

A Midsummer Night's Dream Discussion Questions

1. Critic and poet W.H. Auden explains that “In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, mythological characters are used to describe certain universal experiences that we cannot control” (Auden 56). Are the fairies figments of the characters’ imagination?
2. Critic Marjorie Garber says that “the wood functions...as a mirror as well as a lens” (Garber 218). Is this true?
3. Garber also discusses the “three parallel worlds” in the play: the court of Athens, the fairy world, and the world of the “rude mechanicals,” saying that “each of these ‘worlds’ is a reflection and refraction of the others” (Garber 221). Is this true?
4. Actor and Shakespeare scholar Ben Crystal says, “On the surface, it all seems pretty simple. Love mixed with love. Egotistical clown shamed and used, but unharmed. Wannabe actors succeed. Love reunited with love. Happy ending... But unpack it a bit...and a more complicated, carefully crafted piece glistens” (Crystal 86). Is it true that the play is less straightforward than it seems?
5. Crystal also says, “If there’s no sense of genuine threat, there’s no threat of genuine comedy” (Crystal 86). Does a genuine threat exist in the play?
6. In Act 1, Lysander says, “The course of true love never did run smooth” (Shakespeare 1.1.136). In Act 5, Theseus compares lovers to madmen (5.1.7-8). What does this play suggest about love?
7. Critic Harold Bloom says that “Lysander and Demetrius are interchangeable,” and while some have argued that Hermia and Helena are also interchangeable, Bloom argues that “Hermia has considerably more personality than Helena” (Bloom 153). Are the lovers interchangeable? If so, what does this suggest?

Works Cited

- Auden, W. H. *Lectures on Shakespeare*. Edited by Arthur C. Kirsch, Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Bloom, Harold. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. Riverhead Books, 1998.
- Crystal, Ben. *Springboard Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2013.
- Garber, Marjorie B. *Shakespeare After All*. New York, Pantheon Books, 2004.
- Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, editors. Washington Square Press, 1993.

Studying for A Midsummer Night's Dream? We have tons of study questions for you here, all completely free. Compare and contrast Shakespeare's play to a modern-day "romantic comedy." The four young Athenian lovers in the play are pretty much interchangeable characters. Shakespeare seems to have deliberately avoided developing Hermia, Helena, Lysander, and Demetrius as unique characters. Is this a commentary on the fact that love makes everyone a fool, and a person in love needs no other explanation? Are Hermia and Helena treated as more foolish in the play than Demetrius and Lysander? Is this a commentary on gender? A Midsummer Night's Dream. What will happen in the fairy forest? Watch this story, one of our 'Shakespeare Lives' videos, and find out! Discussion. Did you like this play? Write a comment and tell us what you think. Do you remember your dreams? Write a comment and tell us about a dream that you remember. Average: 3.994595.

2. Discuss the meanings of the play's title, A Midsummer Night's Dream. In addition to the title, what other references do you find to dreaming in the play? What relationship is created between dreaming and theater (look, for example, at Puck's final speech)? Why is Midsummer important to the themes of the play?

3. The play presents several different couples: Theseus and Hippolyta,; Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius, Titania and Bottom, and Titania and Oberon. What aspects of love are explored in each of these relationships?

-1 A Midsummer Night's Dream. By William Shakespeare Context Question I. Given below is an extract from A Midsummer Night's Dream. Read the excerpt carefully and answer ALL questions that follow on the next page. Do not refer to the play for answers. Context. EGEUS Full of vexation come I, with complaint 1. Against my child, my daughter Hermia. Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord, This man hath my consent to marry her.