

A Midsummer Night's Dream Study Guide

Act I, scene i

1. Who are Theseus and Hippolyta?
2. What opposites are shown through their dialogue in scene i?
3. How long until they're married?
4. Why has Egeus brought his daughter and her two suitors to Theseus?
5. What was the proper role for women/daughters in Athenian society according to Egeus and Theseus?
6. What choices does Theseus give Hermia?
7. What choices does Egeus give Hermia?
8. Who did Demetrius formerly love?
9. According to Hermia and Lysander, is love always easy?
10. What do Lysander and Hermia plan to do?
11. Why do they tell Helena what they plan to do?
12. Find lines that show wordplay.

Act I, scene ii

1. Who are the actors?
2. What play are they going to perform?
3. Since Bottom wants to play multiple roles, what does that reveal about his character?
4. How do you suppose the threat of being punished if they scare the ladies will affect the artisans' interpretation of the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisby?
5. In what way is this scene funny? Why do you suppose Shakespeare included this scene?
6. Where are the actors to meet the following night? Who else is meeting in these same woods at the same time?

Act II, scene i

1. Who are Oberon and Titania?
2. How have Oberon and Titania been involved in the past with Theseus and Hippolyta, and why have they come to Athens?
3. What have Oberon and Titania been fighting about?
4. What effect has their quarrel had on nature, on the seasons, on humans?
5. Why won't Titania give up the changeling to Oberon?
6. Who is Puck?
7. How does Oberon plan on resolving this conflict with Titania?
8. What wordplay is shown in scene i?
9. What opposites are shown in scene i?
10. What does Oberon tell Puck to do about Demetrius and Helena?

Act II, scene ii

1. Who does Oberon hope Titania will fall in love with? Why would he wish this upon her?
2. What word play is shown in scene ii?
3. Why does Hermia insist Lysander sleep a little ways from her?
4. Why does Puck anoint Lysander's eyes?
5. How does Helena react to Lysander's sudden love for her when he awakens?
6. How is Hermia's dream a reflection of reality?

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Act III, scene i

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 Titania and the other fairies?
6. Bottom says, "...reason and love keep little company together nowadays." Why is this such an apt statement at this point in the play?

Act III, scene ii

1. What does Hermia accuse Demetrius of doing?
2. How are Puck and Oberon going to correct Puck's earlier mistake?
3. Why is Helena upset when Demetrius says he loves her? Isn't this what she had wanted all along?
4. Of what does Helena accuse Hermia?
5. How close had Hermia and Helena been in the past?
6. How does Lysander treat Hermia? Why can't she believe what he says?
7. Of what does Hermia accuse Helena?
8. What opposites are shown in this scene?
9. What are Lysander and Demetrius going off to do?
10. What does Oberon tell Puck to do about the two young men?
11. What is Oberon going to do about Titania?

Act IV, scene i

1. How has Bottom adjusted to the attention of Titania and her fairies?
2. Was Oberon able to take the Indian boy?
3. Why are Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and the others out in the woods so early in the morning?
4. What is Theseus's first explanation of why the young people are asleep in the woods?
5. What is Theseus's decision concerning the four young people?
6. The young people compare last night's events to what?
7. Bottom believes he too has had a dream. How is he going to use his experiences to entertain the Duke?

Act IV, scene ii

1. What opinion do the other artisans 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 artisans hurry to the Duke's palace?

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Act V

1. Why does Theseus dismiss the stories of the four young people?
2. Why does Theseus choose to see the play about Pyramus and Thisby rather than the other entertainments?
3. Why does Philostrate try to keep Theseus from seeing the play? What does he say is wrong with it?
4. What does Theseus mean by the lines, "For never anything can be amiss, when simpleness and duty tender it"?
5. What is accomplished by having the Prologue tell the whole story that the actors are then going to enact?
6. How does Shakespeare use the comments from the audience to enhance the humor of the play that they are watching?
7. What is Hippolyta's reaction to the play?
8. What does Oberon tell the fairies to do?
9. What is the purpose of Puck's final speech?

Other Questions:

- 1) As it regards this story, do you believe in fate or can people make their own destiny? Explain.
- 2) What quality of human nature do the fairies represent?
- 3) What examples of "mistaken identity" are seen in this play?
- 4) What examples of "turning things upside down" are seen in this play?
- 5) How is language used incorrectly, used to insult, or used to show images?