

A Midsummer Night's Dream



Act 1, Sc. 1

Study Questions

Record your answers on a separate sheet of paper. You must answer in complete sentences.

1. How is Hippolyta's reasoning concerning the speed with which the next four days will pass different from that of Theseus? Note how Shakespeare portrays the patience and calmness of Hippolyta in contrast to the impatience and need for action of Theseus.
2. Why has Egeus brought his daughter and her two suitors to Theseus? What does Egeus expect him to do? What was the proper role for women/daughters in Athenian society, according to Egeus and Theseus?
3. What is Theseus' ruling concerning Hermia?
4. How does Lysander's comment about Demetrius' previous love affair with Helena complicate things?
5. What do Lysander and Hermia plan to do about this seemingly impossible situation?
6. Hermia complains that she "frowns upon [Demetrius], yet he loves me still...I give him curses, yet he gives me love." Why, do you suppose, Demetrius continues to pursue a young woman who doesn't want him?

7. Why do Lysander and Hermia tell Helena their plans?

8. Even though Helena loves Demetrius and is Hermia's old school friend, why does she decide to tell Demetrius of Hermia and Lysander's plans? What does this show us about Helena?

9. Some people say that parents know their teenagers better than anyone else in the world, while others say that parents know only one side of their teenagers' personalities and rarely know the full person. With which side do you agree?



Lysander and Hermia

A Midsummer Night's Dream



Act 1, Sc. 2

1. Why does Nick Bottom want to play all the parts?
2. What other famous Shakespearean story does the plot of Pyramus and Thisby echo?
3. How do you suppose the threat of being hanged if they scare the ladies will affect the tradesmen's interpretation of the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisby?
4. In what way is this scene funny?
5. Where are the actors to meet the following night? Why are they rehearsing in this remote place?
6. Who else is meeting in these same woods at the same time? Why do you suppose Shakespeare has set up this coincidence?



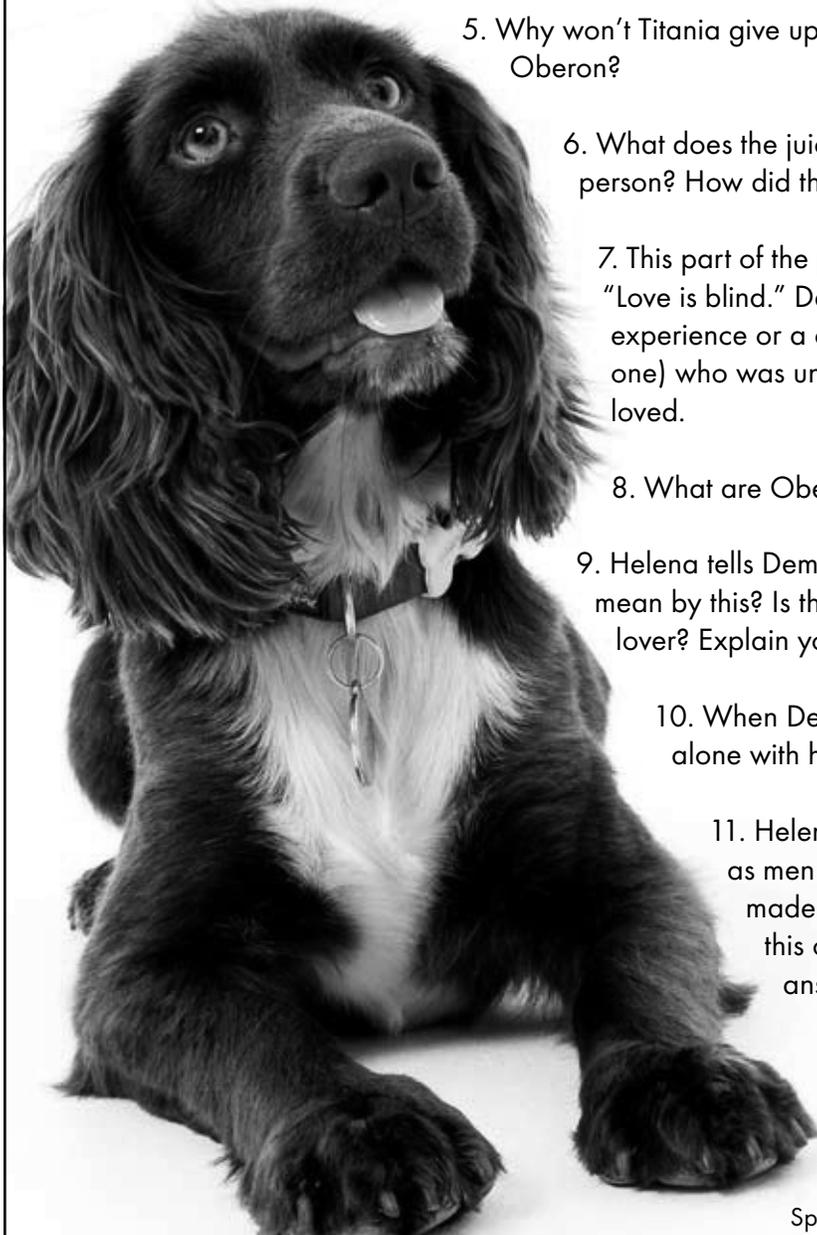
Nick Bottom and Peter Quince

A Midsummer Night's Dream



Act 2, Sc. 1

1. Why are Oberon, the king of the fairies, and Titania, the queen of the fairies, fighting?
2. Name three of the numerous tricks Puck enjoys playing on humans.
3. How have Oberon and Titania been involved in the past with Theseus and Hippolyta, and why have they come to Athens?
4. What effect has their quarrel had on nature, on the seasons, on humans?



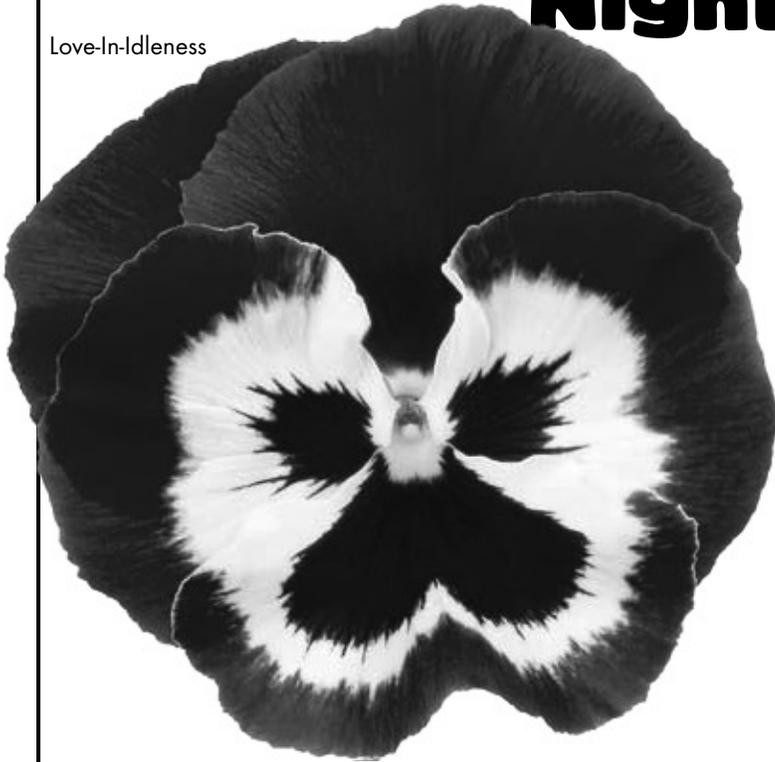
5. Why won't Titania give up the "changeling," or little Indian boy, to Oberon?
6. What does the juice from the "love-in-idleness" flower do to a person? How did the flower get this power?
7. This part of the play reminds one of the famous saying, "Love is blind." Describe a person from your real-life experience or a character from a story/film (other than this one) who was unable to see the flaws of the person he/she loved.
8. What are Oberon's plans for Titania?
9. Helena tells Demetrius, "I am your spaniel." What does she mean by this? Is this the best approach to win back a former lover? Explain your answer.
10. When Demetrius warns that Helena won't be safe alone with him in the woods at night, what is her reply?
11. Helena says that women "cannot fight for love, as men may do; we should be woo'd and were not made to woo." Do you agree with this idea or is this old-fashioned thinking today? Explain your answer.
12. What does Oberon tell Puck to do about Demetrius and Helena?

Spaniel

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Love-In-Idleness



*"Churl,
upon thy eyes I throw
All the power
this charm doth owe."*

Act 2, Sc. 2

1. What's ironic about the song the fairies sing to lull Titania to sleep?

2. Why does Hermia insist Lysander sleep a little bit away from her?

3. Why does Puck anoint Lysander's eyes with the juice from the flower?

4. Now that you've finished reading this scene, what's funny about lines 68-71, when Hermia and Lysander are saying goodnight to each other?

5. How does Helena react to Lysander's sudden love for her when he awakens?

7. Who says this line?
To whom does he think he's speaking?
To whom is he really speaking?

6. What was Hermia's dream?
How is the dream a reflection of reality?



A Midsummer Night's Dream



Act 3, Sc. 1

1. How are the actors going to keep from scaring the ladies when Pyramus kills himself or when the lion roars?
2. How are the actors going to manage the setting/scenery such as the moonlight and the wall?
3. Why do the rest of the actors run off when Bottom reappears?
4. What does Puck plan to do when he follows after the other actors?
5. How does Bottom react to the hysterical shoutings of Snout and Quince?
6. Based on what we already know about Nick Bottom's character, why isn't he surprised that the lovely fairy queen is attracted to him?
7. In lines 140-141, Bottom says that "reason and love keep little company together nowadays." Why is this such an apt statement at this point in the play?
8. Now that Nick Bottom has been transformed, what do we realize is funny about his name?



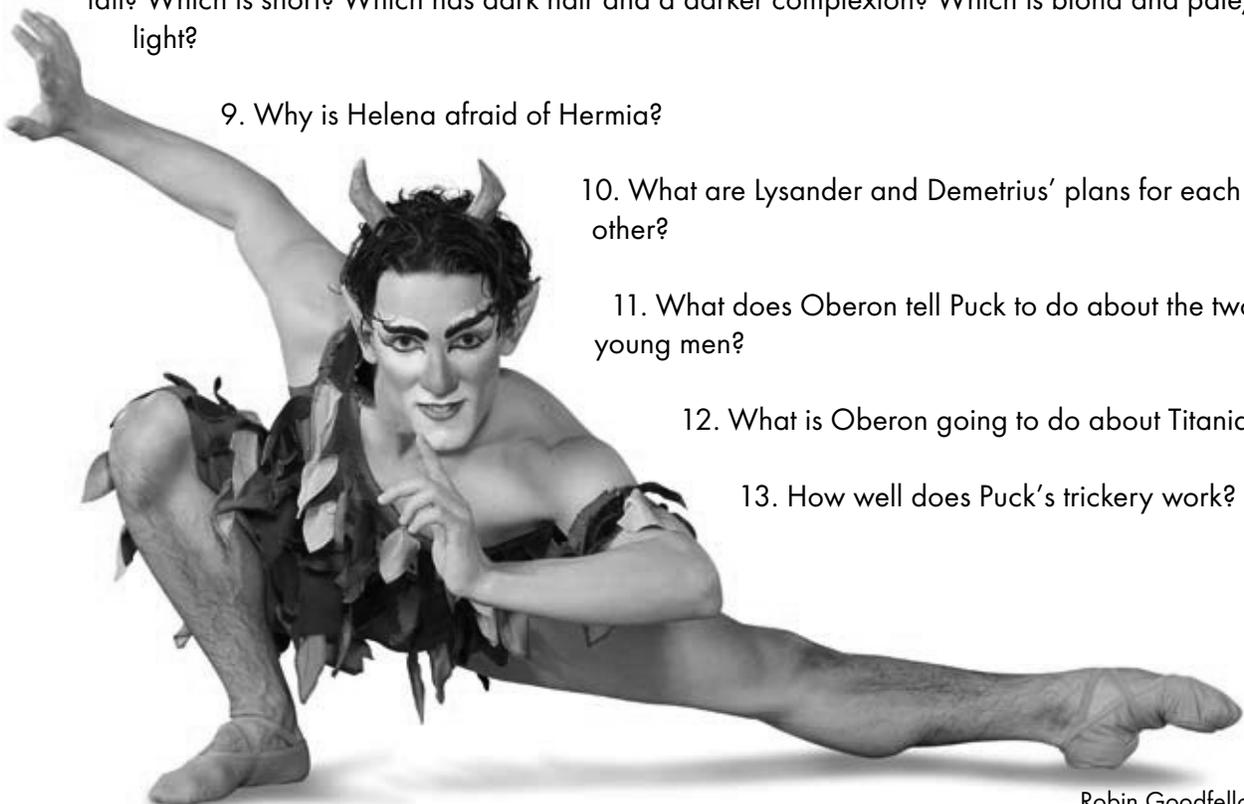
Nick Bottom

A Midsummer Night's Dream



Act 3, Sc. 2

1. When Puck describes to Oberon how the tradesmen/actors reacted when they saw Bottom transformed into a jackass, what analogy does Puck use to describe the manner in which the men scattered? What does this analogy show us about the power that the fairy world has over the mortal world?
2. What does Hermia accuse Demetrius of doing?
3. Hermia calls Demetrius both a "worm" and an "adder." What's an adder? How are both descriptions apt for Demetrius?
4. How are Puck and Oberon going to correct Puck's earlier mistake?
5. Why is Helena upset when Demetrius says he loves her? Isn't this what she had wanted all along?
6. Of what does Helena accuse Hermia?
7. Describe the friendship of Hermia and Helena in their younger days. What fruit analogy does Helena use to describe their former friendship?
8. Helena and Hermia have similar names, but their physical appearance is quite different. Which girl is tall? Which is short? Which has dark hair and a darker complexion? Which is blond and pale/light?
9. Why is Helena afraid of Hermia?
10. What are Lysander and Demetrius' plans for each other?
11. What does Oberon tell Puck to do about the two young men?
12. What is Oberon going to do about Titania?
13. How well does Puck's trickery work?

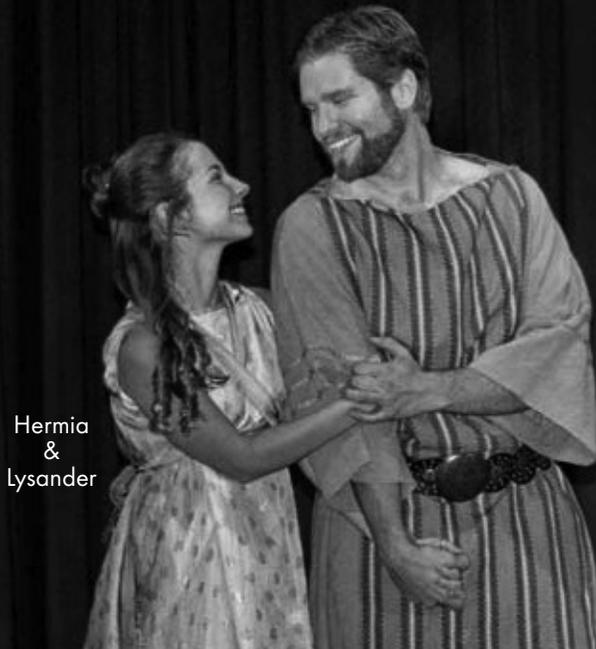


Robin Goodfellow/Puck

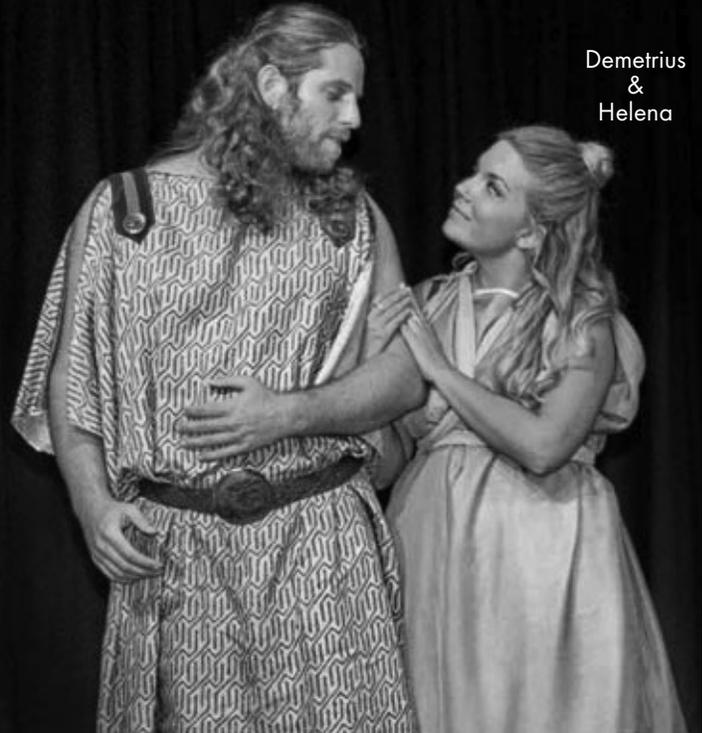
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Act 4, Sc. 1



Hermia
&
Lysander



Demetrius
&
Helena

1. How has Bottom adjusted to the attention of Titania and her fairies?
2. How does Oberon use Titania's infatuation with Bottom to help him gain custody of the Indian boy?
3. What sort of explanation will Oberon make to Titania's question about what happened to her? Do you think he will tell her the truth?
4. Why are Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and the others out in the woods so early in the morning?
5. What is Theseus' first explanation of why the young people are asleep in the woods?
6. Explain Demetrius' meaning when he equates his hatred/love for Helena with sickness and food.
7. What is Theseus' decision concerning the four young people?
8. Why can't the young people be sure whether they are awake or dreaming?
9. Bottom believes he, too, has had a dream. What's funny about this short passage at the end of the scene?



Queen Titania & Nick Bottom

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Act 4, Sc. 2

1. What opinion do the other tradesmen/actors now have of Bottom since they think he is lost?
2. What do they most regret losing by not being able to perform the play?
3. Why must the tradesmen/actors hurry to the Duke's palace?

Act 5, Sc. 1

1. When discrediting the young Athenians' stories, Theseus says, "Lovers and madmen have such seething brains, such shaping fantasies, that apprehend more than cool reason ever comprehends." Explain his meaning. Do you agree with this idea? Explain your answer.

2. Why does Theseus choose to see the play about Pyramus and Thisbe rather than the other entertainment options?

3. What evidence do we have in lines 89-105 that Theseus is a kind-hearted ruler?

4. How is Quince's prologue reflective of what Theseus said in lines 89-105?

5. In lines 145-146, what heavy-handed literary technique is being used?

6. Do you find the newlyweds' commentary during the play to be funny or annoying? Explain your answer.

7. In what way is Thisbe/Flute's final speech humorous?

8. Write down the lines from Theseus' last bit of text that show he actually enjoyed the play.

9. What wedding gift do Titania and Oberon give all three wedded couples?

10. What is the purpose of Puck's final speech? What's ironic (and sort of silly) about Shakespeare ending his play this way?



Performance of *Pyramus & Thisbe*

