

# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## Introduction and Context

### OBJECTIVE

To introduce/reintroduce the study of William Shakespeare and ask students to consider why we study his plays in a secondary context. To have students consider the literary and dramatic context of the play and symbolism of its twin settings in the Athenian court and 'Wood Outside of Athens'.

Key points explored are:

- Why should we read Shakespeare? What is the play about?
- Who are the central characters in this play? Where is the play variously set?
- Why did Shakespeare set the play in Greece?
- What is the symbolic function of the twin setting?

### ENGLISH SYLLABUS DESCRIPTIONS

(Key stage 3 - Reading)

Pupils should be taught to understand and critically evaluate texts through drawing on knowledge of the purpose, audience for and context of the writing, including its social, historical and cultural context and the literary tradition to which it belongs, to inform evaluation.

## Lesson Plans

### RESOURCES

1. ClickView video:  
[\*A Midsummer Night's Dream\* - 'Context and Background'](#)  
[\*Shakespeare: The Animated Tale\* - 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'](#)
2. Worksheets:  
[\*Context and Background\*](#)  
[\*Plot and Character Overview\*](#)  
[\*Characters' Love Web\*](#)
3. Laptops or smart devices to conduct research

### LESSON PLAN

1. Play the ClickView video, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - 'Context and Background'. As students watch the video, ask them to fill in the *Context and Background* worksheet.
2. Play the animation video on ClickView Exchange, *Shakespeare: The Animated Tale* - 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' to acquaint students with the plot, characters, and setting of the play.
3. **Begin a class discussion using the following questions:**
  - Why should we read Shakespeare? For fun and entertainment? Or to learn about life? Or is it because Shakespeare is a part of our literary and cultural inheritance?
  - Can we learn about life on a deeper level and simultaneously have fun?
  - Did Shakespeare's plays deliberately delve into thorny issues of love, power, and family problems to teach us a lesson about life?
  - Should we first consider whether Shakespeare actually meant to say what we commonly think, believe, and interpret in his plays?
  - Which Shakespearean plays are you familiar with?
4. Using the *Plot and Character Overview* worksheet, ask students to complete questions 1-7 from their viewing of the animation. Allow students to use laptops or smart devices for question 7.
5. Discuss students' responses as a class.
6. Question 8 tests students' knowledge about characters' names and events in the play. Have students complete the question within three minutes individually then review answers as a class.
7. Distribute the *Characters' Love Web* worksheet. Ask students to work in pairs and work through the instructions to figure out the different relationships between characters. Go through the answers once students have finished.

# Answers

## LESSON PLAN

### Worksheet: Context and Background

- Q1) love  
 Q2) magic  
 Q3) four  
 Q4) part-owner, actor  
 Q5) The law banned women from acting professionally.  
 Q6) Character groups: Court/royalty; young lovers/nobility; mechanicals/craftsmen; fairies.  
 Q7) Greece  
 Q8) in a forest  
 Q9) playing tricks on humans  
 Q10) Queen Elizabeth I

### Class discussion answer:

Since 1967 and the work of French theorist Roland Barthes ('The Death of the Author'), critics and scholars are not concerned whether an artist such as Shakespeare intended their work to have any particular meaning/s. Rather, we are now concerned as educators in the 21st century that students bring their own experience and meanings to the interpretation of a text ('reader response theory'). It is possible to read Shakespeare on multiple levels and the purpose of the following lesson is to challenge students to both enjoy the texts and think critically.

### Worksheet: Plot and Character Overview

- Q2) a) The Athenian Court and its four lovers with Hermia's father Egeus, Theseus, and Hippolyta  
 b) The Rude Mechanicals including Peter Quince and Bottom  
 c) The Fairies, including Oberon, Titania, and Puck
- Q3) The play is set in the ancient Athenian court and the woods. The play is set in Greece for a variety of possible reasons: to allude to the origins of Western civilisation; to allude to ancient Greek narratives and their importance to English story-telling; to allude to ancient notions of law, ownership and filial (parental) obligation; to set a play in a European country whilst making pointed comments about contemporary England.
- Q4) In Shakespeare's time, the woods were seen as a spiritually 'dark' and dangerous place where witches practised their craft and a setting where people commonly believed the supernatural existed (including fairies, elves, and goblins). Shakespeare's decision to set the play in the woods and include devilish fairies conspiring to create adulterous acts (not to mention a queen sleeping with a donkey) was a bold move - perhaps the equivalent of staging a play today about the royal family in the training-ground of terrorists. Shakespeare made references to Queen Elizabeth I that were more 'cheeky' than reverent about her rumoured love life.
- Q5) What makes the play special is the multi-layered plot which collapses reality with a dream-like imaginary world free of civilised constraint, where the characters explore love as a way to unburden themselves of the rule of parents and the Athenian law. As we will explore later, the twin settings of the Athenian court and 'the woods' effectively symbolise the split between the civilised and imaginary worlds - the woods also suggest what Sigmund Freud would later refer to as the 'sub-conscious'.
- Q8) True or False Quiz  
 a) F, b) F, c) T, d) T, e) F, f) T, g) T, h) T, i) F,  
 j) F, k) T, l) F, m) F, n) T, o) F, p) T, q) T, r) T,  
 s) T, t) F, u) T, v) F, w) F, x) T, y) F, z) T

### Worksheet: Characters' Love Web

Truly loves			Puts flower juice on			Under a love spell		
Lysander	to	Hermia	Oberon	to	Titania	Lysander	to	Helena
Hermia		Lysander	Puck		Lysander	Demetrius		Helena
Demetrius		Hermia	Puck		Demetrius	Titania		Bottom
Helena		Demetrius						
Theseus		Hippolyta						
Hippolyta		Theseus						

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# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## *Context and Background*

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Answer the following questions to demonstrate your understanding of the content.

1. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play about \_\_\_\_\_.
2. A \_\_\_\_\_ potion features in the story.
3. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was first performed \_\_\_\_\_ hundred years ago.
4. As well as being a playwright, what two other roles did Shakespeare have at the Globe Theatre?

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5. Explain why boys would have played the female characters.

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6. There are four sets of characters in the play - list them as groups.

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7. In what country is the play set?

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8. Where does most of the action of the play take place?

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9. What were fairies known for?

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10. Titania might have reminded the play's first audiences of \_\_\_\_\_.



# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## Plot and Character Overview



### Questions to Ponder:

Is Shakespeare asking us to laugh at the power that presumes to govern an emotion as fickle as love (represented by the angry father Egeus)? Or are we called upon to laugh at love itself? To laugh at its various twists and turns?

What makes people funny when they are in love? Their spontaneity? Their absent-mindedness? Their sudden love of nature and its beauty? Their starry-eyed and blank facial expressions?

How do people change when they are in love?

1. What is the play about in a nutshell?

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What would Donald Trump tweet about the plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?  
"Play about young lovers in the woods breaking the law. Sad! Bad people!"

Write your own tweet about the play beneath:

140 Characters



2. Who are the three sets of main characters in the play? What are their names?

a) The Athenian Court and four young lovers: including Theseus,...?

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b) The Rude Mechanicals: including Peter Quince,...?

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c) The Fairy world: including Oberon, Puck,...?

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3. Why do you think Shakespeare set the play in Greece? And in particular the Athenian court and 'the wood'?

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4. What would contemporary audiences have understood about the play that modern audiences do not?

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5. In your opinion, what makes this play so special?

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6. What do students usually find difficult and enjoyable about the text?

*I'll answer that one!*

The sheer amount of characters! The multiple settings and multi-layered plot about four young lovers and the rule of law in Athens. Then there is the play within a play ('The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe') performed by the Rude Mechanicals.

Students often ask: 'Why does the action continually shift between three different sets of characters?' Are they meant to mirror and reflect each other in the narrative? What students find most enjoyable about the play is the sheer sense of fun, whimsy, and frivolity in the set scenes - especially so in the woods as the four young lovers are tricked into believing they are deeply in love with each other, and then out of love with each other - just as Queen Titania is deceived by her husband Oberon into temporarily falling in love with Bottom (who Puck has magically transformed into an ass!)

7. Research FIVE (5) interesting facts about *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and write these in the space below.

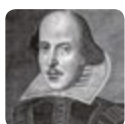
*Hint! Research the image of the ‘fair vestal throned by the west’ struck by Cupid’s arrow, and the image of a mermaid riding a dolphin’s back. The history behind the images might surprise you!*

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## 8. True or False?

*A quick quiz to be answered in less than 3 minutes to test your knowledge. Set your timers... And go!*

		T / F
a	Hermia is the daughter of Demetrius.	
b	Lysander is the son of Theseus.	
c	Helena is in love with Demetrius.	
d	Hermia is in love with Lysander.	
e	Hippolyta is the Queen of the Fairies.	
f	Titania is the wife of Oberon.	
g	Oberon and Hippolyta argue over the custody of an Indian child.	
h	Hermia and Lysander enter the woods first, followed by Demetrius and Helena.	
i	Helena and Demetrius enter the woods first, followed by Puck and the Rude Mechanicals.	
j	The Rude Mechanicals rehearse a play for the marriage of Hermia and Demetrius.	
k	The Rude Mechanicals rehearse a play for the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta.	
l	The Rude Mechanicals rehearse a play for the marriage of Helena and Demetrius.	
m	Puck places love juice in the eyes of Titania.	
n	Oberon himself places love juice in the eyes of his wife, Titania.	
o	Titania wakes up in the woods and immediately falls in love with Demetrius.	
p	Titania wakes up in the woods and immediately falls in love with Bottom, who has already been transformed into an ass.	
q	Egeus loses his battle to make Hermia marry Demetrius.	
r	In the play, there are three sets of weddings in Athens.	
s	The two settings of the play are 'Athens in Antiquity' and 'Wood Outside of Athens'.	
t	The two settings of the play are 'Athens' and 'Boggy Bottom, Hertfordshire'.	
u	Hippolyta makes fun of the Rude Mechanicals bad acting.	
v	Oberon divorces Titania and marries the unwed Helena.	
w	Shakespeare concludes the drama by having Puck tell the audience that Egeus really did love Demetrius.	
x	Shakespeare concludes the play by having Puck tell the audience that they may have dreamt the entire play.	
y	Titania eventually receives back the changeling boy and he speaks the final lines of the play in an eloquent English blank verse.	
z	The final play performed at the wedding by the Rude Mechanicals is about the death of two young lovers separated by a wall.	



**Shakespeare:** "Why test the students? Test the teachers! Thou herring-pickled, wall-eyed slaves!"

# A Midsummer Night's Dream

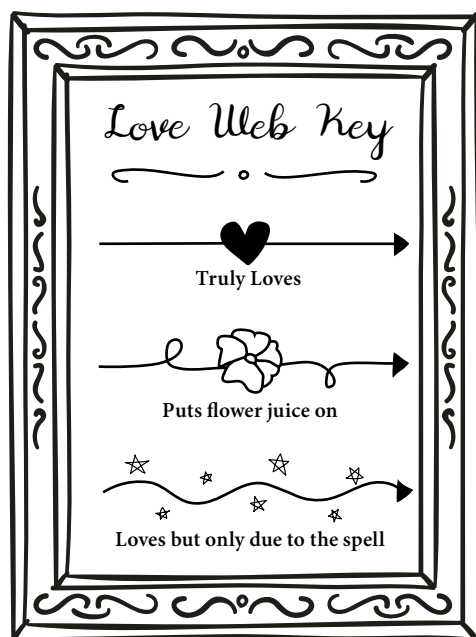
## Characters' Love Web

The relationships between the characters just got so much more complicating because of the flower juice!

In this activity, figure out the different kinds of relationships between the characters after watching the video and following the instructions.

### Instructions:

1. Cut out each of the characters found on the worksheet.
2. Arrange the characters in a circle on a piece of A3 paper in the following order: Helena, Hermia, Demetrius, Puck, Oberon, Titania, Bottom, Theseus, Hippolyta, then Lysander.
3. Show the relationship between characters with the 'Love Web Key' by drawing one of the three relationship lines:
  - A Love line shows a character's love interest.
  - A Flower line shows characters who have used the flower juice on another character.
  - A Love Spell line shows a character's love interest solely due to the flower juice's effects.



For example,



This means that A truly loves B.



This means that A has put flower juice on B.



This means that A loves B, but only due to the spell.

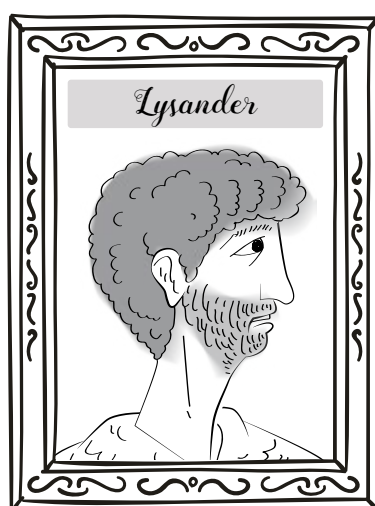
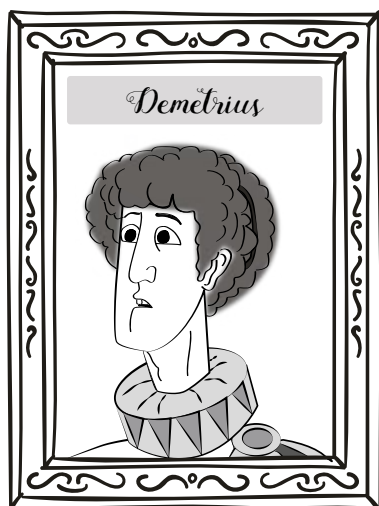
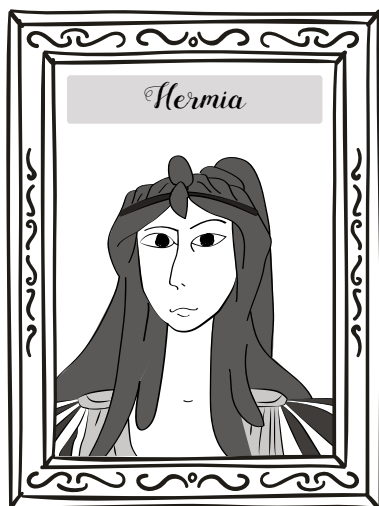


### FUN FACTS - Did You Know?

(Points to make you better understand the play or else to simply inform and amuse)

- The play within a play ('Pyramus and Thisbe') performed by the Rude Mechanicals provides an alternate ending were the play is a tragedy. That is, we witness in the death of Pyramus and Thisbe the (avoided) tragic death of the rebellious young lovers, Lysander and Hermia, should Theseus have ultimately demanded that they obey the Athenian law.
- Shakespeare deliberately includes bad acting in the 'Pyramus and Thisbe' scene to draw comedy out of amateur theatre. Or does he? Is there a deeper meaning here which critics and scholars have overlooked? (A point we will consider later.)
- In this play within a play ('Pyramus and Thisbe') the 'walls' separate the lovers who are kept apart by their parents. This story derives from the ancient Roman writer Ovid, but Shakespeare was also referring to another little play he had written that same year which you may have heard of, *Romeo and Juliet*.
- 'The Wedding March' tune played at most modern weddings was composed by Felix Mendelssohn in 1842 when the composer was commissioned to score a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- The practice of children ending a creative story with the line - 'It was all a dream' - originates in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with Puck concluding the story via a reference to the idea that the audience might have dreamt the entire play.
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was not performed on the British stage for almost 200 years after Shakespeare's death partly because fairies were not commonly believed to be real.







# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## Themes and Concepts

### OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to the significant underlying ideas, themes and concepts of the play.  
To consider the way that Shakespeare challenges the received ideas of his own time and develop students' explanations of this phenomena.

Key points explored are:

- What ideas or themes is the play exploring?
- What are the concepts which arise from these themes?

### ENGLISH SYLLABUS DESCRIPTIONS

(Key stages 1 to 4 - Spoken language)

Pupils should be taught to give well-structured descriptions and explanations and develop their understanding through speculating, hypothesising and exploring ideas. This will enable them to clarify their thinking as well as organise their ideas for writing.

## Lesson Plans

### RESOURCES

1. ClickView video:  
[\*A Midsummer Night's Dream - 'Theme of Dreams'\*](#)
2. Worksheets:  
[\*Theme: Dreams\*](#)  
[\*Themes and Concepts\*](#)

### LESSON PLAN

1. Play the ClickView video, *A Midsummer Night's Dream - 'Theme of Dreams'* to initially familiarise students with the entry-level themes of the text. Ask students to complete the questions on the *Themes: Dreams* worksheet whilst watching.
2. **Begin a class discussion using the following discussion starters:**
  - Is Shakespeare presenting the idea that romantic love naturally makes teenagers and young people independent of their parents?
  - Does Shakespeare suggest that children ought to ignore the wishes of their parents about whom they ought to marry and love? Or is Shakespeare presenting us with a play in which the rebellion of young lovers causes near catastrophe and a great deal of confusion, trouble, and strife?
  - In your opinion, where does Shakespeare stand on the issue of love and rebellion? Is he on the side of stern old Egeus or rebellious young Hermia?
3. Using the *Themes and Concepts* worksheet, ask students to write down a response to the thematic questions on the worksheets - ('Romantic Love' and 'The Nature of Dreams and Reality') drawing upon their classroom discussion, knowledge of the text, and viewing of the ClickView videos.

# Answers

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## LESSON PLAN

### Worksheet: Theme: Dreams

- Q1) dreams
- Q2) A theme is an idea that recurs in the text.
- Q3) a) She dreams that a serpent is eating her heart.  
b) nightmare
- Q4) Dramatic irony is when the audience understands more than the characters do.
- Q5) It is ironic because he is rejecting her, so he himself is the serpent and not the protector.
- Q6) a, b and c) Titania, Bottom, and Demetrius are mentioned in the programme; also accept Helena, Hermia, and Lysander as correct answers.
- Q7) human mind
- Q8) Metaphor is when one thing stands for/represents another.
- Q9) Imagination can invent new worlds/create shape and form from 'airy nothing'.
- Q10) a) Answers may vary. Possible answer include: nightmare, daydream, fantasy, vision, reverie, illusion, mirage, delusion, etc.  
b) Answers may vary.  
c) Answers may vary. Possible answers include: shape-shifting, sudden changes in people's attitudes, getting lost, strange sights, not feeling in control.

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# A Midsummer Night's Dream

*Theme: Dreams*

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Answer the following questions to demonstrate your understanding of the content.

1. Which key theme of the play is mentioned in its title?

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2. Explain what a theme is in a work of literature.

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3. a) What does Hermia dream, before she wakes to find Lysander gone?

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- b) What do we call this sort of dream?

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4. Explain the term 'dramatic irony'.

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5. Why is it a form of dramatic irony when Hermia turns to Lysander for help?

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6. Name three characters who feel puzzled and confused by their experiences in the forest.

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

7. The forest is a metaphor for the \_\_\_\_\_ .

8. Explain the term 'metaphor'.

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# A Midsummer Night's Dream

*Theme: Dreams*

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9. What does Theseus claim that imagination can do?

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10. Complete the following questions after watching the programme.

a) Think of as many words for 'dream' as you can. (You could look up 'dream' in a thesaurus.)

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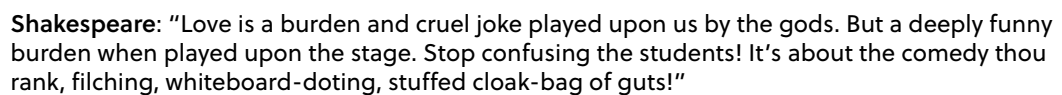
b) Discuss your list of words with a partner. Do they all mean exactly the same thing?

c) Which elements of the play seem dream-like? Work with your partner to create a list or mind map.

## A Midsummer Night's Dream

1. What are the major ideas or themes of this play?

- a) The play is about the power of love to inspire rebellion in young people.
- b) The play is about the importance of dreams to shape our sense of reality and 'discover' our true selves.
- c) The play is about the difficulty of determining what is real and what is imaginary.
- d) The play is about the proper and appropriate role of parents in determining the love-matches and marriages of their children.
- e) The play is about the confusion of life itself and the fuzzy 'borderlines' of the physical and spiritual worlds.
- f) The play is very simply a play about plays, and the wonderful sense of fun and enjoyment we can derive from the theatre.

[illegible]

# A Midsummer Night's Dream

- Points you might consider include:

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- Is Shakespeare attempting to show his audience that the imaginary world of dreams are deceptive, illusory, and hollow? Or rather that our 'dream lives' are the place where we experience true joy and wish fulfilment? Does Shakespeare celebrate love, dreams, and the imagination as the ultimate form of human experience? Thinking ahead to the technical aspect of his play, does the 'wood' symbolise that the 'place' of our true selves is more natural than the 'civilised' world of law, duty, and civil obedience?

- The lovers are drawn to the woods to escape the law and order of Athens. Here in the woods they love, dream, and imagine they are with their 'true love'. But they are deceived.
- Shakespeare presents their concrete feelings of 'true love' as vulnerable to the slightest shift in fortune and chance, and the whims of Oberon and Puck.
- Shakespeare compares the transitory feeling of love to the rise and fall of flowers and trees in the wood. Both only flower for a short period of time before they ultimately and inevitably die, but possess intense beauty while they last. However, it is also arguable that Shakespeare presents us with four young lovers who are at least 'natural' and following their hearts rather than the rule of law.
- It is arguable that Shakespeare reminds his audience that to exist in the 'dream' is to at least possess true creativity, passion, spontaneity, and heart-felt love. It is to possess knowledge of our intimate desires and 'buried' selves.

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# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## Comedic Techniques

### OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to the use of comedic techniques in the play.

Key points explored are:

- How is comedy used by Shakespeare in his play?
- What makes a Shakespearean comedy?
- Who are the humorous characters in the play?

### ENGLISH SYLLABUS DESCRIPTIONS

(Key stages 3 - Reading)

Pupils should be taught to give well-structured descriptions and explanations and develop their understanding through speculating, hypothesising and exploring ideas. This will enable them to clarify their thinking as well as organise their ideas for writing.

## Lesson Plans

### RESOURCES

1. ClickView video:  
*A Midsummer Night's Dream - 'Comedic Techniques'*
2. Worksheets:  
*Comedic Techniques*  
*Making Mischief*  
*The Funniest Mechanicals' Play*
3. Laptops to write their own scripts

### LESSON PLAN

1. Play the ClickView video, *A Midsummer Night's Dream - 'Comedic Techniques'*. As students watch the video, ask them to fill in the *Comedic Techniques* worksheet.
2. Discuss students' responses as a class.
3. Using the *Making Mischief* worksheet, ask students to work in pairs to write a short story following instructions on the worksheet. Allow students to use their laptops to document their scripts.
4. Using *The Funniest Mechanicals' Play* worksheet, ask students to work in groups to recreate their funniest version of the Mechanicals' Play following instructions on the worksheet.

# Answers

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## LESSON PLAN

### Worksheet: Comedic Techniques

- Q1)** The choice is to marry Demetrius or be put to death (modified by Theseus to becoming a nun).
- Q2)** Daughters were the legal property of their fathers.
- Q3)** Tricks/pranks, disguise/mistaken identity, muddle/misunderstanding, love stories, happy endings/marriages.
- Q4)** Oberon's first idea is to use it on Titania, so that when she wakes up she will fall in love with somebody or something inappropriate.
- Q5)** He suggests using the potion on Demetrius to make him love Helena.
- Q6)** Puck puts the potion on Lysander's eyes and he falls in love with Helena.
- Q7)** He puts the potion on Demetrius' eyes as well.
- Q8)** Both men are in love with Helena, so they quarrel.  
Hermia is upset because Lysander no longer loves her.  
Helena thinks that it is all a practical joke on her.  
Hermia and Helena quarrel because they feel betrayed by each other.
- Q9)** He gives him ass' ears.
- Q10)** A love affair between an ugly, humble animal and a beautiful fairy queen seems ridiculous. They would look funny together.

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# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## *Comedic Techniques*

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Answer the following questions to demonstrate your understanding of the content.

1. What choice is Hermia given at the beginning of the play?

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2. Explain why daughters were expected to obey their fathers in 16<sup>th</sup> century England.

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3. List five key ingredients for a Shakespearean comedy.

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4. What is Oberon's first idea about using the potion?

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5. How does Oberon add to the plan in order to help the lovers?

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6. How does the additional plan go wrong?

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7. Explain how Puck tried to put things right.

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8. What problems do Puck's mistake cause?

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9. How does Puck transform Bottom?

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10. Explain why the relationship between Titania and Bottom is comical.

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# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## *Making Mischief*

Think, Pair, Share: Talk with a partner about some practical jokes you have heard about, or in which you have played a part.

You and your partner are to write a short story featuring a trick or a practical joke.

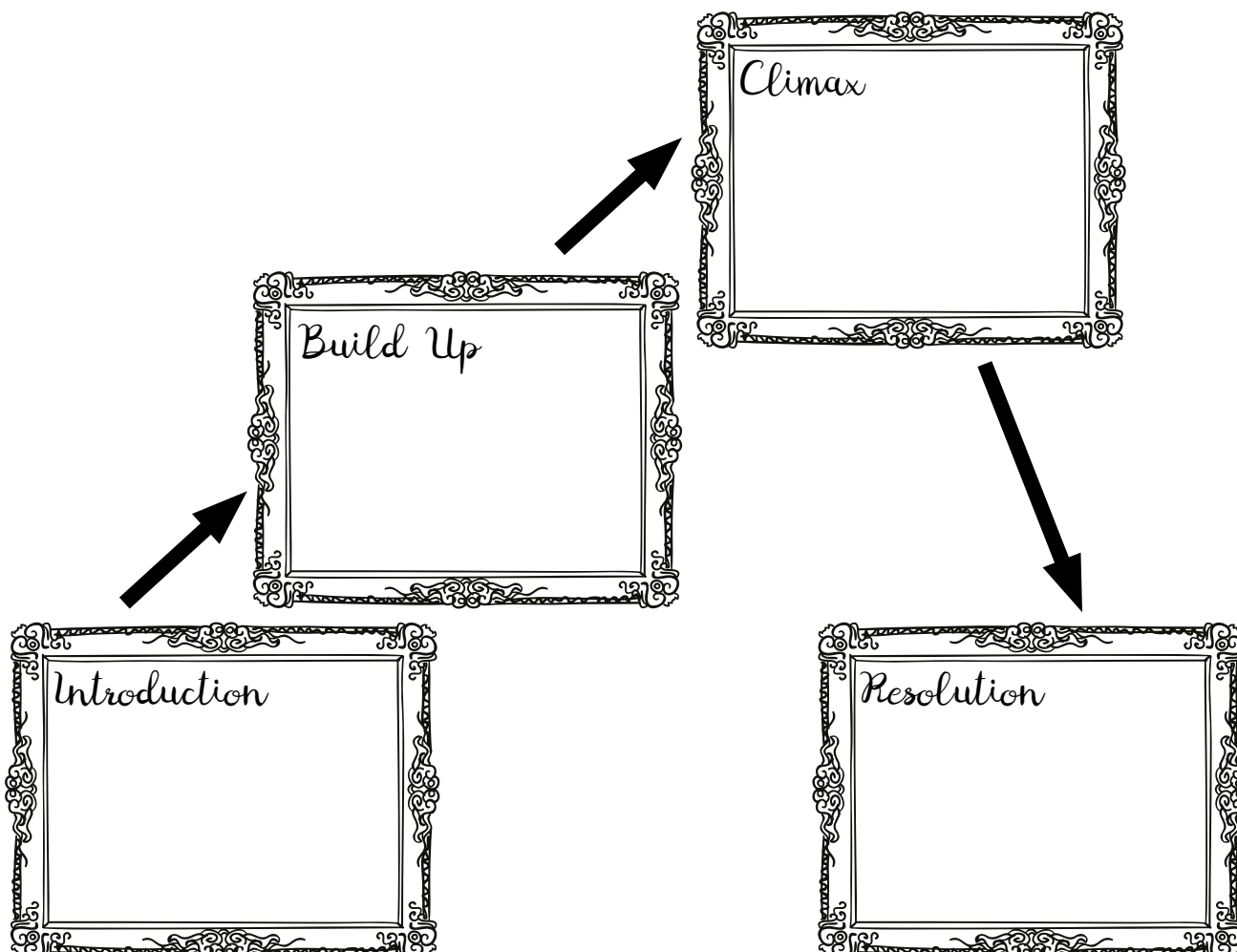
When planning your story, make sure you determine:

- the purpose of the trick, and
- its consequences.

The story can be told from the point of view of either the prankster or the victim. It can be invented or something that really happened. The prank could be realistic or it could even be magical/supernatural. For example, it can be played by a person or creature with special powers.

Plan your story in the space below before you begin.

Characters	
Point of view	
Setting	



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# A Midsummer Night's Dream

*The Funniest Mechanicals' Play*

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## The Comical Tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe

In groups of at least five, produce your own version of the Mechanicals' Play.

Make it as funny as you can.

1. Read Act 5, Scene 1 from lines 166-330, omitting all the interruptions by Theseus, Hippolyta, and the lovers.
2. Allocate parts: Flute, Snout, Starveling, Bottom, and Snug. If you have enough people in your group, some students could be directors or the camera crew.

Note: Excluding the audience interruptions, your script is about 100 lines long.

3. Each actor should write or type his/her own script, including their own lines and cues from other actors.
4. Rehearse the scene, including as much comical action as you can. Make sure you know where your audience will be and what they will see.
5. Props and costumes: how could these enhance the comedic elements? Find or make items that will contribute to the impact of your show. They don't need to be elaborate or expensive.
6. You need to learn your lines so that you are free from the text and can add comic actions.
7. Rehearse and dress your scene.
8. Present your scene to an audience or make a film of it to show your class.



# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## Language Techniques

### OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to the use of language techniques in the play, and in particular, to guide their deeper thinking about Shakespeare's use of metaphor and symbolism.

Key points explored are:

- What are the main language techniques Shakespeare draws upon in this play?
- How do the sub-plots reflect the plot?
- Why does Shakespeare engage with so many plots?

### ENGLISH SYLLABUS DESCRIPTIONS

(Key stage 3 - Reading)

Pupils should be taught to read critically through knowing how language, including figurative language, vocabulary choice, grammar, text structure and organisational features, presents meaning.

## Lesson Plans

### RESOURCES

1. ClickView video:  
[\*Shakespeare Unlocked - 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'\*](#)
2. Worksheet:  
[\*Language Techniques\*](#)

### LESSON PLAN

1. Return to the documentary video on ClickView Exchange: *Shakespeare Unlocked - 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'*. Focus on the exchanges between Felix Hayes and Christopher Godwin as Quince and Bottom and their discussions about the language choices available to the Shakespearean actor.
2. **Begin a class discussion about the following:**
  - How does Shakespeare create comedy between Quince and Bottom?
  - Is it deliberate?
  - Is it effective?
  - What is a metaphor? What is a pun?
  - Do they exist in Shakespeare's play? What is their purpose?
  - What is intertextuality? Why is it an important technique in the construction of a Shakespearean play?
  - Does it simply add to our enjoyment when we recognise that the writer has referred to another story? Or does it have a deeper meaning?
3. Using dictionaries and the provided worksheets, ask students to write down a response to the technical questions drawing upon their classroom discussion, knowledge of the text, and viewing of the ClickView video.

# Answers

## LESSON PLAN

### Worksheet: Language Techniques

- Q1) Irony, puns, metaphor, simile, intertextuality, humour, rhyming couplets, scene changes, stage directions, blank verse.
- Q2) The sub-plot of a warring married couple in the fairy world mirrors the chaos at the centre of the woods, as Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius, and Helena continually fight and argue. We remember too that Hippolyta's impending marriage to Theseus is strained and that some productions place emphasis on this strain. The plot and sub-plot of the fairies, young lovers, and royal couple collide to enhance the dramatic tension of the play, and to continue a theme that romantic love creates chaos.
- Q3) In Shakespeare's time, the woods were a spiritually 'dark' and dangerous place where witches practised their craft and a setting where people commonly believed the supernatural existed (including fairies, elves and goblins). Shakespeare's decision to set the play in the woods and include devilish fairies conspiring to create adulterous acts (not to mention a Queen in love with a donkey) was a bold move - perhaps the equivalent of staging a play today about the royal family in the training-ground of terrorists. Shakespeare made references to Queen Elizabeth I that were more 'cheeky' than reverent about her rumoured love life. What makes the play special is the multi-layered plot which collapses reality with a dream-like imaginary world free of civilised constraint where the characters explore love as a way to unburden themselves of the rule of parents and the Athenian law. As we will explore later, the twin settings of the Athenian court and 'the wood' effectively symbolise the split between the civilised and imaginary worlds - the woods also suggest what Sigmund Freud would later refer to as the 'sub-conscious'.
- Q4) Helena's rhyming couplets at once express her eloquence and education, but also her inner sense that civilised Athenian life revolves around marriage and forced partnerships. That is, on one level, the rhyming couplets express her anxiety about not being in a 'couple' and her pragmatic understanding of its necessity. On another level, the rhyming couplets show her capacity for love, joy, and exuberance, but also reflect her simplistic, child-like understanding and impatience with her frustrating predicament.
- Q5) 'Intertextuality' refers to pointed references within the play to the narrative of other stories and plays. It also refers, less commonly, to humorous and ironic references within the play to the play itself (a technique otherwise known as 'irony'). For instance, we might say that Bottom is denied the role of Thisbe (wife to Pyramus) just as Hermia is denied the role of Lysander's wife. That the all-controlling Oberon determines who the young couples fall in love with as a comic mirror to Egeus and Theseus. We might say that the squabbling Theseus and Hippolyta (according to some productions) are a mirror of the squabbling Oberon and Titania. And in the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, we have an echo not only of the tragic fate of Hermia and Lysander (should Theseus condemn them to death), but also of Shakespeare's own play *Romeo and Juliet*, produced the same year as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. And in the story of the supernatural elements in the woods (where almost literally anything can happen), we have a reminder of the conceptually darker play, *Macbeth*. But we also remember that the source material for 'Pyramus and Thisbe' is Ovid, and the way that Shakespeare's intertextuality is perhaps nodding towards his ancient European sources as a way of celebrating the evolution of English drama.
- Q6) Yes. The line is ironic in that Lysander presents his 'true love' as a river. That is, something real, natural, and permanent. It is an ironic image because on the one hand, we know that his 'true love' is transitory (or not real because it passes when he falls in love briefly with Helena in the woods). On the other hand, it is ironic because we know that later in the play, the 'true love' between Lysander and Hermia will suffer tremendous disruption and the image is therefore very much an understatement! In this way, the line is also a foreshadowing language device. It is also a pun, however. Look up the dictionary meaning of the word 'coarse'. Shakespeare would appear to be making a joke about the nature of young love and the way it is viewed unfavourably by parents. Don't forget, too, that Lysander has presented his love as a river. That is, the image is also a metaphor.
- Q7) a) Yes. In the play within a play, 'Pyramus and Thisbe', we learn that the lovers are only able to speak to each other between a small hole in the wall.  
b) The walls of family, the walls of society, the walls of social class and prejudice, the walls of understanding, the walls of the law.  
c) Answers may vary.
- Q8) Answers may vary.



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# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## *Language Techniques*

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1. What are the main language techniques Shakespeare draws upon in this play?

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2. How do the sub-plots reflect the plot itself?

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3. Why does Shakespeare engage with so many plots? Is it effective?

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4. Why does Shakespeare have Helena speak in rhyming couplets in Act 1, Scene 1? Is it deliberate? And if so, what does it symbolise?

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5. What is intertextuality? Does Shakespeare engage with intertextuality in this play? Is there an example of intertextuality within the play itself?

*Hint: Who does the control-freak Oberon remind you of in the play? Egeus or Theseus?*

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6. What are the definitions of 'irony' and 'pun'? Are there examples of irony and puns in the play? Can a line contain both irony and a pun? And even more techniques? Can one line contain multiple literary and dramatic techniques?

*"The course of true love never did run smooth..." (Lysander to Hermia, Act 1, Scene 1)*

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*What are other examples of puns in the play?*



**Shakespeare:** "Slow down, you hack-sawed fool! Thou will confuse thy students who should simply be enjoying my verse!"

7. a) What is a 'metaphor'? Are there examples of metaphors in the play?

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- b) What are the symbolic or metaphorical 'walls' in the play that separate Lysander and Hermia?

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- c) What are other examples of metaphors in the play? And importantly, are they effective? Make an argument in the space beneath for your opinion.

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8. What are the connotations of the title of the play itself? What are the connotations of 'dream'? Circle the explanations that you most agree with, then explain why in the space provided below.

- a) The 'dream' in the title suggests a literal sleep dream.
- b) The 'dream' in the title suggests a daydream.
- c) The 'dream' in the title is a reference to the long nights of an English midsummer where the light lingers and therefore the dream world collides with the real world.
- d) The 'dream' in the title suggests the way that love, nature, and beauty are illusions (like a dream itself), figuratively made up of transitional seasons. We each fall in love and out of love as though we exist in the confusing structure of a dream.

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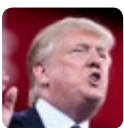
**Shakespeare:** "The language of my play is straightforward and simple. Yes, I pun a little, but keep it simple when explaining my language to students. It's meant to be funny! The language of love is to be enjoyed, not 'analysed', thou poppin-headed, sun-burnt, clay-brained whore-son! You will never know what I meant to say as the author."



**Barthes:** "Actually, I don't care what you intended to write. I'll interpret it the way I read it. Death to the author!"



**Referee:** "Time out!"



**Trump:** "I'm with the dead bald guy. Leave the kids alone and let them enjoy the play! On second thoughts, make them join the army!"



**Referee:** "You stay out of this, sir. Aren't you busy enough already?"

# A Midsummer Night's Dream

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## Close Reading Analysis

### OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to the close reading of textual passages. To have students appreciate, enjoy and engage with the play. The various passages and their questions cater for a range of students. The questions are designed so that students may build upon the previous lesson centred on language techniques.

Key points explored are:

- What does a close reading of the play show us about Shakespeare's literary and dramatic purpose?
- What does it show us about Shakespeare's intention to create a fun and humorous play?

### ENGLISH SYLLABUS DESCRIPTIONS

(Key stage 3 - Reading)

Pupils should be taught to read and appreciate the depth and power of the English literary heritage through reading a wide range of high-quality, challenging, classic literature.c

## Lesson Plans

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### RESOURCES

1. ClickView Exchange video:  
*A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999) directed by Michael Hoffman
  2. Worksheet:  
*Close Reading Analysis*
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### LESSON PLAN

1. Watch this video on the Exchange: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999) directed by Michael Hoffman. Following a complete viewing of this Hollywood production, have students return to the text and re-familiarise themselves with Shakespeare's verse.
2. Draw upon the worksheets to have students study a passage of the play suitable to their ability level. Ask students to write down a response to the questions on the worksheets provided - drawing upon their classroom discussion, knowledge of the text, and viewing of the Hollywood production.

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# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## Close Reading Studies

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### EGEUS

Full of vexation come I, with complaint  
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.  
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,  
This man hath my consent to marry her.  
Stand forth, Lysander: and my gracious duke,  
This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child;  
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,  
And interchanged love-tokens with my child:  
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,  
With feigning voice verses of feigning love,  
And stolen the impression of her fantasy  
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,  
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers  
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth:  
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,  
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,  
To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,  
Be it so she; will not here before your grace  
Consent to marry with Demetrius,  
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,  
As she is mine, I may dispose of her:  
Which shall be either to this gentleman  
Or to her death, according to our law  
Immediately provided in that case.

(Act 1, Scene 1)

- 1) What is Egeus exactly accusing Lysander of doing to his daughter Hermia? Is he subtly accusing him of performing magic upon her? Of stealing her heart? Does it sound likely? Without referring to a study guide translation, attempt to write in modern English what Egeus says to the Duke.

Rewatch the opening scene of the film, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999) to gain a sense of whether Shakespeare regards this a comic scene.

Is it meant to be funny? Is it the rant of a crazy, jealous father?

Write your translation down.

(Extension Activity: Identify the language techniques of this passage).

### DEMETRIUS

Relent, sweet Hermia: and, Lysander, yield  
Thy crazed title to my certain right

### LYSANDER

You have her father's love, Demetrius;  
Let me have Hermia's: do you marry him.

### EGEUS

Scornful Lysander! true, he hath my love,  
And what is mine my love shall render him.  
And she is mine, and all my right of her  
I do estate unto Demetrius.

(Act 1, Scene 1)

- 2) What is Lysander telling Demetrius in response to his demand that Hermia marry him? Does Egeus' response make the situation even more ridiculous still? What does Egeus say in response to the claim that Demetrius has his love? Is Egeus effectively claiming to 'own' Hermia?

Rewatch the same scene in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999) to gain a better understanding of your own belief.

Write your answer down.

(Extension Activity: Identify the language techniques of this passage)

# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## Theatre and Film Productions

### OBJECTIVE

To have students experience a range of productions of the play. To have students consider the way that the cinematic medium alters and transforms our expectations of the text.

Key points explored are:

- A consideration of costumes, staging, and set design in the play, and how the play is usually performed and staged.
- Questioning if directors always aim for humour in the play and what exactly is 'physical acting'? Why is it so important?

### ENGLISH SYLLABUS DESCRIPTIONS

(Key stage 3 - Reading)

Pupils should be taught to:

- understanding how the work of dramatists is communicated effectively through performance and how alternative staging allows for different interpretations of a play

## Lesson Plans

### RESOURCES

1. ClickView video:  
[\*A Midsummer Night's Dream\* \(2016\) directed by Russell T Davies](#)
2. Worksheet:  
[\*Theatre and Film Productions\*](#)

### LESSON PLAN

1. Watch the adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Russell T. Davis with allusions to fascist-era set design on the ClickView Exchange.
2. **Begin a class discussion using the following questions:**
  - How would you stage the play to demonstrate your best ideas about its meaning?
  - Would you even stage it as a play in a theatre or would you instead stage the play as a ballet? Or a mime?
  - Would the play be better represented outdoors in a wood or in a theatrical environment where you could control the lighting and props?
  - Would you leave the play in its same order or would you cut out particular scenes and characters?
  - In your opinion, who are the most expendable characters? What scenes add little to the meaning of the play?
  - Would you stage the play in a modern and abstract setting as Peter Brook did in 1970, or would you costume your characters in Elizabethan clothing? Why would you make this decision?
  - Do you believe that the play teaches us anything about modern life in the 21st century? How would you stage the play to reflect these ideas?
3. Draw upon the worksheets to have students study a passage of the play suitable to their ability. Ask students to write down a response to the questions on the worksheets provided - drawing upon their classroom discussion, knowledge of the text, and viewing of the BBC production.

# A Midsummer Night's Dream

*Theatre and Film Productions*

1. Which theatrical or cinematic production did you most enjoy? Give reasons for your choice.

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2. In Russell T Davies' 2016 production, the opening scene evokes the fascist-era of the 1930's. Is this an effective way to present the power and control that Egeus and Theseus possess over Hermia? Or is it 'over the top'? Give reasons for your answer.

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3. Imagine you are staging the play for a 21st century London audience. Create your own adaptation or appropriation. What are the current world issues you would allude to in your staging of the play? Make some quick notes and bullet points about how you would like your play to appear on stage.

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4. Now begin to sketch a scene from your play onto a blank piece of paper. Draw one or two of your costumes, set design, and props.

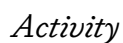


## **Class discussion:**

Shakespeare deliberately skips and jumps between scenes in the play to mimic the effects of a dream; everything is disordered and nothing makes any sense. That is, the form of the play perfectly mirrors its *concept* - 'reality' as being unstable and not to be trusted.



# A Midsummer Night's Dream



Write a letter to these academics explaining your counter-argument.

Could the 'bad actors' who continually interpret and misinterpret 'Pyramus and Thisbe' be a reference to the way that we ourselves continually misinterpret our own dreams? Or the idea that we are all 'bad actors' in the 'dream' of life? Is the play and its treatment of the Mechanicals really as literal as the academic would have us believe? Or is there another interpretation possible?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# A Midsummer Night's Dream

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## Writing and Dramatic Activities

### OBJECTIVE

To finish this unit of work by having students write detailed compositions about their deeper ideas about the play. Furthermore, to have students perform sections of the play in a class performance.

- Students will write detailed extended (and short) compositions demonstrating their understanding and interpretation of the play. Furthermore, they will draw upon the previous lesson to experiment dramatically by staging part-scenes, and where possible with iPads (or video recording devices), creating short films in which they manipulate sound and images to create their illustrated vision and set design.

### ENGLISH SYLLABUS DESCRIPTIONS

(Key stage 3 - Spoken English)

Pupils should be taught to:

- speak confidently and effectively, including through:
  - using Standard English confidently in a range of formal and informal contexts, including classroom discussion
  - improvising, rehearsing and performing play scripts and poetry in order to generate language and discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness and action to add impact.

(Key stage 3 - Reading and writing)

Pupils whose linguistic development is more advanced should be challenged through being offered opportunities for increased breadth and depth in reading and writing.

## Lesson Plans

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### RESOURCES

1. ClickView video:  
*A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2016) directed by Russell T Davies
  2. Worksheet:  
*Writing and Dramatic Activities*
  3. iPads or video recording devices
  4. Video editing software of choice
- 

### LESSON PLAN

1. Using the worksheets, ask students to select question/s that suit their level of understanding to draft a series of responses.
2. Have students demonstrate their understanding of the play by staging part-scenes and/or filming their performances with sound effects and 'special effects' added in the editing.

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# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## Writing and Dramatic Activities

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Choose ONE (1) or TWO (2) of the following questions and create an extended composition, drawing upon key quotes and techniques from the play to support your answer(s).

1. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play which challenges a male way of thinking about the world.  
*Hint: That is, it asks the question: can men ever really hope to 'order' a world governed by the emotion of love?*
2. Why does Shakespeare end a play about romantic love with poetry, song, and whimsy?  
*Hint: What is the comment Shakespeare ultimately makes about romantic love? Is it an antidote to the law, regulations, honour, status, and religion? Is love the magical agent which frees us from society and its 'civilised' expectations?*
3. Is Shakespeare making fun of amateur drama or is he drawing upon the humour, comic tensions, and rivalries of amateur drama to mimic the squabbles of love?
4. To what extent is the play simply about dreaming itself? Give reasons for your answer.
5. What is the idea behind Titania falling in love with Bottom as an ass?  
*Hint: Is it a metaphor that her love is dominated by 'animal instincts'? Or is it a layered joke that her husband Oberon is an ass? "Methoughts my husband was an ass".*
6. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play that should simply be enjoyed as a fun experience of theatre.  
To what extent do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.

### Extension Activity

7. What is Shakespeare saying about the role of dreams and the 'subconscious' in our daily lives?



**Freud:** "Let me answer that! Tell the students to first research my ground-breaking work on the subconscious."

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## – Rehearsals! Which character are you? –

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### *Activity*

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1. Choose a scene from the play (in consultation with your teacher) and aim to act out three 3 minutes of it.
2. Refer to the illustrations of set design and costume in the previous lesson to experiment with your staging.
3. Where possible, record your performance with iPads (or other video recording devices) to create a short film in which you manipulate sound and images to reflect your desired vision for the costumes and set design.



You might like to begin your rehearsals by experimenting with the humour of the following passage by the Rude Mechanicals:

**FLUTE**

Here, Peter Quince.

**QUINCE**

Flute, you must take Thisby on you.

**FLUTE**

What is Thisby? a wandering knight?

**QUINCE**

It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

**FLUTE**

Nay, faith, let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming.

**QUINCE**

That's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

**BOTTOM**

An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too, I'll speak in a monstrous little voice. 'Thisne, Thisne;' 'Ah, Pyramus, lover dear! thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!'