

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

SUMMARY

In ancient Athens, Hermia's father is forcing her into marriage with Demetrius, even though Hermia loves Lysander. Helena, Hermia's best friend, is in love with Demetrius. Hermia and Lysander run away into the woods, and Helena and Demetrius follow.

In the woods, the Queen and King of fairies, Titania and Oberon, are fighting over a changeling child. Oberon has his servant Puck fetch a flower that will make anyone who is asleep fall in love with the first thing they see when they wake. With this flower, Puck causes mischief as characters suddenly fall in love with new partners.

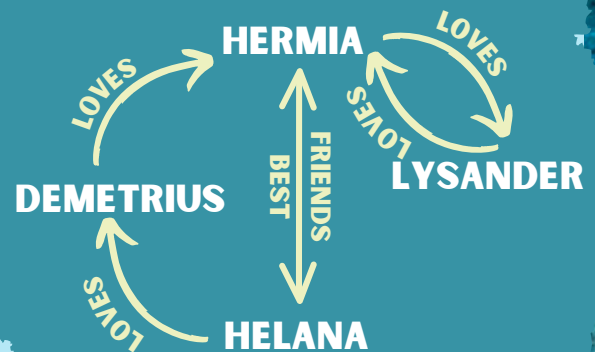
Meanwhile, a group of amateur actors, the Mechanicals, lead by Peter Quince and Bottom, rehearse a play to perform at Duke Theseus' wedding. Will Hermia and Lysander end up together? Will Titania and Oberon make peace? How many problems will Puck cause?

CASTING HISTORY

In Shakespeare's day, all roles on stage, male or female, were played by men. This production, in which both a woman and a man play roles of either gender, is a fun inversion of that history.

"THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH"
-LYSANDER, ACT 1 SCENE 1

RELATIONSHIPS (AT THE START OF THE PLAY)



How do these relationships change throughout the action of the play?

Who ends up with who?

TWO ACTORS FOR ALL THESE PARTS?

In this production, two actors play all the parts, often switching roles during scenes. Costume pieces are used to identify which character they're currently playing. What piece signifies Hermia? Lysander? Bottom? Titania?

THEMES

- Love & Marriage
- Order & Chaos
- Dreams & Reality

Which of these themes is most important in the play?

Is there another theme you'd add to the list?

"SHALL WE THEIR FOND
PAGEANT SEE?
LORD, WHAT FOOLS THESE
MORTALS BE!"
-PUCK, ACT 3 SCENE 2

ACTIVITY IDEAS

1. Bottom, Quince, and the rest of the Mechanicals perform their own version of "Pyramus and Thisbe," an old tale. But their telling is full of mistakes, arguments with the audience, and over-acting. In a group, choose an old story--perhaps a fairy tale--and perform it in a similar manner for your class mates.

2. Titania and Oberon are the monarchs of fairy land. Take turns with your classmates being ruler of fairy land. Everyone else is a "real person." Have the real people start out in a normal place, and then enter fairy land. As you lead the real people through fairy land, what do they see? What magic is there, and what does it do to the real people? What tricks will you play on them?

"O ME! YOU JUGGLER! YOU
CANKER-BLOSSOM!
YOU THIEF OF LOVE!"
-HERMIA, ACT 3 SCENE 2

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Is it possible to fall in love at first sight?

Were Oberon/Puck right to use the flower to make Demetrius fall in love with Helana?

How are modern attitudes toward love different than 400+ years ago in Shakespeare's time? Are there similarities?

Compare/contrast the "worlds" of Athens and the woods. How is life different in each location?

Can dreams affect our reality?