

## *A Midsummer Nights Dream*

### **Detailed Study Questions**

#### **Act I, scene i**

1. How is Hippolyta's reasoning concerning how quickly the next four days will pass different from that of Theseus? Note how Shakespeare portrays the patience and calmness of Hippolyta in contrast to the impatience and need for action of Theseus.
2. Why has Egeus brought his daughter and her two suitors to Theseus? What does Egeus expect him to do?
3. What was the proper role for women/daughters in Athenian society according to Egeus and Theseus?
4. What is Theseus's ruling concerning Hermia?
5. How does Lysander's comment about Demetrius's previous love affair with Helena complicate things?
6. What do Lysander and Hermia plan to do about this seemingly impossible situation?
7. Why do they tell Helena what they plan to do?
8. Even though Helena loves Demetrius and is Hermia's best friend, why does she decide to tell Demetrius of Hermia and Lysander's plan?

#### **Act I, scene ii**

1. Why does Nick Bottom want to play all the parts?
2. How do you suppose the threat of being handed if they scare the ladies will affect the artisan's interpretation of the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisby?
3. In what way is this scene funny? Why do you suppose Shakespeare included this scene?
4. Where are the actors to meet the following night? Who else is meeting in these same woods at the same time?

#### **Act II, scene i**

1. What does the reader find out about the current relationship between Oberon, King of the Fairies, and Titania, Queen of the Fairies, from Puck and the first fairy?
2. How have Oberon and Titania been involved in the past with Theseus and Hippolyta, and why have they come to Athens?
3. What effect has their quarrel had on nature, on the seasons, on humans?
4. Why won't Titania give up the changeling to Oberon?
5. What does Oberon send Puck to find?
6. What are Oberon's plans for Titania?
7. How does Helena react to Demetrius's verbal abuse?
8. What is her response to his threats of physical abuse?

9. In what way is Helena's behavior inappropriate for Athenian women?
10. What does Oberon tell Pluck to do about Demetrius and Helena?

### **Act II, scene ii**

1. Why does Oberon want Titania to wake and fall in love with some vile thing?
2. Why does Hermia insist Lysander sleep a little ways from her?
3. Why does Puck anoint Lysander's eyes?
4. How does Helena react to Lysander's sudden love for her when he awakens?
5. How is Hermia's dream, a reflection of reality?

### **Act III, scene i**

1. How are the actors going to keep from scaring the ladies when Pyramus kills himself or when the lion roars?
2. How are the actors going to manage the setting/scenery such as the moonlight and the wall?
3. Why do the rest of the actors run off when Bottom reappears?
4. What does Puck plan to do when he follows after the other actors?
5. How does Bottom react to Titania and the other fairies?
6. Bottom says, "...reason and love keep little company together nowadays." Why is this such an apt statement at this point in the play?

### **Act III, scene ii**

1. What does Hermia accuse Demetrius of doing?
2. How are Puck and Oberon going to correct Puck's earlier mistake?
3. Why is Helena upset when Demetrius says he loves her? Isn't it what she wanted all along?
4. Of what does Helena accuse Hermia?
5. How close had Hermia and Helena been in the past?
6. How does Lysander treat Hermia? Why can't she believe what he says?
7. Of what does Hermia accuse Helena?
8. Why is Helena afraid of Hermia?
9. What are Lysander and Demetrius going off to do?
10. What does Oberon tell Puck to do about the two young men?
11. What is Oberon going to do about Titania?
12. Why doesn't Oberon fear the coming of day?
13. How well does Puck's trickery work?

### **Act IV, scene i**

1. How has Bottom adjusted to the attention of Titania and her fairies?
2. What is Oberon's reaction to Titania's infatuation with Bottom?
3. What sort of explanation will Oberon make to Titania's question about what happened to her? Do you think he will tell her the truth?
4. Why are Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and the others out in the woods so early in the morning?
5. What is Theseus's first explanation of why the young people are asleep in the woods?
6. What explanation does Demetrius make? Why does he compare his love for Hermia to an illness?
7. What is Theseus's decision concerning the four young people?
8. Why can't the young people be sure whether they are awake or dreaming?
9. Bottom believes he too has had a dream. How is he going to use that dream to entertain the duke?

#### **Act IV, scene ii**

1. What opinion do the other artisans now have of Bottom since they think he is lost?
2. What do they most regret losing by not being able to perform the play?
3. Why must the artisans hurry to the Duke's palace?

#### **Act V**

1. Why does Theseus dismiss the stories of the four young people?
2. Why does Theseus choose to see the play about Pyramus and Thisby rather than the other entertainments?
3. Why does Philostrate try to keep Theseus from seeing the play? What does he say is wrong with it?
4. What does Theseus mean by the lines, "For never anything can be amiss, when simpleness and duty tender it"?
5. What is accomplished by having the Prologue tell the whole story that the actors are going to enact?
6. How does Shakespeare use the comments from the audience to enhance the humor of the play that they are watching?
7. What is Hippolyta's reaction to the play?
8. In what way is Thisby's final speech humorous?
9. What does Oberon tell the fairies to do?
10. What is the purpose of Puck's final speech?

### *A Midsummer Nights Dream Quiz*

**A complete answer will be a minimum of three sentences. (Minimum will earn you about a Basic).  
Direct quotes are needed to earn an Advanced.**

#### **Plot**

1. How does Puck's interference affect what happens in the play?
2. What is the importance of the forest as the scene of action for most of the play?
3. How does Oberon's interference in the affairs of man further complicate matters?
4. How does Shakespeare use the night, the woods, and the fairies to move the plot forward? IF students have read other Shakespeare plays, they can discuss other elements of setting Shakespeare uses to develop his plots. They might discuss why the setting is so important to the plot.
5. What is the overall effect of placing the scenes with the artisans where they are in the play? How is the plot affected?

#### **Characterization**

**A complete answer will be a minimum of three sentences. (Minimum will earn you about a Basic).  
Direct quotes are needed to earn an Advanced.**

1. How is Helena to blame for the confusion in the woods?
2. Compare and contrast Hermia and Helena; Hippolyta and Titania.
3. Compare and contrast Lysander and Demetrius; Theseus and Oberon.
4. Rewrite the argument between Hermia and Helena in Act III, scene ii, lines 191-344, using modern language.
5. Which of the four women is more like a modern-day woman? In what ways is each of them modern?
6. Why are the artisans willing to perform for the Duke?
7. How does Theseus prove himself to be a wise leader?
8. How does Oberon prove himself to a wise king?
9. How does Bottom react to the fairies? What does this reflect about his character?
10. Explain Demetrius's return to Helena. Was it only because of Oberon's antidote?

#### **Themes**

**A complete answer will be a minimum of four sentences. (Minimum will earn you about a Basic).  
Direct quotes are needed to earn an Advanced.**

1. What kind of marriage do Oberon and Titania have? What will the married life of Theseus and Hippolyta be like?
2. How does the play about Pyramus and Thisby serve as a model for love?
3. Compare and contrast the difficulties of Hermia and Lysander with those of Pyramus and Thisby.
4. What is the importance of the dreams in this play? How do they affect the outcome?
5. What part does friendship play? Is loyalty of importance? How?

### ***A Midsummer Nights Dream Quiz***

#### **Plot**

1. How does Puck's interference affect what happens in the play?
  - a. Mistakes Lysander for Demetrius and the potion he spreads changes Lysander's love from Hermia to Helena
  - b. Plays tricks on the artisans – including Bottom
2. What is the importance of the forest as the scene of action for most of the play?
  - a. Magic of the forest with the fairies – chaos would not ensue without them
  - b. Play within a play – different setting than Athens
3. How does Oberon's interference in the affairs of man further complicate matters?
  - a. Oberon is the puppet master of Puck, so how he changes things are really because of Oberon
4. How does Shakespeare use the night, the woods, and the fairies to move the plot forward? IF students have read other Shakespeare plays, they can discuss other elements of setting Shakespeare uses to develop his plots. They might discuss why the setting is so important to the plot.
  - a. Magical woods – similar to Birnam Wood in “Macbeth”
  - b. Night = bad events – similar to “Macbeth” – Duncan's death and the bizarre occurrences of the night.
5. What is the overall effect of placing the scenes with the artisans where they are in the play? How is the plot affected?
  - a. The artisans set the play within a play before the Athenians leave for the woods. At the end, they connect the play within the play to the original play through the telling of Pyramus and Thisby.

#### **Characterization**

1. How is Helena to blame for the confusion in the woods?
  - a. She convinces Demetrius to go to the woods in the first place to follow Hermia and Lysander.
2. Compare and contrast Hermia and Helena; Hippolyta and Titania.
  - a. Hermia and Helena = similar because each would do anything for love of live

- b. Hermia is feisty. She is not afraid to stand up to Theseus himself and demand to know what her options are.
  - c. Helena is another thing altogether. Moping, whining, self- her lack of self-esteem leads her to reject not only Lysander's protestations of love, but also Demetrius's because she cannot accept that they would love someone as worthless as she is.
  - d. Both women are in love with powerful beings in their world – but Hippolyta and Theseus are in love and Hippolyta and Oberon are currently estranged.
3. Compare and contrast Lysander and Demetrius; Theseus and Oberon.
- a. Lysander - A young man of Athens, in love with Hermia. Lysander's relationship with Hermia invokes the theme of love's difficulty: he cannot marry her openly because Egeus, her father, wishes her to wed Demetrius; when Lysander and Hermia run away into the forest, Lysander becomes the victim of misapplied magic and wakes up in love with Helena.
  - b. Demetrius - A young man of Athens, initially in love with Hermia and ultimately in love with Helena. Demetrius's obstinate pursuit of Hermia throws love out of balance among the quartet of Athenian youths and precludes a symmetrical two-couple arrangement.
  - c. Both men are powerful beings in their world – but Hippolyta and Theseus are in love and Hippolyta and Oberon are currently estranged.
4. Rewrite the argument between Hermia and Helena in Act III, scene ii, lines 191-344, using modern language.
- a. Helena - I cannot believe you are saying this – we use to be best friends. In school we did everything together and were like two peas in a pod.
  - b. Hermia - I'm completely dumbfounded by what you're saying. I'm not insulting you. It sounds more like you're insulting me.
  - c. Helena - I'm not insulting you – you sent Lysander to tease me about the fact that nobody loves me. You pity me and that's insulting.
  - d. Hermia - I don't know what you're talking about.
  - e. Helena - Fine, keep lying and laughing at me – the two of you are doing such a great job making fun of me, somebody should write a book about it.
5. Which of the four women is more like a modern-day woman? In what ways is each of them modern?
- a. Hippolyta – treats Theseus with some indifference
  - b. Hermia – Strong-willed – willing to defy father for love
  - c. Helena – Self-pitying and sometimes puts herself in dangerous situations
  - d. Titania – Leaves Oberon until he gives her what she wants.
6. Why are the artisans willing to perform for the Duke?

- a. He will pay them well and others will want to hire artists who have performed for royalty.
7. How does Theseus prove himself to be a wise leader?
  - a. Gives Hermia options, but follows Athenian rule as well.
8. How does Oberon prove himself to be a wise king?
  - a.
9. How does Bottom react to the fairies? What does this reflect about his character?
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### **Themes**

1. What kind of marriage do Oberon and Titania have? What will the married life of Theseus and Hippolyta be like?
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