



# A Midsummer Night's Dream – Theme: Dreams Transcript

- Speaker 1: Okay, where am I? Oh, that's right, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Dreams, they're the maddest things and everyone has them. Night dreams, daydreams, dreams of adventure, romance, a brilliant career.
- Bottom: The dream of living the dream.
- Speaker 1: And in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare explores the nature of dreams. Hippolyta's first lines in the play set the tone.
- Hippolyta: "Four days will quickly steep themselves in night; four nights will quickly dream away the time."
- Speaker 1: And Demetrius asks the question we all ask ourselves when something extraordinary happens.
- Demetrius: "Are you sure that we are awake? It seems to me that yet we sleep, we dream."
- Speaker 1: How can we know? When we dream, the strange world we inhabit seems real enough until we wake.
- Puck: Might not this be a dream?
- Speaker 1: You are always trying to confuse and bewilder, aren't you?
- Puck: That's what I do. I'm a mischief maker. I make mischief. And play pranks.
- Speaker 1: Dreams are a major theme of the play –
- Puck: Yeah, I'm not surprised, it's in the title.
- Speaker 1: Yes. The theme is in the title.
- Bottom: Dream theme. I know all about theme, I'm good at theme. Just remind me, what is it again?
- Speaker 1: The themes of the text are ideas that run through it, like a thread. They're often ideas that people can relate to, like love, loss and hope.
- Bottom: And dreams.
- Speaker 1: Robin is right to wonder what's real and what's imagined in this play. Shakespeare creates layers of confusion as to what's really going on. Characters fall asleep and upon waking speak of strange dreams, as Hermia does.
- Hermia: "Ay me, for pity. What a dream was here. Lysander, look how I do quake with fear. Methought a serpent eat my heart away, and you sat smiling at his cruel prey."





# A Midsummer Night's Dream – Theme: Dreams Transcript

- Speaker 1: Hermia tells her lover Lysander of the dream about a serpent eating her heart.
- Puck: But he's not there.
- Speaker 1: Shakespeare is using dramatic irony here because Hermia is looking for help from the person who is about to reject her and eat her heart.
- Puck: A bit of bad luck. I got the wrong guy with the love potion. Pretty funny though, don't you think?
- Bottom: Dramatic irony, gold, classic technique. Makes the play grace. Makes the play great. What is it?
- Speaker 1: Dramatic irony is where the audience understand more than the characters do. Their words and actions take on different meanings for us than they do for the characters themselves.
- Bottom: I like it.
- Speaker 1: The love potion also puts characters under a spell as they're in a dream. Titania speaks of her love for Bottom in this way after Robin undoes the spell.
- Titania: "My Oberon. What visions have I seen. Methought I was enamoured of an ass."
- Speaker 1: Overall, the play's structure and style have a very dreamlike quality.
- Bottom: I have a dream of having an ass's head. Hey, hold on a second, no I don't. My dream is to play everyone in the play because I'd be great. I have a dream where I got an ass's head.
- Puck: Which might have been real. Do you believe in fairies?
- Speaker 1: Shakespeare is exploring all the different types of dreams and the blurred line between dreams and waking, between what's real and imagined, what's reasonable and what's completely crazy.
- Puck: And once I give Bottom his human head back, he struggles to explain it.
- Bottom: "The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was."
- Puck: He still seems confused. Eyes don't hear, hands can't taste.
- Speaker 1: Shakespeare is both contrasting and confusing the five senses for dramatic and comic effect.





# A Midsummer Night's Dream – Theme: Dreams Transcript

- Bottom: In dreams, senses merge sometimes. Well, they do for me anyway.
- Puck: When you mortals watch a play or a film or read a novel, you suspend disbelief and imagine it's real. Laugh real laughter. Cry real tears.
- Bottom: My dreams are wild and crazy and a little bit saucy. In them Titania can't get enough of me.
- Puck: It all happens in a forest, my place.
- Speaker 1: Once the characters enter the forest, normal laws no longer apply. The forest is a metaphor for the human mind. A place full of dreams, fears, desires and imaginings.
- Puck: And for Shakespeare this forest, the human mind, is fertile ground.
- Bottom: It's where wild imagining and bizarre creations arise. A place where imagination runs free.
- Speaker 1: Theseus makes a speech about dreams and imagination in the final act.
- Theseus: "The poet's eye in fine frenzy rolling, doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven and as imagination embodies forth the forms of things unknown, the poet's pen turns them to shapes and gives to an airy nothing, a local habitation and a name."
- Speaker 1: Theseus is saying imagination gives the poet the power to create something out of nothing, to give form to the formless and create new worlds, like Shakespeare did.
- Bottom: He did and did it very well too.
- Puck: At the end of the play I complicate things further by suggesting that the whole performance could have been thought of as a dream.
- "If we shadows have offended, think but this and all is mended. That you have but slumbered here while these visions did appear and this weak and idle theme, no more yielding but a dream."
- Speaker 1: Dreams, suddenly I feel quite tired. It's time for me to sleep.

