not have the happy ending that Shakespeare implies. The Amazons mounted an attack on Athens, and Antiope/Hippolyta died in the battle, fighting at her husband's side against her own people.

You Are Your Work

The names of the Mechanicals reflect their occupations. Bottom, the weaver, is named for a skein of yarn or thread, called a "bottom." The name of Quince, the carpenter, suggests "quines," or blocks of wood used by carpenters in building. Flute is a bellows mender-- the bellows has a fluted shape, and was used to compress air to stoke a fire or to produce sound (as in a church organ). Snout, the tinker, would have been a mender of pots, pans and kettles-- the spout of a kettle was often called a "snout" in Shakespeare's time. Snug, finally, is a joiner, one who manufactures cabinets and other jointed furniture made of snug-fitting pieces of wood.

Adamant

"Adamant" originally referred to a mythical substance which the ancient Greeks believed was so hard and strong that it could not be cut or broken. It comes from a Greek word meaning "not tamed," and came to refer to diamonds, because of they are so difficult to cut. In the Middle Ages, the word was mistaken for the Latin *ad-amare*, "to attract," and *adamant* was used to refer to magnets. When Helena calls Demetrius "a hard-hearted adamant," she plays on both senses of the word— his heart is as hard as a diamond, but he exerts a magnetic attraction on her.

A Long Road to Travel

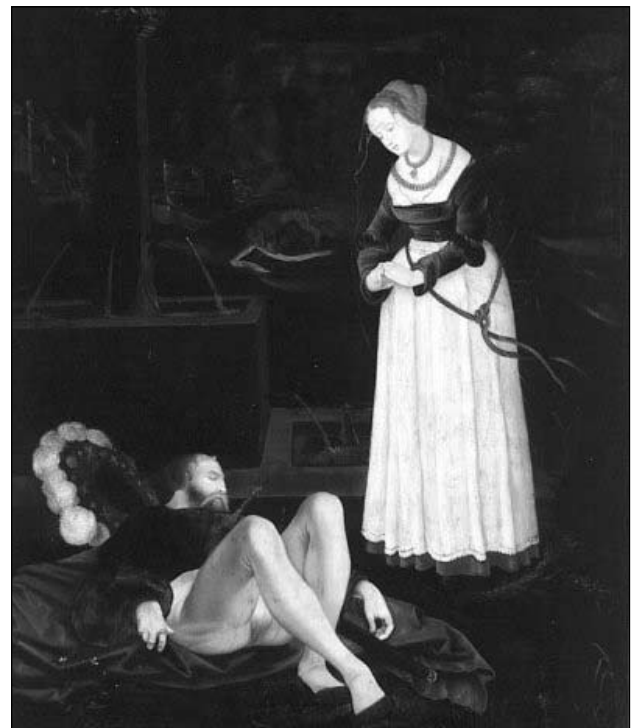
Lysander states that his aunt's home is "remote seven leagues" from Athens, and he and Hermia plan to walk there. A league was a unit of measurement approximately equivalent to three miles. Assuming that an average adult walks roughly 3-5 miles per hour, it would have taken them up to seven hours to travel the 21 miles on foot. And that's without considering the fact that they're traveling at night in the woods... and the fact that Lysander gets them lost.

Shakespeare's Reading List

The story of Pyramus and Thisbe is found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and its plot is striking similar to that of another Shakespeare play written around the same time as *Midsummer: Romeo & Juliet*.

Faster Than A Speeding Bullet

Puck proclaims that he'll "put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes." To do so, he would need to travel over 37,500 miles per hour. That's just over 10 miles per second. In comparison, astronauts orbit the earth in about 90 minutes. Puck is moving more than twice as fast.



Shakespeare's Common Tongue

alack- expression of dismay or shock
anon- soon, right away
ere- before
hath- has
hence- away (from here)
henceforth- from now on
hither- here
lest- or else
naught- nothing
oft- often
perchance- by chance, perhaps, maybe
sirrah- "hey, you" as said to a servant or someone of lower status
thee- you
thence- away, over there
thine- yours
thither- there
thou- you
thy- your
whence- where
wherefore- why
whither- where

... and the "thys" have it

Often Shakespeare will alternate his usage of "thou" for "you", or "thy" for "your", or "thine" for "yours". Though the words are synonymous, there is a great deal of information that can be obtained by looking closely at these choices.

The different use of these pronouns have to do with status, relationship, degrees of intimacy and shifting attitudes. "You" is used in formal situations and conveys respect from the speaker. It is used when addressing royalty and parents. "Thou," used in more informal settings, also can suggest contempt or aggression from the speaker. The use of "thou" places the speaker above the status of the person to whom s/he is speaking. Children are addressed using "thou," "thee" or "thy." In a conversation between two people of equal status, the use of "you" suggests that everything is going along smoothly, whereas "thou" would suggest that there is some kind of upset or unrest in the relationship.

These general guidelines can be used to give a vast insight into the emotional and social navigation of a character.

Terms & Phrases found in *Midsummer*

ACT I

nuptial hour- wedding day
solemnities- ceremonies
vexation- annoyance, anger
"bewitched the bosom"- magically charmed the heart
"avouch it to his head"- swear it to his face
"steal forth"-sneak out of
lamentable-very sad
gallant-dashing and courageous
con-to learn or memorize

ACT II

revels- celebrations
"passing fell and wrath"- angry and dangerous
changeling- a human child exchanged for a fairy one
wanton- wild, ungoverned
votress- a female worshipper, a devotee
anoint- to ceremonially dab on or apply a liquid
ounce- in this case, a wild cat
pard- a panther or leopard

churl- a crude person, especially someone of low class

ACT III

chink- a crack or narrow opening
auditor- an audience member, one who listens
misprised- mistaken
derision- ridicule
juggler- trickster, someone who practices sleight-of-hand
canker blossom- a diseased flower
painted maypole- a decorated pole used in festivals (but in this case, *Hermia implies that Helena is too skinny and wears too much makeup*)
vixen- a quarrelsome, malicious woman

ACT IV

amiable- lovely and lovable
bower- a shaded, leafy refuge
concord-agreement, peace

ACT V

masque- a special performance-- part music, part dance, part theatre-- created for a wedding or other celebration
perchance- by chance, maybe
dole- sorrow
mantle- a loose cloak or shawl
confound- to confuse
pap- nipple
"my breast imbrue"- stain my chest (with blood)

A Man of Many Words

Shakespeare used over **20,000 different words** in his plays and poems. Of these, 8.5% (1700 words) had never been seen in print before Shakespeare used them. To give you a sense of just how extraordinary this is, consider that the King James Bible uses only 8,000 different words. Homer is credited with using approximately 9,000 different words in his works. Milton is estimated at using 10,000 different words in his works.

Additional Topics for Discussion

About the Play

1. Shakespeare uses three distinctly different writing styles for the three groups of characters in *Midsummer* (Fairies, Royals/Lovers, and Mechanicals). How do the groups sound different? What kind of vocabulary does each group have? Do certain groups speak more in prose than verse, or vice-versa? And if they speak in verse, are there any notable characteristics of the verse they use? Why might Shakespeare have given each group its own “language” in this way?
2. Although the play is titled *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, evidence in the text suggests that the events may actually be taking place around the first of May. If this is the case, what does the title mean? What characteristics of midsummer, nighttime and/or dreaming are important in this play?
3. If the play is a “*Dream*,” whose dream is it? Is it Bottom’s dream? Titania’s? Puck’s? Does the “dream” in the title refer to the lovers’ adventures in the woods? Or is the entire play the audience’s collective dream? Support your answer.
4. The major conflicts of the play are resolved when the various couples are happily paired up. Shakespeare, however, chooses not to end the story there, but devotes a substantial amount of stage time to the Mechanicals’ presentation of the tragic tale of Pyramus and Thisbe. Why did Shakespeare make the “play-within-a-play” such a large part of *Midsummer*? Are there any parallels between the play of *Pyramus & Thisbe* and *Midsummer*?
5. Transformation is a major theme of this play. How are the characters transformed from the beginning to the end? Does the situation at the end of the play represent a new and improved reality, or are these transformations only skin deep?

About this Production

1. In this production, eight actors play twenty different roles. How do the actors and the director manage to differentiate between these different characters? How did the costumes help you identify specific characters? Identify some of the strategies you saw used, and discuss whether they were effective.
2. Director Abigail Isaac drew inspiration from the natural world in creating the appearance and behavior of the fairies in this production. What kind of animals do you see reflected in the fairies? Does their “wild” appearance and behavior support the themes and plot of the play?
3. Music plays a prominent role in this production. How did the type of music that was used, and its placement in the show, help you understand and enjoy the play? Were you surprised by any of the musical choices? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

1. Write a review of this production of *Midsummer*. Be sure to include specific information and your own reactions to both the acting and the design elements (like set and costumes). Explain what you liked about the production and what you disliked, and support your opinions. Then submit your review to The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey’s Education Department, or see if it can be published in your school newspaper.
2. “**Alert the media!**” Big events are afoot in the course of *Midsummer*: Theseus and Hippolyta have a royal wedding, Hermia and Lysander try to elope, some very amateur actors get their first big break, Bottom has a very strange night in the woods, and so on. Assign the big events of the play to members of the class and create appropriate television or newspaper coverage.
3. “**I learn by this letter...**” Write a letter or diary entry from the point of view of one of the characters, discussing an event or situation in the play. For example, love letters between the couples, a letter from Egeus to Lysander’s father, a letter from Theseus to Egeus explaining why he changes his mind, or a letter from Bottom to Titania after he has been changed back. Alternatively, write a love poem sent by one of the play’s many lovers.
4. Divide into five groups, and have each group take one act of the play. Your task is to create a three-minute version of your act, using only Shakespeare’s words. Choose carefully the lines from your act that carry the most important information and advance the story. When each group is done, you will have a 15-minute version of *Midsummer* which you can perform for one another. Afterwards, discuss both the process of adaptation and how your “abridgement” compared to *Shakespeare LIVE!*’s.
5. Choose one of the scenes from the play that has both male and female characters and act it out in class three times: once with an all-male cast, once with an all-female cast, and once with the roles assigned according to gender. How does it affect the scene? Discuss this in light of the fact that, in Shakespeare’s time, Hermia, Helena, Titania and Hippolyta would have been played by boys.

6. **Play/Pause/Rewind.** Available versions of *Midsummer* on video include the 1935 Warner Brothers film, the 1968 RSC production, the 1982 NYSF Central Park production and Michael Hoffman’s 1999 film. Choose two versions of the same scene, such as the meeting of Oberon and Titania in II.i, and show each to the students, asking them to observe how the actors in each production speak, interpret and move to the language. Make liberal use of the pause button to stop and ask specific questions, then rewind and let them watch the entire scene through uninterrupted.

Teachers:

Do you have activities or exercises to suggest for this play? We are always looking for new ideas to inspire students (and teachers). Send your suggestions to info@ShakespeareNJ.org, and we will share them with other teachers, or maybe even include them in future study guides.

What Did He Say?

This is an opportunity to test your comprehension of Shakespeare's language. Below you will find passages from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Answer the questions for each passage as specifically as possible.

TITANIA

The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a votress of my order,
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side...
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

1. To whom is Titania speaking?
2. At what point in the play does this speech occur?
3. Define "votress" and "gossip'd."
4. What child is she discussing? Why is he important to her? What is special about him?
5. Why was the child's mother important to Titania? What happened to her?

THESEUS

I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehends
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact.
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

1. To whom is Theseus speaking?
2. What does he mean by "antique fables" and "fairy toys"?
3. Define "of imagination all compact."
4. What similarities does Theseus see in madmen, lovers and poets? What differences?
5. In your own words, explain how Theseus sees the madman, the lover and the poet. Are they calm or excitable, sad or merry, levelheaded or irrational? Be specific.
6. What is Theseus' main idea in this speech? Does he make a good case? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

Who Said That?

Match the spoken line to the character who speaks it. Two characters have two quotes each. Two characters have none of the quotes listed below.

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------|
| A. | "...the course of true love never did run smooth." | THESEUS |
| B. | "Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so." | HIPPOLYTA |
| C. | "Nay, faith, let me not play a woman. I have a beard coming." | HELENA |
| D. | "Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury." | HERMIA |
| E. | "I love thee not, therefore pursue me not." | LYSANDER |
| F. | "I'll follow thee, and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well." | DEMETRIUS |
| G. | "I see their knavery. This is to make an ass of me." | NICK BOTTOM |
| H. | "I am a spirit of no common rate." | FRANCIS FLUTE |
| I. | "And are you grown so high in his esteem
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?" | PETER QUINCE |
| J. | "I will overbear your father's will." | OBERON |
| K. | "Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time." | TITANIA |
| L. | "If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended..." | PUCK aka ROBIN GOODFELLOW |

Artwork Credits:

p5: Engraving of William Shakespeare by Droeshout from the First Folio, 1623.

p7: Reginald Metcalf in the 2002 *Shakespeare LIVE!* touring production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

p8: Mark Elliot Wilson and Geoff Wilson in the 2002 Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey production of *A Midwinter Night's Dream*.

p9: Woodcut illustration by Rockwell Kent for the Doubleday edition of Shakespeare's *Works*, 1936.

p10: Illustration of Bottom, Titania and the fairies by Henry Fuseli, from the American edition of *Boydell's Illustrations of Shakespeare*, 1852.

p11: James Michael Reilly and Sabrina LeBeauf in the 2002 Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey production of *A Midwinter Night's Dream*.

p12: Ames Adamson, Molly McCann, Michael Rossmly, Roderick Lapid and Mandy Olsen in the 2003 *Shakespeare LIVE!* touring production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

p13: Molly McCann in the 2003 *Shakespeare LIVE!* touring production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

p13: *Pyramus and Thisbe* by Hans Baldung, 1530.

p17: Dan Lenzian, Jack Moran and Matthew Simpson in the 2008 *Shakespeare LIVE!* touring production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

p19: Photo of the F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre, the Main Stage venue of The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, 1998.

Sources for this study guide:

THE ANNOTATED SHAKESPEARE, Introductions, Notes, and Bibliography by A.L Rowe

THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, edited by Harold F. Brooks

ASIMOV'S GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE by Isaac Asimov

THE COMPLETE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE, by Laurie Rozakis

FREEING SHAKESPEARE'S VOICE by Kristin Linklater

THE FRIENDLY SHAKESPEARE by Norrie Epstein

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THE ESSENTIAL SHAKESPEARE HANDBOOK, by Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding

SHAKESPEARE SET FREE, edited by Peggy O'Brien

SHAKING HANDS WITH SHAKESPEARE, by Alison Wedell Schumacher

Who Said That? Answer Key

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| A. Lysander | G. Nick Bottom |
| B. Helena | H. Titania |
| C. Francis Flute | I. Hermia |
| D. Oberon | J. Theseus |
| E. Demetrius | K. Theseus |
| F. Helena | L. Puck |



Meeting Core Curriculum Standards

In 1996, the New Jersey State Board of Education adopted Core Curriculum Content Standards that set out to clearly define what every New Jersey student should know and be able to do at the end of his/her schooling. The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is committed to supporting teachers by ensuring that our educational programs are relevant to standards-based teaching and learning. Viewing a performance by *Shakespeare LIVE!* and participating in the post-performance discussion can serve as a powerful springboard for discussion, writing, and other outlets for higher-order thinking. On this page you will find suggestions for ways to align your study of our production to each standard.

LANGUAGE ARTS LITERACY STANDARDS

As a theatre dedicated to the classics, we are continually engaged in exploring some of the world's greatest literature, and the relationship between the written text and performance. Our philosophy and practice follow the four underlying assumptions of the Language Arts Literacy CCCS: that "language is an *active process* for constructing meaning," that "language develops in a *social context*," that language ability increases as learners "engage in texts that are *rich in ideas and increasingly complex in language*," and that learners achieve mastery not by practicing isolated skills but by "*using and exploring language* in its many dimensions." In the practice of theatre, we merge all areas of the language arts, as the standards suggest, "in an integrated act of rehearsal, reflection, and learning." Using the visual and performing arts to motivate and enhance language arts learning is explicitly recommended by the CCCS, citing extensive research.

Below, you will find just a few of the possibilities for aligning your study of our productions to each of these standards.

STANDARD 3.1: All students will apply the knowledge of sounds, letters and words in written English to become independent and fluent readers, and will read a variety of materials and texts with fluency and comprehension.
Read a scene from the play as a class and use context clues to interpret new words and expand vocabulary (3.1.C/F); demonstrate understanding by performing a scene from the play (3.1.G); compare and contrast literary elements in the play with another text being studied (3.1.H)

STANDARD 3.2: All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.
Write a new ending for the play in blank verse or in modern prose (3.2.D), write a critique of the play which will be workshopped and published in a classroom setting (3.2.A/B/D)

STANDARD 3.3: All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.
Participate in a post-show discussion (3.3.A/B), memorize and perform a monologue or scene from the play (3.3.D)

STANDARD 3.4: All students will listen actively to information from a variety of sources in a variety of situations.
Select one speech or line from the play and

compare how it was performed in the stage and film version (3.4.A/B)

STANDARD 3.5: All students will access, view, evaluate and respond to print, nonprint, and electronic texts and resources.

Discuss how the play expresses cultural values of the playwright's time (3.5.A); compare and contrast the printed text with its staged version (3.5.B)

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS STANDARDS

According to both No Child Left Behind and the New Jersey CCCS, the arts (including theatre) are a core subject and "experience with and knowledge of the arts is a vital part of a complete education." In the area of performing arts, performances, workshops and study guide exercises developed by The Shakespeare Theatre address all five state standards.

Below, you will find just a few of the possibilities for aligning your study of our productions to each of these standards.

STANDARD 1.1: All students will use aesthetic knowledge in the creation of and in response to dance, music, theatre and visual art.
Discuss the use of metaphor in both the text and the design of the production; discuss how the play expresses cultural values of its period and/or of today

STANDARD 1.2: All students will utilize those skills, media, methods, and technologies appropriate to each art form in the creation, performance, and presentation of dance, music, theatre and visual art.
Perform a monologue or scene from the play; participate in a classroom workshop that develops the physical and technical skills required to create and present theatre

STANDARD 1.3: All students will demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles of dance, music, theatre and visual art.
Participate in a post-show discussion of elements such as physicality and creating motivated action; discuss the relationship between playtext and production design

STANDARD 1.4: All students will develop, apply and reflect upon knowledge of the process of critique.
Write a review of the production using domain-appropriate terminology; develop a class rubric for effective theatrical presentations; compare and contrast the play with work by other artists

STANDARD 1.5: All students will understand and analyze the role, development, and continuing influence of the arts in relation to world cultures, history, and society.
Discuss the representation of social issues (class, political leadership, etc.) in the play; research how the historical period affected the writer's work; compare the play to work from other historical periods

About The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey

The acclaimed Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is one of the leading Shakespeare theatres in the nation. Serving nearly 100,000 adults and children annually, it is New Jersey's only professional theatre company dedicated to Shakespeare's canon and other classic masterworks. Through its distinguished productions and education programs, the company strives to illuminate the universal and lasting relevance of the classics for contemporary audiences. The longest-running Shakespeare theatre on the east coast, The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey marks its 48th season in 2010.

In addition to producing and presenting classic theatre, the Theatre's mission places an equal focus on education—both for young artists and audiences of all ages. The Theatre nurtures emerging new talent for the American stage and cultivates future audiences by providing extensive student outreach opportunities. Through our work, we endeavor to promote literacy, civilization, community, cultural awareness, the theatrical tradition, and a more enlightened view of the world in which we live and the people with whom we share it.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is one of 20 professional theatres in the state of New Jersey. The company's dedication to the classics and commitment to excellence sets critical standards for the field. Nationwide, the Theatre has emerged as one of the most exciting "new" theatres under the leadership of Artistic Director, Bonnie J. Monte since 1990. It is one of only a handful of Shakespeare Theatres on the east coast, and in recent years has drawn larger and larger audiences and unprecedented critical acclaim. The opening of the intimate, 308-seat F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre in 1998, provided the Theatre with a state-of-the-art venue with excellent sightlines, and increased access for patrons and artists with disabilities.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is a member of ArtPride, The Shakespeare Theatre Association of America, Theatre Communications Group, and is a founding member of the New Jersey Theatre Alliance.

Other Opportunities for Students... and Teachers

STUDENT MATINEE SERIES

Student Matinee performances of the productions in our Main Stage season provide students and teachers with an opportunity to view theatre classics brought to life by some of the nation's most skilled professional actors in the intimate setting of the F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre. Each includes a comprehensive study guide and a lively talkback with the cast.

JUNIOR AND SENIOR CORPS

Young actors are given the opportunity to participate in the excitement of the Theatre's summer season through this program, which offers classes, a final presentation, as well as behind-the-scenes and front-of-house experience. Geared for students in grades 6 through 12, admission to this program is through audition and/or interview.

PAGES TO PLAYERS: IN-SCHOOL RESIDENCIES

Residencies provide an opportunity for classroom English teachers in grades 5-8 to partner with the Theatre's skilled teaching artists to explore Shakespeare's text in-depth in an exciting, performance-based way that evokes collaboration, self-confidence and creativity while reinforcing language arts skills.

SHAKEFEST: SUMMER SHAKESPEARE INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

Designed for elementary and secondary teachers of Shakespeare, *ShakeFest* is a weeklong intensive filled with myriad practical ways to conquer "ShakesFear" and excite students about the Bard. In hands-on sessions, experienced teaching artists model active and exciting performance-oriented techniques to get students on their feet and "speaking the speech."

SHAKESPERIENCE: NJ STUDENT SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

This annual spring festival, developed in partnership with the Folger Shakespeare Library and Rider University, gives middle and high school classes the opportunity to spend a day at the Theatre experiencing Shakespeare together as both actors and audience. The *Shakespeare: NJ* Festival celebrates the power of performance as a teaching tool on a statewide scale.



For more information about these
and other educational programs
at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey,
log onto our website,
www.ShakespeareNJ.org
or call **(973) 408-3980**