



William Shakespeare's  
***A Midsummer Night's Dream***  
*Adapted and Directed by Allen O'Reilly*  
Education Director for Georgia Shakespeare

On Tour throughout the Southeast  
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Study Guide Creation  
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*\*Please be sure to share the theatre etiquette sheet with your students,  
as it is key to a communicative theatre experience.*

*\*\*All writing and discussion questions are based on the  
Georgia Standards for the 2011-2012 school year.*

# Characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

## The Court

Theseus  
Hippolyta  
Egeus  
Philostrate

## The Lovers

Helena  
Hermia  
Lysander  
Demetrius

## The Fairies

Oberon  
Titania  
Puck  
First Fairy  
Moth  
Peaseblossom  
Mustardseed

## The Mechanicals

Bottom  
Quince  
Flute  
Starveling  
Snug  
Snout

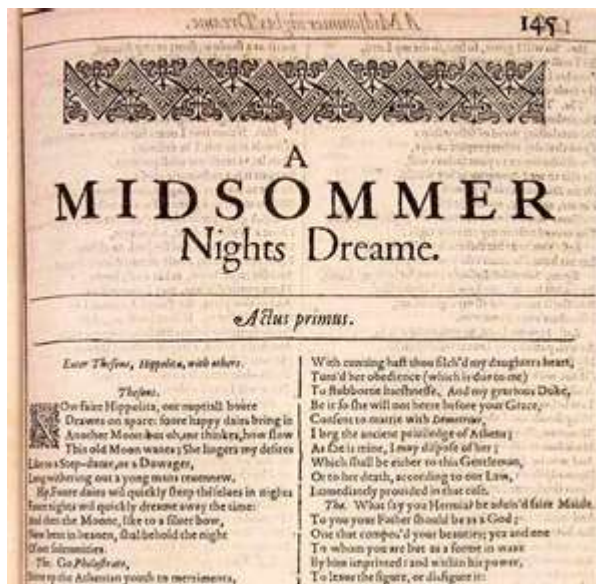
## The casting breakdown for four actors!

Hermia/ Puck/Moth/ Snug

Hippolyta/ Helena/ Titania/ Snout

Theseus/Oberon/Bottom/Demetrius/Cobweb

Philostrate/ Egeus/Lysander/ Quince/Mustardseed



### *Synopsis of A Midsummer Night's Dream (full text)*

The play opens in Athens. The Duke, Theseus, is returning home from war, where he was triumphant. Theseus also acquired a bride-to-be, Hippolyta, the Queen of the Amazon, from his travels. Theseus attempts to woo his captive and sends his master of revels Philostrate to “stir up the Athenian youth to merriment” hoping to cheer his warrior-love up in the process. He is interrupted by the appearance of Egeus and his daughter Hermia, and two rival youths, Demetrius and Lysander. Fed up with the love affair of Lysander and Hermia, Egeus appeals to Duke Theseus. If Hermia refuses to wed Egeus’ choice of husband, Demetrius, an ancient Athenian laws states that “she will either die the death, or abjure forever the company of men.” Lysander and Hermia devise a plan to meet the following night and elope to escape the strict laws of Athenian society. When they are planning their escape, Hermia’s childhood friend Helena appears lamenting her unrequited love for her former boyfriend, Demetrius. Lysander and Hermia divulge their plan to Helena, and Helena then decides to tell Demetrius their plan, knowing full well he will pursue his love Hermia to the wood and there Helena will be able to woo him. Some Athenian laborers have gathered to rehearse a play for Duke Theseus’ wedding celebration led by the carpenter Peter Quince and the exuberant Bottom, the weaver. Once the parts are assigned the men agree to meet the following night in the wood, where they may rehearse their play out of earshot of their fellow competitors.

In the wood outside Athens we meet Puck, a mischievous prankster. Puck follows the King of the Fairies, Oberon who is in the midst of a quarrel with his wife Titania, the Queen of the fairies. The fight stems from the fact that Titania refuses to yield up a young Indian prince to Oberon. To exact his revenge, Oberon dispatches Puck to fetch a little western flower, the juice of which will make Titania “dote upon the next live creature that she sees.” As Demetrius runs through the forest pursued by Helena, Oberon decides to inflict Demetrius with the juice of the flower, ensuring that he will fall in love with the erstwhile Helena. Oberon then lays the love-juice on the sleeping Titania in her bower, hoping that when she awakes she will fall in love with some “vile thing.” Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius however and puts the love juice in Lysander’s eyes compelling him to fall in love with Helena. Meanwhile, the laborers meet in the forest and during the rehearsal Puck puts a spell on Bottom turning him into an ass. Bottom is abandoned by his fellows and Titania awakens and falls immediately in love with him. In an attempt to set the lovers right, Oberon squirts the love juice in Demetrius’ eyes, but when the betrayed Hermia arrives, mass confusion and jealousy ensue until Puck sets all things right by restoring Lysander’s sight to his “former lady’s eye.”

Once Oberon obtains the Indian boy from Titania, he removes the spell and Puck removes the ass head from Bottom. The lovers and Bottom return to Athens; the lovers to get married joining Duke Theseus and Hippolyta, and Bottom to perform the part of Pyramus in the craftsmen’s performance at the Duke’s wedding celebration. The play though amateurish, is “very notably discharged” nevertheless. The lovers go to bed, and the fairies return to bless the Duke’s palace. Puck ends the play with a suggestion that we have “but slumbered here while these visions did appear.”

## The Adaptation

Shakespeare never said it was set in Athens *Greece*! That is the departure point for this fun, lively and *contemporary* look at this classic comedy from William Shakespeare! The idea struck me on a recent visit with my college-bound son to the University of Georgia campus in Athens. The college-town of Athens is a vibrant place with a wonderful mix of intellectuals and artists much like Athens, Greece. Even the UGA arch (pictured below) the main symbol of the Georgia campus has a classic Greek Athenian look.



The UGA Arch

Athens, Georgia is the type of place where co-eds, athletes, administrators and local musicians can freely mingle due to the many restaurants and clubs practically located on the UGA campus. It was very clear to me that if I chose this approach Hermia would be a cheerleader-type, Lysander an intellectual, Helena a sorority girl and Demetrius a frat boy football player; this contemporary approach with the lovers make them more easily identifiable to a modern high school audience. Oh yes, and there's a football connection! What discussion of Athens, Georgia would be complete without a reference to Georgia Football, Go Dawgs! I mentioned Hermia as a cheerleader, we also have Theseus represented as the UGA Football coach in this version, Hippolyta a captured homecoming Queen from Auburn and the opening action of our Midsummer is rife with the excitement of a Saturday afternoon between the hedges!

Any approach involving Athens' Georgia must also include a reference to the vibrant music scene and it's most famous denizens REM and the B-52's. REM's eclectic combination of joy and heartache in their music seemed like the perfect soundtrack for the lovers while REM's almost primitive, Dionysian sound was a great fit for the fairies, who in this world have some to Athens to party and affect the local in as mischievous a way as possible!

All of this is achieved without changing a word of Shakespeare's text and without the added fixture of clunky southern dialects! We hope the story and the comedy ring true for you and that you end up identifying even more with these characters because they are coming to you from your own backyard.

## **Glossary**

**Abridgement-** n. pastime.

**Antiopa** -Queen of the Amazons, often identified with Hippolyta, but here they are viewed as separate women.

**Ariadne-** King Minos' daughter, who gives Theseus the thread by which he finds his way out of the labyrinth after killing the Minotaur.

**Bacchanals-** worshippers of Bacchus, the god of wine and revelry.

**Bergomask dance-** a rustic dance, named for Bergamo (a province ridiculed for its rusticity).

**Cankerblossom-n.** a worm that destroys the flower bud.

**Dewlap –n.** a loose fold of skin hanging from the throat of cattle and certain other animals, or a similar loose fold under the chin of a person.

**Disfigure-v.** Quince's blunder for "figure."

**Dowager-n.** an elderly woman of wealth and dignity.

**Ercles-n.** Hercules.

**Eyne-n.** eye.

**Filch'd-v.** to steal, pilfer.

**Gambol-v** frolic.

**Gauds-N.** cheap, showy trinkets, playthings.

**Gleek-v** jest.

**Imbrue-v.** stain.

**Limander, Helen-** blunders for the lovers Hero and Leander; Leander swims the Hellespont from Abydos every night to be with her; when he drowns in a storm, Hero throws herself into the sea.

**Lode-stars-n.** stars by which one directs one's course.

**Love-in-idleness-n.** pansy, heartsease

**Minimus-n.** petite person.

**Muskroses-n.** Mediterranean roses with fragrant, usually white, flowers.

**Neaf-n.** fist.

**Nine-men's morris-n.** pattern cut in the turf when this game was played outside with nine pebbles.

**Ninny/Ninus-** mythical founder of Ninevah.

**Ouzel cock-n.** male blackbird.

**Oxlips-n.** a perennial plant of the primrose family.

**Patches-n.** clowns.

**Peascod-n.** the pod of the pea plant.

**Phibbus' car-** the chariot of Phoebus (Apollo as god of the sun).

**Philomel-** the nightingale (Philomela was a princess of Athens raped by Tereseus; the gods change her into a nightingale).

**Phoebe-** Artemis as goddess of the moon: identified with the Roman Diana.

**Recreant-adj.** cowardly

**Shafalus and Procrus-** blunders for "Cephalus" and "Procris," famous lovers.

**Sisters Three-** the Fates, the three goddesses who control human destiny.

**Stepdame-n.** stepmother.

**Thessalian-n** inhabitant of Thessaly, a region of E Greece, between the Pindus Mountains and the Aegean Sea.

**Tiring-house-n.** attiring house.

**Tong & bones-n** instruments for rustic music.

**Translated-adv** transformed.

**tiring-house-n** attiring house.

**Welkin- n.** the vault of heaven, the sky, or the upper air.

## Famous quotes from A Midsummer Night's Dream

***"The course of true love never did run smooth."***

Lysander Act sc.1

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

Flute Act I sc. 2

***"I am that merry wanderer of the night."***

Puck Act II sc.1

***"My heart is as true as steel."***

Helena Act II sc.1

***"Lord, what fools these mortals be!"***

Puck Act III sc.2

***"Jack shall have Jill;***

***Nought shall go ill;***

***The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well."***

Puck Act III sc.2

***"I have had a dream, past the wit of man to  
say what dream it was."***

Bottom Act IV sc.1

***"The lunatic, the lover and the poet***

***Are of imagination all compact."***

Theseus Act V sc. 1

***"The best in this kind are but shadows, and the  
worst are no worse, if imagination amend them"***

Theseus Act V sc. 1

***"If we shadows have offended,***

***Think but this, and all is mended,***

***That you have but slumbered here***

***While these visions did appear."***

Puck Act V sc.1

# Pre-Show Writing and Discussion Activity

Based on the Georgia Language Arts Standards for 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade:

10<sup>th</sup>: (ELA10RL1), 11<sup>th</sup>: (ELA11W1) 12<sup>th</sup>: (ELA12W1)

Although written in 1595, the themes of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* still resonate in today's society. Spend a class period exploring the themes of *Midsummer*, and have students relate these themes to their own experiences in life. Further the self-discovery and improve creative writing skills with the creation of a sonnet. To help with the lesson plan, one of Shakespeare's sonnets, soaked with youthful love, has been pulled for your reference.

## **Sonnet XVIII (18)**

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this and this gives life to thee..*

## **Major themes in *Midsummer*:**

- Love
  - How is love different for the four main couples of the play?
- Dedication
  - Who is dedicated to their quest?
- Transformation
  - What is the difference between internal and external transformation?
- Urban vs. Rural
  - In Athens vs. the forest, what rules apply, and what rules can be broken?
- Old World vs. New World
  - What are the pros and cons of arranged marriage vs. marriage for love?

## **I. Activity One- Individual**

Ask your students to pick one of the themes from the list above and write a paragraph relating the theme to their own life experience. Once the assignment has been completed, have the students break into small groups (four to five students), and ask them to discuss the reason why they chose a certain theme and what it means to them. The students can either read the paragraph aloud to the group or class, or allow the students to keep the paragraph to themselves; maybe the paragraph is more like a journal entry and is simply a catalyst to help them to begin to think about the themes in relation to their own lives.

## **II. Activity Two- Group**

- A. Ask the groups to pick their favorite theme and paragraph (if read aloud) of the group. They then work together to decide five action verbs and five sensory adjectives to describe the chosen theme and paragraph.
- B. Working together in the group, ask the students to help each other come up with five action verbs and five sensory adjectives that relate to their individually chosen theme.

## **III. Theme Sonnet**

- A. If the group is working together with one theme and paragraph, have the group collaborate on the construction of a Sonnet, using the elected action verbs and sensory adjectives to help guide them through the writing process. Each student can contribute a couplet or two.
- B. If the student is moving away from the group to work individually, have each student write their own Sonnet as a homework assignment, to be presented to the class, incorporating the action verbs and sensory adjectives.

# Post-Show Discussion Questions- Language Arts

Based on the Georgia Language Arts Standards for Reading and British Literature for 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade.  
(ELABLRL1)

## **I. Character Point of View**

- Compare and contrast the characters Hermia and Helena. Which one do you identify with the most?
- Explore the names of the mechanicals. What do their names tell you about their personality?
- What is the development arc of the male sweethearts? How are they changed by the flower's love potion?

## **II. Language and Style**

- What is the difference between prose and verse?
- The Mechanicals tend to speak in prose, and the fairies tend to speak in verse. Why do you think Shakespeare made this choice?
- In the character of Puck: Identify the rhyming couplets in the famous following passage from Act III, SC II. What qualities of Puck does this style choice illuminate?

*Puck (cut version)*  
*My mistress with a monster is in love.*  
*Near to her close and consecrated bower,*  
*While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,*  
*A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,*  
*That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,*  
*Were met together to rehearse a play*  
*Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.*  
*The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,*  
*Who Pyramus presented, in their sport*  
*Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake*  
*When I did him at this advantage take,*  
*An ass's noll I fixed on his head:*  
*Anon his Thisbe must be answered,*  
*And forth my mimic comes.*  
*So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;*  
*I led them on in this distracted fear,*  
*And left sweet Pyramus translated there:*  
*When in that moment, so it came to pass,*  
*Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.*

## **III. Imagery and Symbolism**

- What is the symbolism and importance of the magical flower to the sweethearts and the fairies?
- How do the mechanicals employ symbolism in their "play within the play?"
- Hippolyta is the Queen of the Amazon. How does the enslavement of Hippolyta compare to the enslavement of Hermia to her father's wishes? Does this imagery and dramatic action relate to today's women?

## **Post-Show Discussion Questions-** **Social Studies, World History and Geography**

- Act One and Act Five in the full text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* take place in Athens, Greece. One of the great contributions of Greek culture is the formulation of democracy. Where in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* do you see democracy utilized? (SSWG1)
- Compare the democracy of Greece to the monarchy of England. What are the differences between today and the late 1500's? (SSWG1)
- In the many biographies written about the life of William Shakespeare, there is no reference to him ever traveling outside of England. Why do you think he set his plays in such exotic locales, having never traveled there himself? (SSWG2)
- Does the exotic setting help enhance the play for the Elizabethan audience, as well as today's audience? How does the enhancement differ between then and now? (SSWG2 and SSWH9-f)



Athens, Georgia



Athens, Greece



## Interesting Shakespeare Facts

William Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564.

Shakespeare later died on his birthday in 1616.

He was 52 years old.

***In Elizabethan times, plays were not considered a literary accomplishment. Therefore, Shakespeare's plays were not published until almost a decade after his death. He only published the 154 sonnets and the 2 narratives in his lifetime.***

The best seat in the house was considered to be the farthest away.

That way you could see the entire action on stage.

***There were no women allowed on the Elizabethan stage. Young male acting apprentices, whose voices had not yet changed, played the young female roles.***

William Shakespeare was 18 years old when he married.

His wife, Ann Hathaway, was 26 years old.

William and Ann had three children: Susanna, and twins Judith and Hamnet.

Hamnet died when he was eleven. Very soon after his death, Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*.

***William Shakespeare helped expand the English language more than any other poet of his lifetime by coining more than 1500 words!***

***Many of these words and phrases are part of our everyday speech.***

His plays have inspired operas, ballets, paintings, songs, and film.

## ***Shakespeare's plays have been translated into***

### ***Theatre Etiquette for Georgia Shakespeare***

We encourage you to explore the role of the audience in Shakespeare's day.

Who were the Groundlings? How did they behave at a performance?

How does it differ from the role of the audience today?

Please have your entire group seated and accounted for prior to the arranged curtain time. This request is important, as we may have up to three schools to visit each day, and need to stay on schedule.

Run time for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is 50 minutes.

**What rules apply when attending live theatre? Why are they different than attending a movie theater?**  
***The main reasons for the differences in etiquette are safety and courtesy.***

Unlike a movie, the actors are live on stage, and can hear the audience when they talk, play video games, and text message. They can see the light from your phone as you check your messages, or see you sleeping. This distracting activity harms one of the most awesome parts of live theatre: the communication between the actors and you! There is an energy that is passed between the two, and good audiences can make a good show jump to being a great show because the actors know that you are listening and engaged in the performance. In a movie, the actors filmed 6 months ago, and are currently lounging in Hollywood. They are not part of the immediate experience like live theatre actors.

For obvious reasons, safety is an issue because the theatre is dark during a performance. However, in live theatre, you may not always know what is coming next! Not only is it dark, the door you may need to go through to get to the restroom may be the same door being used by an actor with a broadsword. As a courtesy to the actors, house management staff and those seated around you, it is best to remain seated until a scheduled break in the performance.