

Units: 24 – 28: Plots & Subplots

A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare

Literature for Units 24 – 28

<https://books.google.com/books?id=vn00AAAAMAAJ>

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/midsscenes.html>

“. . . While these visions did appear, and this weak and idle theme, no more yielding, but a dream.”

— Puck, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

“Unlike most of Shakespeare’s plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems to have been almost wholly the poet’s own invention. In the plots of most of his plays he unhesitatingly adopted material lying ready to his hand in history, legend, tale, or older play; but though some suppose *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to be based on a lost play called *Huon of Bordeaux*, only a few details can be traced to any known source. The names of Theseus, Hippolyta, and Philostrate are found in Chaucer’s “Knight’s Tale,” which is pervaded with the spirit of chivalry that Theseus typifies. North’s translation of *Plutarch’s Lives* probably furnished the names of Theseus’s former lovers, the mention of the battle with the Centaurs, and the reference to the conquest of Thebes. Puck, better known as Robin Goodfellow, was the subject of many tales in English folklore. The story of Pyramus and Thisbe was familiar to all educated people of the time, though Shakespeare may have taken it direct from the Latin poet, Ovid. Save for these trifles, the play is the invention of Shakespeare’s mind.”

from the Introduction in Shakespeare’s Comedy of A Midsummer Night's Dream, edited with an introduction and notes by Ernest Clapp Noyes, A.M., Professor of English, Normal High School, Pittsburg, PA

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The source information in “Unit 24 – Assignment Background” is as shown.

The “Assignment Backgrounds” for Unit 25-28 are from:

*The Academy Classics:*

***Shakespeare A Midsummer Night's Dream***

*from “The Origin of A Midsummer Night's Dream” found in the Appendix*

For Units 24-28 the scene summaries and “**Questions and Topics for Discussion**” are from:

*The Academy Classics:*

***Shakespeare A Midsummer Night's Dream***

*from “Explanatory Notes” found following the Appendix*

## Unit 24 – Assignments

### Literature

- Read Unit 24 – Assignment Background.
- In your reading journal, write and answer the questions under **Questions and Topics for Discussion**.
- Read Act I of the play. (If you are having trouble reading the Bard’s words, you may use this side-by-side version: <http://nfs.sparknotes.com/msnd/>.)

**Activity While Reading:** •Use the information about verse and meter found in ‘Unit 24 – Assignment Background’ to play around with the sounds when you are reading the play.

There are four plots going on at once throughout the play: (1) The Marriage, (2) The Lovers, (3) The Rustics, and (4) The Fairies. Keep track of these plot lines as you read the play and note the events which occur. Be sure to mark the Act, Scene, and Line of each key event (*i.e.* IV, i, 353-365\*; IMPORTANT: Line numbers can vary among publishers, so it is important to pay close attention to which publication you are using.). Also note how and where the plots and the characters meet and affect each other.

- Using the biographical information on Shakespeare, write a three-paragraph mini biography giving information on Shakespeare and his influences. For information about the author go to: [http://absoluteshakespeare.com/william\\_shakespeare.htm](http://absoluteshakespeare.com/william_shakespeare.htm).

\* The ‘IV’ is Act IV, the ‘i’ is Scene 1, 353-365 are the line numbers in texts that have line numbers. If the text you are reading from doesn’t have line numbers then look at [www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/midsscenes.html](http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/midsscenes.html).

## Unit 24 – Assignment Background

*Adapted for Middle School from:*

### **Shakespeare’s Comedy of A Midsummer Night’s Dream,**

edited with an introduction and notes by Ernest Clapp Noyes, A.M.

#### **The Meter of the Play**

#### **The Use of Prose and of Verse**

Both *prose* and *verse* are found in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, but they are not used at random. Each has its purpose. In general, prose (natural, nonpoetic speech) is employed by Shakespeare for humorous passages and for the conversation of vulgar characters, while verse (rhythmic, poetic speech) is the medium of expression for the more elevated and poetical parts of the play. Thus Bottom and his friends regularly speak in verse.

When prose and verse are used together, the conjunction is usually for the purpose of heightening a contrast either between the speakers, as in III, i, 128-200, where Bottom uses prose, and Titania, verse; or between the persons spoke to, as in V, i, 353-365, where Theseus addresses Bottom in prose and the lovers in verse. The variation in the mode of expression, when skillfully managed, contributes quite a bit to the general effect.

#### **Blank Verse**

The type of verse generally used in Shakespeare’s plays consists of ten-syllabled lines accented on every other syllable beginning with the second, and not rhymed. An example of such a line with the accents ‘**bold**’ is:

"Four **nights**/will **quick**/ly **dream**/ away/ the **time**."

This verse is called *unrhymed iambic pentameter* - pentameter because the ten syllables in the line are divisible into five groups, or “feet,” as marked above; and iambic because each foot is an *iamb*, that is, a foot containing two syllables of which only the second is accented. Other names for this kind of meter are *blank verse* and *heroic verse*.

### Variations

Since a succession of regular lines each containing five iambic feet would soon become tiresome, Shakespeare frequently substitutes another kind of foot for an iamb in order to give variety. Some of the feet that are thus substituted are: the *trochee*, which consist of an accented syllable followed by an unaccented; some are *pyrrhic*, which consist of two unaccented syllables; and some are *spondee*, which consist of two accented syllables. Thus, in I, i. 143:

“Making / it mo / menta / ry as / a sound,”

we have a trochee in the first foot. An example of pyrrhic in the first and third feet and of a spondee in the second foot may be seen in II, i, 99 -

“And the / quaint maz / es in / the wan / ton green.”

One whose ear is only ordinarily quick will find no difficulty in dividing into feet these lines that contain variations.

### Fairy Verse

Much of the verse spoken by the fairies is *trochaic*. The lines vary in length, but are always short. A good example is a speech in III, ii, 110 (accented syllables ‘**bold**’):

“**C**aptain / **o**f our / **f**airy / **b**and

**H**elen / **a** is / **h**ere at / **h**and

**A**nd the / **y**outh mis / **t**ook by / **m**e

**P**leading / **f**or a / **l**over’s / **f**ee”

When the final syllable of the last foot is cut off, as it is here, the verse is called *catalectic*. Trochaic meter is commonly used by Shakespeare for the speech of his supernatural beings. The light tripping measures seem especially appropriate to the fairies.

*Adapted for Middle School from:*

*The Academy Classics:*

### **Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream**

*from “The Origin of A Midsummer Night’s Dream” found in the Appendix*

#### **Originality of the plot**

The plot of A Midsummer Night’s Dream cannot be traced to any one source; there is no single story which, as so often is the case with Shakespeare, forms the basis of the action. The play is a combination of themes which are in themselves incongruous, but which are welded into an artistic whole by the incomparable skill of the dramatist. We shall concern ourselves briefly with the so-

called “source material,” but it should be pointed out that this is, for the most part, nothing more or less than the imagination of the poet.

#### **Books that influenced**

Perhaps in talking of the origin of the plot it is best to speak not of “sources” but of “books that influenced.” The framework for the Theseus story, for example is generally

referred to Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," one of the stories told by his Canterbury Pilgrims. But any indebtedness is very slight - being confined, as a matter of fact, to a few names and the idea of a wedding. For the events in the career of Theseus, touched upon in the First, Fourth, and Fifth Acts, Shakespeare probably relied on the *Life of Theseus* in Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*, which was published in 1579; from this book also he seems to have obtained the

names of the other Athenians at Court. But it must be remembered that, although Theseus belongs to Greek mythology, in the play he is Greek in name only. He becomes, as drawn by Shakespeare, an English nobleman such as the poet might see any day at the Queen's Court; he has been at the wars and has now returned to his estate and his country sports. The good Duke possesses qualities which never came out of Plutarch.

### Act I, Scene 1

The First Act sets before us the conditions at the opening of the play and acquaints us with the human actors. We learn of the approaching marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta and we see that the course of true love does not run smooth for the betrothed.

The Rustics discuss their plans to please the Duke. At the close we know that the Lovers and the Rustics, each group intent upon its own concerns, are all going on the morrow night to the wood outside Athens.

### Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. Why is the complaint of Egeus introduced so early in the play?
2. How does Theseus impress you in this scene (a) as a lover, (b) as a ruler?
3. What plan is made by Lysander and Hermia to thwart her father's wishes?
4. How does Helena explain the infatuation of Demetrius for Hermia? What is going to be done about it?
5. Do the hardships of the Lovers affect you very deeply?

### Act I, Scene 2

We now meet the Athenian workingmen, the "rustics," who are to do honor to Theseus by acting an interlude at his wedding. It is plain that the wedding festivities form the thread which binds together the discordant elements - Lovers and Rustics are both going to the forest. Rehearsals and plays such as we find undertaken by Bottom and his friends were doubtless common in England in Shakespeare's time - he himself must have been present on such occasions. You will note that prose is always used for the speech of the Rustics. It was Shakespeare's way of distinguishing them as comic persons, and it is especially effective in emphasizing the contrast between Bottom and the Fairies.

### Pyramus and Thisby

The correct spelling is Thisbe. Bottom and his friends probably pronounced the name Thisbei. Pyramus and Thisbe were in love and occupied adjoining houses in Babylon. Because of a quarrel between their parents, they were forbidden to see or to speak to each other. However, they discovered a crack in the wall between the houses, through which they conversed and finally made arrangements for a meeting just outside of the city gates. While Thisbe, who was first to arrive, was awaiting Pyramus, she was frightened away by a lion. In her flight, she dropped her veil, which the lion tore to pieces. Pyramus, coming soon afterwards and finding the torn and bloody

veil, concluded that Thisbe had been devoured by the lion, whose footprints he could see; and in despair he thrust his dagger into his heart. In a short time, Thisbe returned, and finding Pyramus dead, drew the dagger from his body, and plunging it

into her chest, died by his side. Since that time the mulberry tree by which they had agreed to meet has changed the color of its berries from white to red, dyed by the blood that flowed from the wounds of Pyramus and Thisbe.

### Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. Can you differentiate the characters of the Rustics by what they say to one another?
2. Who seems to you the stupidest man in the company?
3. How does Quince persuade Bottom to stick to one part?
4. Show how the action of the play is set forward by this scene.
5. Set the stage to indicate the house of Peter Quince, where this conversation takes place.

## Unit 25 – Assignments

### Literature

- Read Unit 25 – Assignment Background.
- Read Act II of the play (if you are having trouble reading the Bard’s words, you may use this side-by-side version: <http://nfs.sparknotes.com/msnd/>).

**Activity While Reading:** There are four plots going on at once throughout the play: (1) The Marriage, (2) The Lovers, (3) The Rustics, and (4) The Fairies. Continue keeping track of these plot lines as you read the play and note the events which occur. Also note how and where the plots and the characters meet and affect each other.

- In your reading journal, write and answer the questions under **Questions and Topics for Discussion**.

## Unit 25 – Assignment Background

### The “Rustics” and the “Fairies”

If Theseus in the play steps outside his Greek origin, the Athenian “Rustics” have no origin in books at all. Bottom and his friends are pure Warwickshire — familiar to Shakespeare since his childhood in Stratford and doubtless seen many times again on the London streets:

*“rude mechanicals  
That work for bread upon Athenian  
stalls.”*

No book knowledge here; these men stumbled into the play straight from the English countryside. And their “Pyramus and Thisbe” is just the kind of “tedious brief” tragedy which we should expect them to choose. It is not only appropriate to their capacity and taste, but from another point of view, since the theme was well known to Elizabethan audiences, it serves admirably to hold up to good-natured ridicule the cruder dramatic performances of the time. From the countryside, likewise, came the Fairies. Puck has a long history in



folklore; he was in every village before Shakespeare drew him for all the world to see; Moth, Cobweb, and their pretty company danced and sang in the moonlit woods down Stratford way all summer through — they never came from books. Oberon and Titania, however, have a literary history and are found in scattered poems and stories right back to classical times. Oberon (to cite one instance) is the “Auberon” of the medieval romance “Huon of Bordeaux”; Titania appears in the “Metamorphoses” of Ovid, of which a translation familiar to Shakespeare was published in 1567. But when we have said this, we must add that whatever their sources may have been, in the play they take on new beauty and interest and are vested with a life such as they never had before.

### Blending the material

Given a set of dramatic elements like these, which do not in themselves

appear harmonious — how, we may ask, are they to be combined by the playwright into an artistic whole so that the audience shall be conscious of no incongruity? There are four groups to be considered: Theseus and Hippolyta; the Lovers; Oberon and Titania, with Puck and the Fairies; and the Rustics. How are we to be preserved from any sense of incongruity in the relations of these groups? How are we to be made to feel that the events of the play might really happen? Briefly, as follows. The Lovers are sketched in rather slightly — they are a little unreal — and are brought into contact with the unreal Fairies. We thus get the full effect of the Rustics, who are very real indeed. Theseus, who is also real, doesn't believe in Fairies and of course he never sees them; Hippolyta is almost equally skeptical. Finally, the dream idea is kept before us throughout, until the strong blast of the hunting-horns brings back the normal world.

### Act II, Scene 1

It is now the “morrow night”; Lovers and Rustics are in the wood. The first scene introduces Puck and the Fairies, and we watch the quarrel between Oberon and Titania; the second scene shows how Oberon carries out his plan of punishing his Queen. In both scenes the Lovers appear and Puck's mischief-making begins to complicate matters. *Puck*, or

Robin Goodfellow, was the Old English spirit of the countryside. For a sympathetic account, read this collection of stories by Kipling — “Puck of Pook's Hill”:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/557/557-h/557-h.htm>

### Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. Does the Fairy recognize Puck at first? If not, when does the recognition take place?
2. What account does Puck give himself?
3. What is the cause of the quarrel between Oberon and Titania?
4. Why is reference made to “the Indian steppe,” and “the spiced Indian air”?
5. How does Oberon plan to “torment thee for this injury”?
6. Why does he bid Puck meet him “ere the first cock crow”?
7. Discuss the passage lines 147-166. (Oberon begins, “Well, go thy way. . .”)

## Act II, Scene 2

The scene opens with music and offers opportunity for beautiful stage effects. Oberon carries out his plan to punish Titania. Puck obeys the orders of his master in regard to the Athenian, but

makes a mistake which immediately leads to confusion. The interest of the plot is heightened by the complications which must ensue.

### Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. Why does Puck anoint the eyes of Lysander? What is the result?
2. What becomes of Hermia?
3. What complications have been created so far in the play?

## Unit 26 – Assignments

### Literature

- Read Unit 26 – Assignment Background.
- Read Act III of the play (if you are having trouble reading the Bard's words, you may use this side-by-side version: <http://nfs.sparknotes.com/msnd/>).

**Activity While Reading:** There are four plots going on at once throughout the play: (1) The Marriage, (2) The Lovers, (3) The Rustics, and (4) The Fairies. Continue keeping track of these plot lines as you read the play and note the events which occur. Also note how and where the plots and the characters meet and affect each other.

- In your reading journal, write and answer the questions under **Questions and Topics for Discussion**.

### Composition

- Begin drafting a composition on one of the following topics:
  - Using your notes on the four plots in this play, write an essay explaining how the four different plots help explain or illustrate the other plots. What is their connection to each other? Do they mirror each other or contrast each other? Would the plots be as interesting without the others? How could they each stand alone?
  - Using your notes on the play, rewrite the scenes in modern language, set in modern times. You may change anything about the story: setting, character, etc.; however, you must keep the same story lines for each plot.

## Unit 26 – Assignment Background

### A strange and beautiful web

The First Act develops the feeling of dramatic suspense — Rustics and Lovers alike are to meet in the forest. The Second provides the complicating interest, when

the Fairies are brought into relation with the Lovers. Act Three shows us the complications at their height: we see their effects upon different groups - Rustics, Lovers, Fairies. The Fourth Act brings

reconciliation and the clearing away of difficulties, while the Fifth is taken up with performance of the Rustics and the blessing of the bridal pair. It is all so skillfully done that as we watch the play we are conscious of nothing but the charm of the story, and not till we think it's over do we realize the amazing unlikeness of the groups that have played their parts before us. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has a wonderful artistic wholeness; a fine blending of poetry and dramatic art. Professor Dowden has summed the matter up. The play, he says, "is a strange and beautiful web, woven delicately by a youthful poet's fancy. What is perhaps most remarkable is the harmonious blending in it of widely different elements. It is as if threads of silken splendor were run together in its texture with a yarn of hempen homespun, and both these with lines of dewy gossamer and filament drawn from the moonbeams. Taking a little from this quarter and a little from that, Shakespeare created out of such slight materials his magnificent Dream."

### **"Masquerade-like" elements in the play**

In some phases of *A Midsummer Night's*

*Dream* Shakespeare was undoubtedly influenced by the form of dramatic entertainment known as the "masque," which was much in vogue at the time. The masque was introduced into England from Italy during the reign of Henry VIII — about 1530. Its effects were produced wholly by means of splendid costume, fine music, and beautiful stage-setting; of plot or character development there was nothing. Combined with the masque was the "anti-masque," which contained grotesque and humorous figures in strong contrast to the grace and beauty of the masque itself. Their presentation was confined to the wealthy nobles; they were given in places and great halls rather than on the public stage. They persisted until well into the seventeenth century, but were finally discontinued on account of the expense: the elaborate "Triumph of Peace," produced in 1634, cost a sum equivalent to \$100,000 in our money. Most famous of all masques was Milton's "Comus," given at Ludlow Castle in 1634 in honor of the Earl of Bridgewater. In our play we find all the elements of the masque — music, costume, stage-setting — together with the anti-masque in the Rustics and their absurd tragedy.

### **Act III, Scene 1**

In this act the complications of the play reach their height. Titania, the Rustics, and the Lovers all suffer from the magic of

Oberon or the mischief of Puck. The first scene brings together the rustic story and the fairy story.

### **Questions and Topics for Discussion**

1. What are some of the difficulties which the Rustics find in their play? How are they overcome?
2. Why does Puck interfere?
3. Does Bottom realize the change that has come on him?
4. Can you explain the joke in lines 137-141 (In response to Titania telling him he is wise and beautiful)? Is there reason that Bottom should be so proud of it?
5. How does Shakespeare develop the contrast between Titania and Bottom?
6. Where is Puck during the latter part of the scene?



## Unit 27 – Assignments

### Literature

- Read Unit 27 – Assignment Background.
- Read Act IV of the play (if you are having trouble reading the Bard’s words, you may use this side-by-side version: <http://nfs.sparknotes.com/msnd/>).

**Activity While Reading:** There are four plots going on at once throughout the play: (1) The Marriage, (2) The Lovers, (3) The Rustics, and (4) The Fairies. Continue keeping track of these plot lines as you read the play and note the events which occur. Also note how and where the plots and the characters meet and affect each other.

### Composition

- Continue working on your composition. Use the evaluation rubric in the **Resources** section of [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) to check your rough draft.

## Unit 27 – Assignment Background

### The “Allegories”

Involved, more or less, with the sources of the play are one or two passages which have given rise to some difference of opinion. The first of these is found in II., I. 140-6. It is said to present a “political allegory” and, although this theory is not generally accepted, yet it is so ingenious that it may be touched on here. According to this theory the “mermaid” is Mary Queen of Scots. She succeeded to the throne as a baby on her father’s death in 1542; her career was a strange and stormy one which must have been still vivid in the memories of the audiences which saw *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. She married the Dauphin of France (the “dolphin”); he died after two years and she went to Scotland in 1561. Her beauty and charm soon won the allegiance of the people — “the rude sea grew civil at her song.” She had already laid claim to the English throne upon the death of Mary, Queen Elizabeth’s sister, in 1558. Then, and on later occasions, some great English noblemen attached themselves to her

cause, but were ruined when that cause was lost —

*“certain stars shot madly from their spheres*

*To hear the sea-maid’s music.”*

She fell into the power of Elizabeth, was imprisoned for nineteen years in various castles, and finally — in 1587 — was beheaded on the ground that she was a menace to the peace and safety of the realm. Her son, James VI of Scotland, became James I of England in 1603. Her life, her sufferings and sad fate, produced a deep impression on the people of England. The other passage is obviously a compliment to Queen Elizabeth, who never married and hence is represented “in maiden meditation, fancy free.” It was fitting that Shakespeare should shape his graceful compliment to the “fair vestal throned by the west,” for he had received from her his first summons to Court and was at this time in the full enjoyment of the royal patronage.

The whole passage from I. 140 to I. 158 has been fitted to yet another

interpretation, which we mention as a further instance of critical ingenuity. This interpretation connects the lines with the entertainment given to Queen Elizabeth by the Earl of Leicester at his castle of Kenilworth in 1575. The “mermaid” was a part of the water pageant; the “stars,” simply fireworks (“never before or since have fireworks been so glorified”); while the attempt of Cupid to pierce the heart of the “fair vestal throned by the west” represents Leicester’s unsuccessful wooing of the Queen. The “little western flower” was the Countess of Essex, whom he afterward married.

You may take your choice. Perhaps the most rational point of view is reached, however, when we ask why Oberon suddenly drops his allegory to say to Puck: “Fetch me that flower” (line 161). There is a wrench in thought here, if we accept any allegorical interpretation of the preceding lines, which is difficult to account for. On the other hand, if we regard the whole passage as embodying merely some reminiscences of Oberon’s, without any hidden meaning, we come to a conclusion which presents no puzzling features. We then have to except only the very graceful compliment to the Queen — the “imperial votaress.”

### Act IV, Scene 1

This act ends the “dream” part of the play. Titania is freed from her enchantment, Bottom loses his ass-head, and the Lovers waken to reconciliation and happiness.

Structurally considered, the interesting thing is the way in which all this is managed — the appearance of Theseus seems to clear away all the mists and shadows of sleep.

### Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. Discuss the contrast between Bottom and Titania.
2. What is the significance of Oberon’s remark: “See’st thou this sweet sight?”
3. Why is the charm removed?
4. Why does Puck give warning about the “morning lark”? Where do Oberon and Titania go?
5. Discuss the dramatic value of the “hunting-horns.”
6. Why have Theseus and Hippolyta come to the forest?
7. Explain the dramatic significance of their conversation about dogs and hunting.
8. How does Egeus feel about it all?
9. What is the object of the brief conversation between the Lovers before they follow Theseus?
10. Why didn’t Bottom wake up when the others woke?

### Act IV, Scene 2

This scene leads on directly to Act V. Bottom is restored to his fellows, and all the

woodland wanderers are once more in Athens.

### Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. What is the effect upon his friends of Bottom’s absence? Of his sudden return?
2. Why doesn’t he tell them his story?
3. Explain: “Our play is preferred.”

## Unit 28 – Assignments

### Literature

- Read Unit 28 – Assignment Background.
- Read Act V of the play. (If you are having trouble reading the Bard’s words, you may use this side by side version: <http://nfs.sparknotes.com/msnd/>)

**Activity While Reading:** There are four plots going on at once throughout the play: (1) The Marriage, (2) The Lovers, (3) The Rustics, and (4) The Fairies. Continue keeping track of these plot lines as you read the play and note the events which occur. Also note how and where the plots and the characters meet and affect each other.

- In your reading journal, write and answer the questions under **Questions and Topics for Discussion**.

### Composition

- Complete a final draft of your composition. Use the grading and evaluation rubric from the website to check your work and make sure your draft is free of grammatical and mechanical errors.

## Unit 28 – Assignment Background

### Dramatic position of the play

*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* comes at an interesting period in Shakespeare’s career. He has completed his early experimenting; he has gained control over the elements of poetry and humor; he shows himself a master of selection and construction. Of character development he has much to learn before he can command the great figures of Shylock, Brutus, or Hamlet; his blank verse, too, is still to grow in flexibility and music before it reaches its full maturity as a

medium for the presentation of his thoughts. But the play before us has got free from the sharpness of construction and the mere youthful cleverness seen in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* or *The Comedy of Errors*; at the same time it looks forward to still greater achievement in plotting, style, and characterization. And in itself stands as a perfectly adequate piece of work — one of the most wholly charming of all Shakespeare’s plays.

### Act V, Scene 1

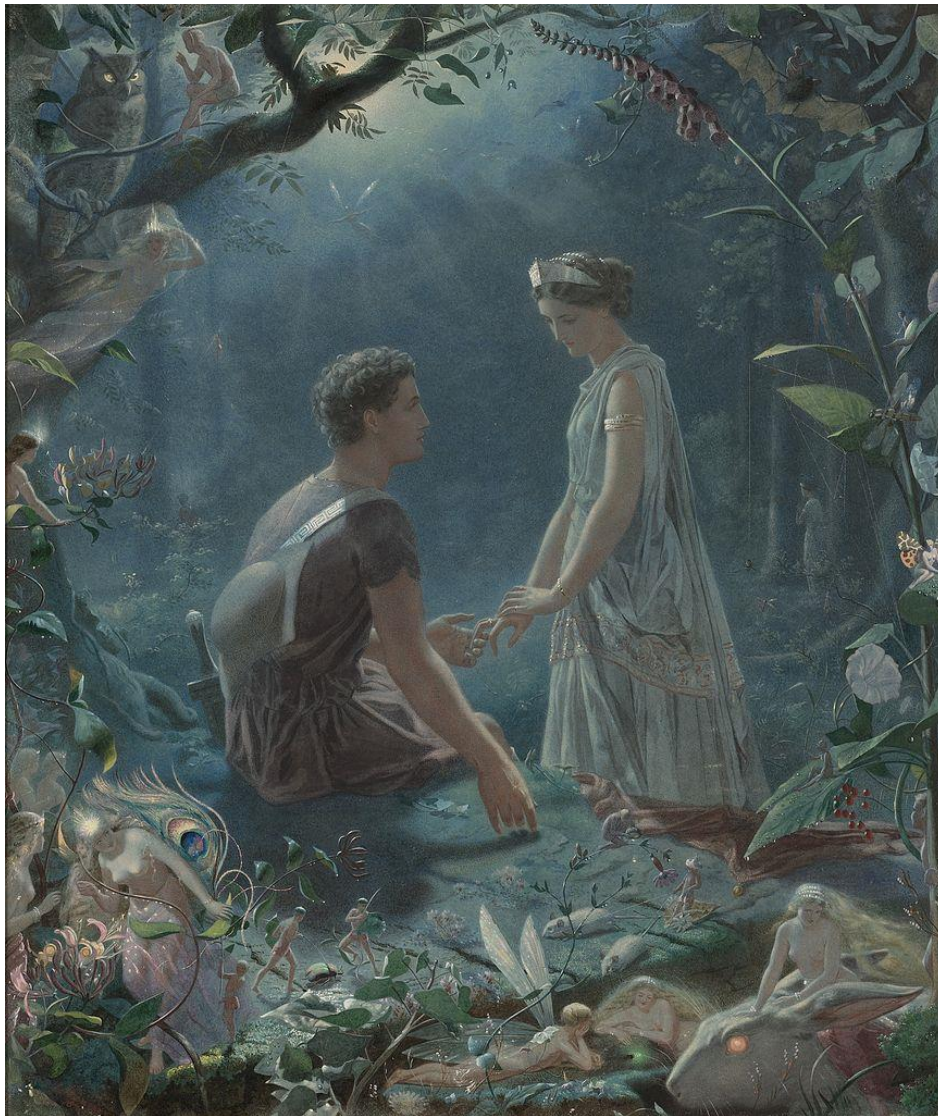
The practical common sense of Theseus puts the final bar between the fantastic events of the past night and the solid happiness which now awaits the Lovers. The Duke does not believe a word of the strange tale told by Demetrius and the rest

— his robust mentality revolts against fairies and all such “antique fables.” The whole Act is devoted to the Rustics’ Interlude, with the fairy scene coming in at the end as a kind of Epilogue.

### Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. What does Theseus think of the tale told by the Lovers? Does Hippolyta agree with him?

2. Comment upon the lines: “The lunatic, the lover and the poet . . . a local habitation and a name.”
3. Why does Theseus choose the play of Pyramus and Thisbe from those submitted to him by Philostrate? How does he answer the objections of Hippolyta?
4. How would you set the stage for the Rustics’ play?
5. Do the remarks of the audience add to the humor of the situation? What is the effect of these remarks upon the Players?
6. Read carefully the comments made by Theseus throughout the performance. Are they sarcastic, or merely good-natured witticisms? What does he mean by saying of the play that it was a “fine tragedy” and “notably discharged”? What is the feeling of Hippolyta?
7. How would you light and set the stage for the fairy scene which closes the play?
8. Why does Puck say: “If we shadows have offended,” etc.?
9. Point out in what ways the lines of Puck form a fitting close to “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”



*Hermia and Lysander. A Midsummer Night's Dream, by John Simmons*