

# A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAMER



# STUDY GUIDE OBJECTIVES

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This study guide serves as a classroom tool for teachers and students, and addresses the following standards:

## COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

### Reading Literature: *Key Ideas and Details*

- **Grades 9-10:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **Grades 9-10:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

### Reading Literature: *Craft and Structure*

- **Grades 9-10:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful (include Shakespeare as well as other authors).
- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

### Reading Literature: *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

- **Grade 9-10:** Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text (include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist).

## NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS FOR THEATRE

### Theatre/Creating

- **TH:Cr1.1.HSI-a.** Apply basic research to construct ideas about the visual composition of a drama/theatre work.
- **TH:Cr1.1.HSII-a.** Investigate historical and cultural conventions and their impact on the visual composition of a drama/theatre work.
- **TH:Cr1.1.HSII-b.** Investigate the collaborative nature of the actor, director, playwright, and designers and explore their interdependent roles in a drama/theatre work.

### Theatre/Responding

- **TH:Re7.1.HSI-a.** Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a drama/theatre work to develop criteria for artistic choices.
- **TH:Re8.1.HSI-b.** Identify and compare cultural perspectives and contexts that may influence the evaluation of a drama/theatre work.
- **TH:Re8.1.HSI-c.** Justify personal aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs through participation in and observation of a drama/theatre work.
- **TH:Re9.1.HSI-b.** Consider the aesthetics of the production elements in a drama/theatre work.

### Theatre/Connecting

- **TH:Cn11.2.HSI-b.** Use basic theatre research methods to better understand the social and cultural background of a drama/theatre work.

# GUIDELINES FOR ATTENDING THE THEATRE

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Attending live theatre is a unique experience with many valuable educational and social benefits. To ensure that all audience members are able to enjoy the performance, please take a few minutes to discuss the following audience etiquette topics with your students before you come to Hartford Stage.

- How is attending the theatre similar to and different from going to the movies? What behaviors are and are not appropriate when seeing a play? Why?
  - › Remind students that because the performance is live, the audience can affect the performance the actors give. No two audiences are exactly the same and no two performances are exactly the same—this is part of what makes theatre so special! Students' behavior should reflect the level of performance they wish to see.
- Theatre should be an enjoyable experience for the audience. Audience members are more than welcome to applaud when appropriate and laugh at the funny moments. Talking and calling out during the performance, however, are not allowed. Why might this be?
  - › Be sure to mention that not only would the people seated around them be able to hear their conversation, but the actors on stage could hear them, too. Theatres are constructed to carry sound efficiently!
- Any noise or light can be a distraction, so please remind students to make sure their cell phones are turned off. Texting, photography, and video recording are prohibited. Food and gum should not be taken into the theatre.
- Students should sit with their group as seated by the Front of House staff and should not leave their seats once the performance has begun. If possible, restrooms should be used only during intermission.

# Who Was William Shakespeare?

By Aurelia Clunie

William Shakespeare was baptized on April 26, 1564, about three days after his birth. Born to John Shakespeare, a glovemaker, and Mary Arden Shakespeare, the daughter of a wealthy farmer, Shakespeare was the third of eight children. He was born and raised in Stratford-upon-Avon, a small town 100 miles northwest of London. Shakespeare's family was neither noble nor wealthy, so Shakespeare did not go to university, but many believe he received a foundation of Latin, some Greek, Greek mythology, history, and rhetoric at King's New School, the local grammar school. In 1582, at 18 years old, he married 26-year-old Anne Hathaway, who was pregnant with his child. They had their first child, Susanna, in 1583. In 1585, the couple had twins, Hamnet and Judith. In 1596, Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, died at age 11.

Much of Shakespeare's life following his marriage and the birth of his children is unknown. Some call the next seven years the "lost years" (Shakespeare in American Communities). It was not until seven years later that evidence appears of Shakespeare's life in London. In a pamphlet entitled the "Groatsworth of Wit," university-educated poet Robert Greene attacked Shakespeare, calling him an "upstart crow" for his audacious writing style:

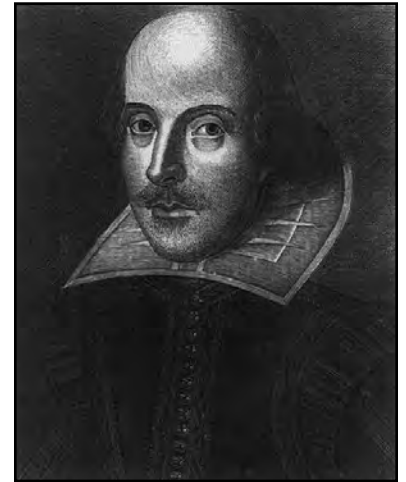
"Yes, trust them not, for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that, with his Tygers heart wrapt in a Players' hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you..."

By 1592, Shakespeare was acting on and writing for London stages. His earliest plays, including *The Comedy of Errors* and *Henry VI*, had been produced. In 1593, he wrote two narrative poems: *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. It was likely during this period that he also began writing his 154 sonnets that survive to this day.

In 1594, Shakespeare joined and became a part owner of the acting company The Lord Chamberlain's Men with whom he would act throughout his career. The Lord Chamberlain's Men was a popular company in London and would often play privately for Queen Elizabeth I's court, as well as for the masses in the public theatres. The Lord Chamberlain's Men performed at The Theatre, originally built in 1576 by James Burbage. When the lease was lost on the site, Shakespeare became part owner in the Globe, which was completed in 1599.

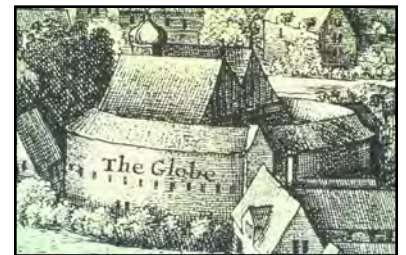
Between 1594 and 1595, Shakespeare wrote some of his most famous plays, including *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. By 1599, he had written *Julius Caesar*, *Henry V*, and *As You Like It*. In 1603, when King James succeeded Queen Elizabeth I, he gave the Lord Chamberlain's Men a "royal license" and they became the King's Men. Following this appointment, Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare's sonnets were published either in 1609 or 1611.

By 1616, Shakespeare's health was failing and he had revised his will. He left most of his estate to his daughters, Susanna and Judith. Some money and items were also left for his sister, friends, theatre partners, and "the poor of Stratford" (Shakespeare in American Communities). However, his will states that he only left his "second best bed" to Anne, his wife. Shakespeare died on his birthday, April 23, in 1616. Although many of his plays had been published in small books called quartos during his lifetime, it was not until 1623 that two of Shakespeare's friends from the theatre, John Heminges and Henry Condell, gathered what remained of his plays and published the first book of his complete works, now called the First Folio. Shakespeare's contemporary, Ben Jonson, said of him in a poem of homage, "He was not of an age, but for all time!"



Above: Portrait of William Shakespeare. Engraving by Maerten Droeshout.

Below: The Old Globe Theatre. A print of the original theatre in London. Drawing by Wenceslas Hollar.



# Synopsis of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

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## ACT 1

Duke Theseus anxiously awaits his marriage to Hippolyta. Egeus brings his daughter Hermia before the Duke to make a complaint against her: she refuses to marry Demetrius, the husband that he has chosen for her, because she is in love with Lysander. Theseus rules that Hermia must obey her father, or else be put to death or sent away to a convent. Helena enters, lamenting her unrequited love for Demetrius. Hermia and Lysander secretly decide to elope and reveal to Helena their plan to leave Athens the following night. Helena thinks that she can win favor with Demetrius by telling him about Hermia's plan to leave Athens.

A group of Athenian tradesmen meet to rehearse a play—"The most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe"—to perform on the Duke's wedding day. Peter Quince, the director, calls roll and assigns parts. Flute complains about playing a woman, and Bottom wants to play every part. They agree to meet again in the woods the following night.



*Lysander and Hermia Confide in Helena.*  
Courtesy of The Library of Congress.

## ACT 2

Oberon and Titania, the king and queen of the fairies, are fighting, which is causing a disturbance in the weather. Oberon sends his servant, Puck, to find a flower that has the power to make a sleeping person fall in love with the first living thing he or she sees upon awaking. Oberon plans to use it to play a trick on Titania.

Oberon overhears a conversation between Demetrius and Helena. Although Demetrius rejects her outright, Helena persists in trying to win his love. She follows him deeper into the woods.

Puck returns with the flower. Oberon takes some of the juice from the flower to put on Titania's eyes while she sleeps. Oberon feels pity for Helena and instructs Puck to place the flower's juice on Demetrius' eyes; he says Puck will know him by his Athenian clothing.

Titania's fairy attendants sing her to sleep. Oberon squeezes juice from the flower onto Titania's eyes, hoping that she will

"wake when some vile thing is near."

Lysander and Hermia are lost and decide to stop and sleep for a while. Hermia, for the sake of her modesty, insists that Lysander sleep a distance away from her. Puck sees them and mistakes Lysander for Demetrius. Puck squeezes the flower's juice on Lysander's eyes.

Helena chases Demetrius to where Hermia and Lysander are sleeping. Helena wakes Lysander. Under the spell of the flower, he immediately falls in love with her. Helena, confused, thinks that he is mocking her and leaves. Lysander follows her. Hermia awakes from a bad dream and finds that Lysander is gone. Hermia runs off in pursuit of Lysander.



*The Meeting of Oberon and Titania.*  
Illustration by Arthur Rackham, 1905.

## ACT 3

The actors meet for rehearsal near the place where Titania sleeps. Puck enters and casts a spell on Bottom, changing his head into a donkey's head. Quince and the other actors think that he is a monster and run away. Bottom, unaware of his donkey's head, thinks that the others are making fun of him and trying to scare him; he decides to stay in order to prove he is not afraid. He begins to sing. The commotion awakens Titania,

who sees Bottom and immediately falls in love. Titania orders her attendants to feed him, wait upon him, and take him to her bower.

Puck reports back to Oberon that Titania has fallen in love with a monster. Demetrius and Hermia enter, arguing; she cannot find Lysander, and believes that Demetrius might have killed him. She leaves, and Demetrius lies down for a nap. Oberon realizes that Puck applied the flower's juice to the eyes of the wrong man and sends Puck to find Helena. Meanwhile, Oberon puts the flower's juice on Demetrius' eyes. Puck returns with Helena; Oberon and Puck hide. Lysander and Helena argue; Helena still believes that Lysander's romantic advances are in jest. Their argument awakens Demetrius, who sees Helena and immediately falls in love. This enrages Helena even more; she thinks that both men, who loved Hermia before, are making fun of her. The two men begin to fight over Helena. Hermia enters and finds that Lysander is now in love with Helena. The two women begin to argue. Hermia believes that Helena has stolen Lysander's heart; Helena pleads innocence, and thinks that Hermia is in on the joke against her. Lysander and Demetrius exit to a duel, while Helena runs away and Hermia follows.

Oberon instructs Puck to cover the woods with fog so that Lysander and Demetrius cannot find each other to fight. Puck will lead them astray until they are too tired to go further; when they fall asleep, he will put the flower's juice into Lysander's eye, so that he will love Hermia again when he awakens. Meanwhile, Oberon will release Titania from her spell.

Lysander and Demetrius enter separately, looking for one another. Puck each time feigns the rival's voice and leads them on. Demetrius and Lysander, sight obscured by the fog, fall asleep near one another. Helena and Hermia fall asleep near Demetrius and Lysander, respectively. Puck squeezes the juice on Lysander's eyes and leaves while all four lovers sleep.

## ACT 4

In Titania's bower, Bottom is enjoying his royal treatment. Bottom and Titania fall asleep. Oberon squeezes the flower's juice onto Titania's eyes. She awakes and sees Oberon. Puck takes the spell off of Bottom, restoring his normal head, but leaves him asleep. Oberon and Titania dance. As the dawn of Theseus' wedding day approaches, Puck, Oberon and Titania set off to fly around the world; Titania asks Oberon to explain the strange events of the night.

Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus arrive in the woods on an early morning hunt. They find Helena, Hermia, Demetrius, and Lysander asleep. They wake them with their hunting horns. Knowing that Lysander and

## QUICK FACTS

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written between 1595-1596, around the same time as *Romeo and Juliet*. It was printed in the First Folio (first collection of Shakespeare's plays) in 1623.

It is believed that it was written to be performed at a prominent wedding, though scholars do not know whose wedding it was.

The play is one of Shakespeare's only plays that does not have a single identifiable source.

## CHARACTERS

### THE COURT

<b>Theseus</b>	Duke of Athens
<b>Hippolyta</b>	engaged to marry Theseus
<b>Lysander</b>	in love with Hermia at the start of play
<b>Demetrius</b>	in love with Hermia at the start of play
<b>Hermia</b>	in love with Lysander
<b>Helena</b>	in love with Demetrius
<b>Egeus</b>	Hermia's father
<b>Philostrate</b>	assistant to Theseus

### THE MECHANICALS

<b>Peter Quince</b>	a gardener, director of <i>Pyramus and Thisbe</i>
<b>Nick Bottom</b>	a chauffeur, plays <i>Pyramus</i> in <i>Pyramus and Thisbe</i>
<b>Francis Flute</b>	a boot boy, plays <i>Thisbe</i> in <i>Pyramus and Thisbe</i>
<b>Robin Starveling</b>	a tailor, plays <i>Moonshine</i> in <i>Pyramus and Thisbe</i>
<b>Snug</b>	a painter, plays the <i>Lion</i> in <i>Pyramus and Thisbe</i>

### THE FAIRIES

<b>Oberon</b>	King of the Fairies
<b>Titania</b>	Queen of the Fairies
<b>Puck</b>	servant to Oberon; a hobgoblin. Also known as Robin Goodfellow

### **Fairy Attendants**

Demetrius are rivals, Theseus asks what they are doing in the woods together. Lysander answers that his memory is unclear, but that he does remember leaving with Hermia to escape Athens. Egeus immediately calls for justice against Lysander for wronging himself and Demetrius, but Demetrius intervenes, declaring his love for Helena. Theseus overrules Egeus, proclaiming that both young couples will be wed alongside him and Hippolyta. The lovers marvel over the strange events of the night, commenting that it all feels like a dream. Bottom wakes, ready for his next cue, believing that everything that passed since he left rehearsal was a dream.

## ACT 5

Bottom returns to his troupe, to the collective relief of Quince and the other actors, just in time for the performance. Hippolyta and Theseus muse on the nature of love. Theseus calls for entertainment to help pass the three hours between dinner and bedtime. He is given a list of options, from which he chooses to see Pyramus and Thisbe, described to him as “a tedious brief scene.” Theseus’ servant warns him against choosing this play, but Theseus insists.

Quince delivers the Prologue, which tells the entire story of the play. Snout introduces himself as the Wall. Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight with the Wall in between them. They agree to run away and meet at Ninus’s tomb. Snug enters as the Lion and assures the audience that he is not a real lion. Starveling introduces himself as Moonshine. Thisbe enters, looking for Pyramus, and is chased off by the Lion; she loses her cloak. Pyramus enters and, finding Thisbe’s cloak, believes that she is dead. He stabs himself. Thisbe returns to find Pyramus dead. She stabs herself. Then, Bottom and Flute (Pyramus and Thisbe) rise for their bows; Bottom asks the audience if they would like to hear the Epilogue. They decide on a dance instead. Midnight comes, and it is time for all to retire. Puck delivers an Epilogue, apologizing for any offense the play has caused, suggesting that it was all a dream, and bidding the audience goodnight.



Above: Enter Theseus, Act I, scene i, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery.

Below: Oberon, Titania, and Puck with Fairies Dancing. Watercolor by William Blake, circa 1875.



## Exploring Language in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

By Aurelia Clunie, Natalie Pertz & Jennifer Roberts

For over four hundred years, the language of Shakespeare’s plays has moved audiences, inspired actors, and baffled many. Shakespeare’s language can be confusing at first, but can also be decoded and spoken by all. With a little work, everyone from third grade students to seasoned actors like Patrick Stewart can perform Shakespeare’s text with confidence.

### Iambic Pentameter

Shakespeare did much of his writing in a form called iambic pentameter, in which each line of text has ten alternately stressed syllables (five pairs, or feet). There are five iambs in each line.

A full line of iambic pentameter has the rhythm:

da-**DUM** da-**DUM** da-**DUM** da-**DUM** da-**DUM**

Or, for example:

To **seek** new **friends** and **stranger companies**  
(Hermia, 1.1, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*)

Some say this rhythm echoes the human heartbeat and is a naturally spoken rhythm in English. Actors generally do not speak it in a sing-song fashion, emphasizing the rhythm or meter, but are aware of it and allow it to influence which words are stressed in the context of a scene.

Shakespeare primarily wrote in blank verse for his tragedies and history plays. However, blank verse, like life, is not perfect. Sometimes Shakespeare's lines have extra syllables, or are short some syllables. Sometimes the emphasis changes. Many scholars and actors believe variation in blank verse offers insight into a character's state of mind, emotional state, or reaction to what is happening onstage.

The good news is that you don't have to know what every word means in order to watch, understand, and enjoy a Shakespearean play. In a production, it is the actor's job to know what every single word means—so that they can then translate it for you, the audience member, using their voice, actions, body language, and facial expressions.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is filled with a variety of linguistic forms, including blank verse, rhyming verse, and prose. Heightened language is the use of poetic techniques such as simile, metaphor, and imagery. Direct language is when characters literally say what they mean. When reading a play, always ask yourself, why does the character speak this way? Try reading a portion of the text out loud to see if it sounds different than you expect when reading to yourself. Examples of Shakespeare's linguistic techniques can be found below. Ask yourself, why do the characters use these words, images, or rhymes to express themselves?

In addition to the various forms of text, Shakespeare uses many literary devices in his characters' dialogue. Their thoughts and feelings are expressed in both poetic and direct ways. How do you think actors keep the action alive while using the text Shakespeare wrote?

## Imagery

Visually descriptive or figurative language.

### OBERON

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips and **the nodding violet grows,**  
**Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,**  
**With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:**  
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,  
**Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;**  
And there the snake **throws her enamell'd skin,**  
**Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:**  
(2.1)

## Simile

Comparing two unlike thing using "like" or "as."

### LYSANDER

Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,  
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,  
Making **it momentary as a sound,**  
**Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;**

**METER** = the arrangement of a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables to create rhythm in a verse.

**FOOT** = the basic unit of meter.

**IAMB** = a metrical foot consisting of one unstressed followed by one stressed syllable.

**PROSE** = text written in common language that resembles everyday speech; has irregular rhythm and lacks metrical structure.

**VERSE** = text (song, poetry, or dramatic text) written in metrical lines; it may rhyme.

**BLANK VERSE** = text (song, poetry, or dramatic text) written in iambic pentameter that does not rhyme.



The 1623 First Folio facsimile of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Courtesy of the Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text and Image.

**Brief as the lightning in the collied night,**  
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,  
And ere a man hath power to say 'Behold!'  
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:  
So quick bright things come to confusion.  
(1.1)

### **Assonance**

The repetition of a vowel sound or diphthong in non-rhyming words.

#### **LYSANDER**

Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood;  
And to speak troth, I have forgot our way:  
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,  
And tarry for the comfort of the day.  
(2.2)

#### **THESEUS**

Go, Philostrate,  
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;  
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth;  
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;  
The pale companion is not for our pomp.  
Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,  
And won thy love, doing thee injuries;  
But I will wed thee in another key,  
With pomp, with triumph and with revelling.  
(1.1)

### **Alliteration**

The repetition of consonant sounds.

#### **LYSANDER**

And, which is more than all these boasts can be,  
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia:  
(1.1)

### **Epistrophe**

The repetition of words or phrases at the end of successive sentences.

#### **HERMIA**

God speed fair Helena! whither away?

#### **HELENA**

Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.  
Demetrius loves your fair: O happy fair!  
(1.1)

### **Allusion**

An expression that calls something to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference, often to the Bible, mythology, or historical literature.

#### **THISBE**

My love thou art, my love I think.

#### **PYRAMUS**

Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace;  
And, like **Limander**, am I trusty still.



*Helen of Troy.* Painting by Evelyn de Morgan, 1898.



### **THISBE**

And I like **Helen**, till the **Fates** me kill.  
(3.2)

When Pyramus (aka Bottom) mentions Limander, he is referring to Leander, a faithful lover in Greek mythology. Helen is Helen of Troy. What makes this funny is that according to legend, Leander loved Hero not Helen. Also, Helen of Troy was famous for being unfaithful in her marriage. In Greek mythology, the Fates were believed to predict an individual's fate and life.

**YOU TRY! Below are two literary devices Shakespeare uses in his writing. Highlight all the examples of these techniques in the passages below.**

### **Antithesis**

Placement of contrasting or opposing words, phrases, clauses, or sentences side by side. ***Use two different colors to highlight all of the opposites you find below.***

#### **HERMIA**

What, can you do me greater harm than hate?  
Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love!  
Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander?  
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.  
Since night you loved me; yet since night you left me:  
Why, then you left me—O, the gods forbid!—  
In earnest, shall I say?

#### **LYSANDER**

Ay, by my life;  
And never did desire to see thee more.  
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;  
Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest  
That I do hate thee and love Helena.  
(3.2)

### **Repetition**

The repetition of sounds, words, or phrases within one character's line or throughout a segment of a scene. ***Highlight each word that is repeated throughout the following scene.***

#### **DEMETRIUS**

If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

#### **LYSANDER**

Thou canst compel no more than she entreat:  
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.  
Helen, I love thee; by my life, I do:  
I swear by that which I will lose for thee,  
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

#### **DEMETRIUS**

I say I love thee more than he can do.

#### **LYSANDER**

If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.  
(3.2)

## THEMES

### Mention of Order and Disorder

Throughout the play, the themes of order and disorder are explored. As the play begins, Shakespeare quickly establishes that within the human world, the social order (Hermia marrying the man of her father, Egeus' choosing) is awry. It is not until the human characters transition to the fairy world and magic intervenes that love triangles are untangled and order is restored through the official, approved union of both couples (marriage).

#### 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;  
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.  
(1.1)

#### OBERON

**A sweet Athenian lady is in love**  
**With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;**  
**But do it when the next thing he espies**  
**May be the lady:** thou shalt know the man  
By the Athenian garments he hath on.  
Effect it with some care, that he may prove  
More fond on her than she upon her love:  
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.  
(2.1)

#### PUCK

**I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,**  
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier:  
**Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,**  
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;  
**And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,**  
**Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.**  
(3.1)

#### OBERON

Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands with me,  
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

Now thou and I are new in amity,  
And will to-morrow midnight solemnly  
**Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,**  
And bless it to all fair prosperity.  
There shall the **pairs of faithful lovers be**  
**Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.**  
(4.1)

### **The Fickleness of Love**

As you read or watch the play, you'll notice that characters are constantly falling in or out of love. These fluctuating romantic triangles can be dizzying to keep track of! As the play begins, two men—Demetrius and Lysander—are in love with one woman (Hermia). Later in the forest, the same two men profess their love to a different woman (Helena) as Titania falls in love with a donkey. Though we see very little of them, Duke Theseus and his bride, Hippolyta, are the only lovers who remain steadfast throughout the play. While we laugh as an audience, you can't help but wonder if Shakespeare himself saw love—and the act of being in love—as silly and shallow. If you had to guess, how would you describe Shakespeare's attitude toward love?

#### **HERMIA**

My good Lysander!  
**I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,**  
By his best arrow with the golden head,  
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,  
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,  
**By all the vows that ever men have broke,**  
**In number more than ever women spoke,**  
In that same place thou hast appointed me,  
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.  
(1.1)

#### **HELENA**

How happy some o'er other some can be!  
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.  
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;  
He will not know what all but he do know:  
**And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,**  
**So I, admiring of his qualities:**  
Things base and vile, folding no quantity,  
**Love can transpose to form and dignity:**  
**Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;**  
**And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:**  
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste;  
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste:  
**And therefore is Love said to be a child,**  
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.  
(1.1)

#### **HELENA**

**And even for that do I love you the more.**  
I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,  
**The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:**  
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,  
Neglect me, lose me; **only give me leave,**  
**Unworthy as I am, to follow you.**  
**What worser place can I beg in your love,—**

And yet a place of high respect with me,—  
Than to be used as you use your dog?  
(1.2)

**PUCK**

My mistress with a monster is in love.  
(3.2)

**DEMETRIUS**

Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none:  
**If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.**  
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,  
And now to Helen is it home return'd,  
There to remain.  
(3.2)

**Dreams**

As the title suggests, dreams are a recurring theme throughout the play. Whether magical, pleasant, or bewildering, the characters—particularly Bottom and The Lovers—use dreams to justify bizarre and inexplicable events. In the epilogue, Puck concludes by telling the audience that if anything onstage offended them, to remember that it was all a dream.

**HIPPOLYTA**

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;  
**Four nights will quickly dream away the time;**  
And then the moon, like to a silver bow  
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night  
Of our solemnities.  
(1.1)

**BOTTOM**

**I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream was.**  
Man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was,—and methought I had,—but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. **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.**  
(4.1)

**DEMETRIUS**

It seems to me  
**That yet we sleep, we dream.**  
(4.1)

**PUCK**

If we shadows have offended,  
Think but this, and all is mended,  
That you have but slumber'd here  
While these visions did appear.  
And this weak and idle theme,  
**No more yielding but a dream**  
(5.1)

## (A) Play With Language

- Imagine that you are an actor in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is your job to break down the text to make sure that you know exactly what your character is saying. Look at Puck's Epilogue below, broken down line by line. Then, discuss with a partner the following questions: in the final moments of the play, why does Puck speak directly to the audience? In the world of theatre, there is something called an actor-audience relationship. What do you think that is? How would you describe Puck's relationship to the audience?

	<b>PUCK</b>	
<i>Both actors and fairies can be considered "shadows"</i>	If we <b>shadows</b> 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 <b>yielding</b> but a dream,	If we've offended you in any way, think of this: that it was all just a dream...
<i>profitable</i> <i>Puck is addressing the audience</i>	<b>Gentles</b> , do not reprehend; If you pardon, we will mend. And, as I am an honest Puck, If we have <b>unearnèd</b> luck Now to <b>'scape the serpent's tongue</b> We will make amends <b>ere</b> long, <b>Else the Puck a liar call.</b>	
<i>undeserved</i> <i>escape the critics</i> <i>before</i> <i>Shakespeare often places the verb at the end of his sentence for the sake of rhyme and meter. This line could also be read: "[Or] Else call Puck a liar."</i>	So, good night unto you all. Give me your hands, if we be friends, And <b>Robin</b> shall restore amends.	Ladies and gentlemen, do not scold. If you forgive us, we will do better. If we undeservedly escape the critic's pen, we will do better before long, or else you can call me a liar.
<i>Still talking about himself. Puck is also known as Robin Goodfellow.</i>		

- Read the scene on the next page (Act 1, scene 1). What literary devices from the above list do you notice? Highlight or underline the following in different colors.
  - Clear images
  - Repetition of words or phrases
  - Antithesis
  - Allusion
  - Epistrophe
  - Assonance
- Now read a section of the scene with a partner. How does emphasizing each of the above affect your reading? How does it affect what your character does in the scene?
- Work with a partner to choose a section of the scene on the next page. Paraphrase, or write in your own words, what Lysander and Hermia say to Helena. Then perform the original text for the class. How does paraphrasing help you to perform Shakespeare's text as an actor?

**ACT 1, SCENE 1. Near Duke Theseus' Palace.**

*Enter HELENA.*

**HERMIA**

God speed fair Helena! whither away?

**HELENA**

Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.  
Demetrius loves your fair: O happy fair!  
Your eyes are lode-stars; and your tongue's  
sweet air

More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,  
When wheat is green, when hawthorn  
buds appear.

Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,  
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;  
My ear should catch your voice, my eye  
your eye,

My tongue should catch your tongue's  
sweet melody.

Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,  
The rest I'd give to be to you translated.

O, teach me how you look, and with what art  
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

**HERMIA**

I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

**HELENA**

O that your frowns would teach my smiles  
such skill!

**HERMIA**

I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

**HELENA**

O that my prayers could such affection move!

**HERMIA**

The more I hate, the more he follows me.

**HELENA**

The more I love, the more he hateth me.

**HERMIA**

His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

**HELENA**

None, but your beauty: would that fault  
were mine!

**HERMIA**

Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;  
Lysander and myself will fly this place.

Before the time I did Lysander see,

Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me:

O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,

That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell!

**LYSANDER**

Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:  
To-morrow night, when Phoebe doth behold  
Her silver visage in the watery glass,  
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,  
A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,  
Through Athens' gates have we devised  
to steal.

**HERMIA**

And in the wood, where often you and I  
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie,  
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,  
There my Lysander and myself shall meet;  
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,  
To seek new friends and stranger companies.  
Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us;  
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!  
Keep word, Lysander: we must starve our sight  
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

**LYSANDER**

I will, my Hermia. Helena, adieu:  
As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!

**HELENA**

How happy some o'er other some can be!  
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.  
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;  
He will not know what all but he do know:  
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,  
So I, admiring of his qualities:

Things base and vile, folding no quantity,  
Love can transpose to form and dignity:  
Love looks not with the eyes, but with  
the mind;

And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:  
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste;  
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste:  
And therefore is Love said to be a child,  
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.  
As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,  
So the boy Love is perjured every where:  
For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,  
He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;  
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,  
So he dissolved, and showers of oaths  
did melt.

I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:  
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night  
Pursue her; and for this intelligence  
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:  
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,  
To have his sight thither and back again.

*Exit.*

# THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

## Adapting and Cutting Shakespeare

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By Scott Bartelson

We often anticipate that a Shakespearean production will be very long, so it can seem baffling to hear the phrase “two hours’ traffic of our stage” in the Prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*. One can estimate that 1,000 lines of text equals approximately an hour of stage time (Campbell). Based on this estimate, *Hamlet* would run well over four hours, and *Romeo and Juliet* over three. If Shakespeare’s insinuation of “two hours” is to be believed, we can only guess that either the actors of Elizabethan times spoke at a quicker pace than ours, or that Shakespeare cut his own work for the stage, as is often the case for modern productions.

One of the first steps in producing a play by Shakespeare is to review the original texts and then decide what needs cutting (pulling out old versions of scripts from desk drawers can often save time!). Adapting and/or cutting Shakespeare’s plays can sometimes be a contentious process. Purists believe that each line or word must stay intact to its original source. Others are more flexible with their omissions and may even change the order of scenes, lines, or speeches, or remove whole characters.

The “cut,” or adaptation, of a Shakespeare play is directly linked to the intention of the director and the desired length of the performance, or run time. For example, when sitting down to look at adapting the plays for Breakdancing Shakespeare—one of our education programs here at Hartford Stage—the first step is to have a conversation with the director to discuss her ideas and concept of the play. In Breakdancing Shakespeare, we know that dances will take up roughly half of performance time on stage, and that the goal is a running time of approximately 90 minutes. That leaves about 45-60 minutes of actual text. Conversations about where those cuts happen and how dances replace the action in order to help propel the story forward are essential to the process. For example, when adapting *Hamlet* for Breakdancing Shakespeare in 2015, we made a choice to remove the political undertones of the play. The character of Fortinbras was eliminated and the story focused solely on the family relationship.

When cutting the play, two of the most important components to be conscious of are story structure and character arc. Because Breakdancing Shakespeare shows are relatively short, streamlining the action becomes the key driving force for the cut of the text (including the potential for eliminating sub-plots or whole characters). In a MainStage production, the run time is usually longer, and there is more room to keep much of Shakespeare’s poetic imagery and language, complexity of character, and sub-plots. However, decisions are still made about what to keep and what to cut; in last season’s production of *The Comedy of Errors*, for example, scenes or moments in the text were cut to make room for musical numbers.

The process of cutting and adapting the play largely happens before rehearsal begins. The director and creative team settle on a version of the script to use as a starting point going into rehearsals. The cutting of a text, though, can be an ongoing process, and script changes often continue throughout the rehearsal process in response to staging and timing—all in an attempt to keep driving the play forward. The script might even be adapted based on what a particular actor is doing; if an actor is conveying a certain description in a line through their body or gesture, there is no need to keep that repetitive line of text.

As we go about cutting the text, there are further details we keep in mind, such as internal scansion and outdated references. Shakespeare’s texts are infused with jokes that no longer land or references that can go over an audience member’s head. Hartford Stage Artistic Director Darko Tresnjak is keen on removing any references that no longer resonate. The ultimate goal is to have a theatrical experience that the audience is able to understand, connect with and follow.

One of the trickiest components of cutting is keeping the internal scansion of the text intact. The rhythm and pentameter of a speech or scene, particularly one in verse, can often provide clues for an actor to enter into the text and make clear choices and interpretations. An adaptor must be delicate when making an internal change to a speech or scene because it's important to keep the rhythm consistent. For example, a half-line break or caesura often indicates an important moment in a character's discovery or internal distress; eliminating that caesura can throw off that clarity for an actor.

For Hartford Stage's current production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, director Darko Tresnjak states how difficult this particular text is to cut. Unlike most other Shakespeare plays, *Midsummer* has a plot that is purely of Shakespeare's invention and tightly woven together. Any strike in the text can leave a hole in the narrative (a heavy use of rhyme also makes cutting particularly challenging). The largest cuts in our current version come within the fifth act when the mechanicals perform their play for Theseus' and Hippolyta's wedding day. Darko chose to cut and limit the jokes pointed to the mechanicals at their expense in order to emphasize the seriousness of purpose in their theatrical debut. We hope that balance of seriousness in the play's final scene, while still comical, will allow the audience to reflect on the beauty, art, and passion in their crafting of the play. This is one example of how a director's specific focus can help guide the process of adapting the script.

There are countless versions of Shakespeare's texts. Because Shakespeare is in our public domain, we all have the artistic freedom to cut, snip, re-order, re-configure, condense or prolong his plays. These are a few essential tools to keep in mind if you plan on leading a production of your own, but the best cut is always tailored to a particular production, and guided by the particular artists in the room.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If you had the opportunity to direct a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, what would your vision be? Where would it be set? What time period? Would you omit any of the characters or part(s) of the story?
2. Read one scene from a Shakespeare play (you may choose to use the scene that appears on page 14 of this study guide). In three short sentences, distill the most important narrative elements of the scene. Ask yourself: what is the essential action that propels the story forward in this scene? Cut the scene as dramatically as you can so that those elements remain intact but the scene is now significantly shorter. What have you lost and how does it affect your interpretation of the story?
3. After reading through an entire Shakespeare play, choose the one line from each scene that you think is most essential to the narrative of the story. In a separate document, list these lines of dialogue in order from Act 1, scene 1 to the final scene. String them together and read them from start to finish. Is the overall narrative of the play still clear? Can you understand the general concept of the play through those lines only? Discuss!

## Meet the Team: Liss Couch-Edwards

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By Aurelia Clunie

***Ever wonder how Hartford Stage creates the posters for its shows? Well, Liss Couch-Edwards is the woman behind the magic.***

Liss Couch-Edwards is the Marketing and Graphic Design Coordinator at Hartford Stage. She designs all of the theatre's printed materials and works closely with Chuck MacNaughton, the Digital Media Manager, who shares our materials digitally. A native of Farmington, CT, Liss attended The Ethel Walker School in Simsbury. She has been designing images for shows since she was young. In fifth grade, she created the T-shirt design for *School Daze*, her school play. Her interest in design continued to develop from then on: "I've always been interested in visual arts,"





Above: Liss Couch-Edwards.

Below: Poster for Hartford Stage's 2017 production of *The Comedy of Errors*. Illustrated by Liss Couch-Edwards



she says. “I started focusing seriously on photography in high school and discovered how I could use Adobe Photoshop to create something meaningful. Soon after, I began teaching myself how to use InDesign and Illustrator as well.”

Later, she attended Mount Holyoke College where she studied Art History and Film. “I majored in Art History because I was drawn to the symbolism and interpreting what art meant. My dad is a minister and so from an early age, I was exposed to a lot of religious art. It was not until later that I realized how much symbolism there is in all types of art,” explains Liss. At Mount Holyoke, she participated in the theatre department and while stage managing a show, found they needed a poster designer. Liss rose to the occasion: “I made a bold move and asked the director flat out, ‘Can I design something for you?’ It was a play called *Hello Failure*. That was my first poster—I actually have it hanging in my house.” She continued designing for the department as a student.

After graduation, Liss returned to Ethel Walker where she began teaching photography. She enjoyed helping students see the meaning in art, as she had as a child. Additionally, she put her acquired skills to use: “I was also doing graphic design for the marketing department, but I didn’t study graphic design. I think my interest in and passion for it was enough to get me started. If I didn’t know how to do something, I looked it up.”

Since joining the staff at Hartford Stage, Liss has earned her MFA in Illustration from The University of Hartford’s Hartford Art School. When not designing posters for the theatre, she works on writing and illustrating children’s books. In January, *The New York Times* featured an article on Liss’s poster for *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by Darko Tresnjak, and her inspirations for that design. Recently, Associate Director of Education Nina Pinchin sat down with Liss to learn more about her process and approach to designing the poster

for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Their interview is excerpted below.

**NP: So looking at your show art for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, take us through the journey. Where does the inspiration come from? How do you work with the director?**

**LC-E:** Darko, [Associate Artistic Director] Elizabeth Williamson, [Associate Director of Marketing] Todd Brandt, and I sat down and Darko went through the season, describing what each show is about. Each has its own vibe. I looked at images online for inspiration and Darko sent me pictures he felt would spark ideas. I created multiple designs for each show and then showed Darko, and the revision process went back and forth until we were happy with each poster.

**NP: How did this process work for *Midsummer*?**

**LC-E:** He described this production as “opulent” and having an *Upstairs, Downstairs* relationship between the different groups of people living and working on an estate. My original poster idea was a grand ballroom with a chandelier hanging from above. A black and white tile floor faded into grass and the dark background was subtly shadowed with trees. It looked as if the ballroom were transforming into a magical fairy world. Darko felt the poster needed to reflect the characters more than that design did—he wanted some kind of human element. I then found this image of the woman and moon that I thought symbolized the play’s parallels between reality and dreams.

**NP: When you say you find images, where do you look?**

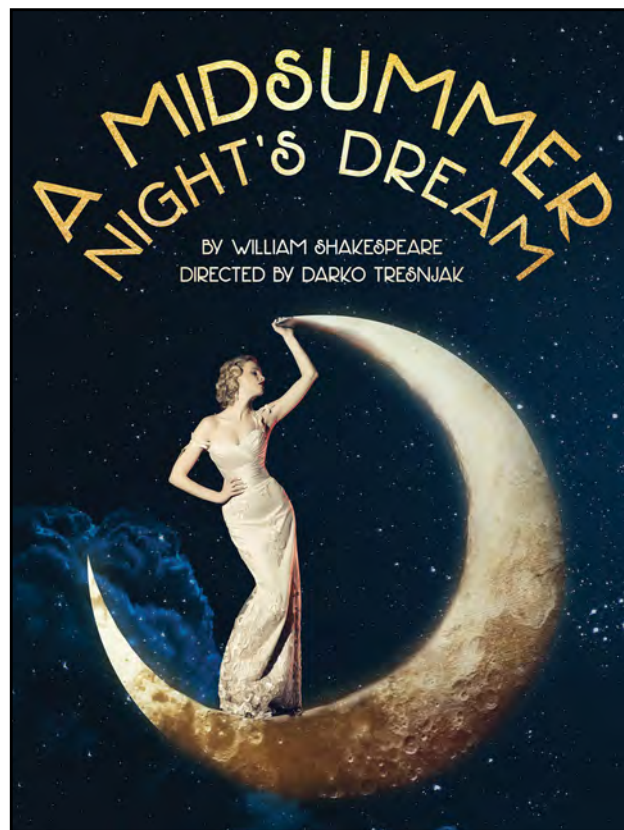
**LC-E:** It depends if the poster is going to be an illustration or a photo. If it's an illustration, I draw them all myself, like I did for *The Comedy of Errors*. Otherwise, I look on stock image websites and purchase what fits best and then edit from there. A single poster is usually multiple images that have been combined into one.

**NP: Is there anything else that you keep in mind as you create the artwork?**

**LC-E:** I'm always thinking about what art can mean—it goes back to my interest in symbolism. What does the poster say about the show, but without giving too much away? It needs to grab someone's attention, yet leave enough mystery so that they come see a performance to find out what it's about. My favorite thing about a theatre poster is how people can often better understand it after they have seen the show—anything that was unclear before suddenly makes sense. The elements that piqued their interest in the beginning have now been explained.

**Liss Couch-Edwards explains her process of finding an image and developing it for a poster:**

- The woman's dress and pose give her a dramatic look that reflect Darko's interpretation of the play.
- The night sky in the background creates a sense of depth and keeps the poster from seeming too flat or plain.
- A blue wash makes the clouds more subtle and puts the focus on the woman.
- Certain stars are edited out to keep the eye from getting distracted from the focal point.
- A gold wash is added to the moon to create warmth and texture.
- The curved title treatment mimics the shape of the crescent moon and adds visual interest.



**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Liss kept coming back to design throughout her life and career. Do you have an interest, hobby, or skill that keeps resurfacing? Write a list of how you use that interest or hobby in your everyday life. Then write a list of ways you can develop that interest or hobby to one day become a career.
2. Liss Couch-Edwards asks, "What images can you put together to represent the show at its best?" Try designing your own poster artwork for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Try focusing on a particular theme or concept such as magic in the forest, love triangles, jealousy, or characters achieving their life's dream.
3. Design a poster for your favorite play or movie.

# Through Athens' Gates: Looking Inside *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

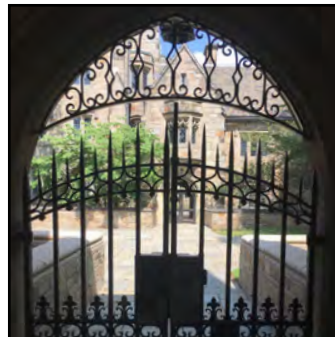
By Natalie Pertz

Shakespeare, a master craftsman of dazzling words, mentions one word in particular throughout the play. In a play with characters moving in between multiple worlds, gates are a reminder not only of the limits of one world but the possibilities of another. In the current Hartford Stage production, a gatehouse, inspired by Biltmore Estate in North Carolina, serves as the centerpiece of the set.

Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:  
To-morrow night, when Phoebe  
doth behold  
Her silver visage in the watery glass,  
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed  
grass,  
A time that lovers' flights doth still  
conceal,  
Through Athens' gates have we  
devised to steal.  
(1.1)

The raging rocks  
And shivering shocks  
Shall break the locks  
Of prison gates;  
And Phibbus' car  
Shall shine from far  
And make and mar  
The foolish Fates.  
(1.2)

But we are spirits of another sort:  
I with the morning's love have oft  
made sport,  
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,  
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,  
Opening on Neptune with fair  
blessed beams,  
Turns into yellow gold his salt  
green streams.  
(3.2)



Clockwise from top left: Biltmore Estate. Etching by Lee James Pantas. Bushnell Park.\*  
Ancient Burial Ground.\* Gate to Jonathan Edwards College, Yale.\*  
Photographs by \*Natalie Pertz and \*Jennifer Roberts.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Throughout *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, gates are mentioned multiple times. In our world, what purpose does a gate serve? Do you think they have the same meaning for Shakespeare? Why did he choose to use the image of gates so often in this play?
2. If you were Shakespeare re-writing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for your classmates, how would you update the following phrase: "*Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.*" Turn to a classmate and share your updated phrase. What other words could you substitute for "gates?"
3. The play begins in Athens in Duke Theseus' court. We quickly learn that Lysander and Hermia are unhappy because they can't be together and come up with a plan to sneak out; they want to escape to a different "world." In your life, what places feel like an escape to you? And what gates, or thresholds—either literal or symbolic—do you cross to get there?

# A Conversation with Joshua Pearson, Costume Designer

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Interviewed by Natalie Pertz

**Q: As a costume designer, what does your process usually look like? How do you begin? Where do you find inspiration?**

**A:** You begin with reading the script. *Midsummer* is obviously quite well known and I've worked on it several times, as an associate designer and costume shop manager. Once Darko settled on a vision for the production, I asked a few questions and started doing research. Darko was initially inspired by pictures of Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Margaret riding horses. That led to the idea of setting the production on an estate in the country.

**Q: Being that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* alternates between multiple worlds, from a design perspective, how do you visually distinguish one world from another? Do you have a favorite world that was the most fun to costume?**

**A:** There is a lot of hunting imagery in the show, which is why Darko wanted Theseus and Hippolyta in equestrian clothing. It made sense to have the cast serve as the house staff on the estate. Philostrate is the butler, Bottom the chauffeur, Peter Quince the gardener, etc. The inspiration for the fairy world is the idea that a classical Greek statue in the garden comes to life. I then looked at how fashion has interpreted Greek clothing. No one knows what a fairy looks like, let alone an ancient Greek-based fairy, so there was freedom to make it beautiful and not based on strict period clothing. I don't have a favorite world! Ask me after the show opens.

**Q: What advice would you give to a student interested in costume design?**

**A:** Any good costume designer is incredibly observant and very curious. Are you? They need to love storytelling and history. And they have to enjoy collaborating with other people. Learning the basics of sewing helps you learn what fabric can and can't do. Draw, even if you're terrible at it. You'll get better with practice.



Above: Ettington Park in the Warwickshire countryside.  
Photograph by Darius Khan.

## OTHER QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does it mean to be "in love?" What are some symbols and images of love?
2. Read the following excerpt from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Does this statement ring true for today's relationships between men and women?  

We [women] cannot fight for love as men may do:  
We should be woo'd and were not meant to woo.  
(2.1)
3. Puck is responsible for many of the mix-ups in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. How would you describe the character of Puck? Is Puck evil?
4. Think of a recent dream you had and describe, in as much detail as possible, the images from this dream. What aspects or images were realistic and which aspects or images were unrealistic? Were you able to recall every detail of your dream?

5. In this production, the director and costume designer collaborated on how to portray fairies and were inspired by the idea that a classical Greek statue comes to life in a garden (check out our conversation with costume designer Joshua Pearson for additional design insights). If you were the director, how would you choose to think of the fairies? What kinds of costumes would you create if you were the costume designer?

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

### The World(s) of the Play

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*A Midsummer Night's Dream* features four different worlds (Theseus' court, the young lovers, the mechanicals, and the fairies). Sometimes, characters from different worlds are in the same scene. It is important for the audience to be able to differentiate one world from another. How would you solve this problem? Select one character from each world to design a costume for, and consider the following questions: How might the audience be able to tell the difference between characters? What visual elements could you use to assist them (i.e. hairstyles, colors, type of clothing)? Grab some drawing utensils and get to sketching!

### Challenging Authority

---

Have you ever disagreed with a parent over curfew? Questioned a school administrator about the technicalities of the dress code? This is what it is to challenge authority. In the play, Hermia challenges the will of her father, Egeus, in refusing to marry Demetrius. Write a monologue about a time you challenged authority.

### Silly Shakespeare

---

Throughout the play, the mechanicals are rehearsing Pyramus and Thisbe, a story that is supposed to be sad, but because they are over-the-top actors, the show is instead comical. In a small group, re-tell a well-known story—*The Three Little Pigs*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Goldilocks and The Three Bears* or *Humpty Dumpty*—with minimal props and costumes that you can find in the room. Try to make it funny!

### Journal as a Fairy

---

When the lovers take to the woods, the play transitions to a forest full of fairies. Whether you're imagining a powerful fairy like Oberon or a mischievous fairy like Puck, write 2-3 journal entries as if you are one of these magical creatures. What do your days consist of? Who do you play tricks on? What lessons have you learned today?

### Midsummer 411

---

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is full of characters falling in and out of love. All of these romantic twists and turns are the perfect ingredients for the cover of a tabloid. First, select a love entanglement from the play and come up with a headline (i.e. Fairy Fury: Titania and Oberon's Custody Battle, or He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not: How I Lost Lysander) Then, create your own tabloid cover using collaged, contrasting images of love and hate. When you've finished, share your cover with the class.

# Opposition Jeopardy

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Are Hermia and Helena friends or enemies? Are Lysander and Demetrius fighting or falling in love with Hermia? *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play full of opposites. Let's play a game of opposites!

Before beginning Opposition Jeopardy, select a host and then split yourselves into two teams of contestants. Every game is made up of three rounds. Each round is comprised of three questions. Every question is a noun and the correct answer is its opposite. It is recommended that the host creates noun cards beforehand. To answer the question, your team must "buzz in" before the opposing side does. For example, a round of Opposition Jeopardy could look like this:

**Host:** Welcome to another fabulous game of Opposite Jeopardy! My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'll be your host this afternoon. Let's get started. ROUND ONE! The opposite of love is...

*Team 1 buzzes in.*

**Host:** Team 1?

**Team 1:** Hate!

**Host:** Correct! One point for Team 1!

**Host:** The opposite of comedy is...

*Team 2 buzzes in.*

**Host:** Team 2?

**Team 2:** Tragedy!

**Host:** Yes! A point for Team 2!

At the end of three rounds, the team with the most points wins!

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