

CONTENTS

Introduction to Shakespeare.....	4
Act One.....	6
Act Two.....	10
Act Three.....	14
Act Four.....	18
Act Five.....	22

QUIZZES & FINAL EXAM

Quiz 1: Act One.....	28
Quiz 1: Act One – Key.....	30
Quiz 2: Act Two.....	32
Quiz 2: Act Two – Key.....	34
Quiz 3: Act Three.....	36
Quiz 3: Act Three – Key.....	38
Quiz 4: Act Four.....	40
Quiz 4: Act Four – Key.....	42
Quiz 5: Act Five.....	44
Quiz 5: Act Five – Key.....	46
Final Exam: <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	48
Final Exam: <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> – Key.....	51
Discussion Question Help.....	56

ACT ONE

READING NOTES:

Athens: The play is set in ancient Athens and in the woods outside of the city. Athens represents a civilized and ordered society in which everyone must remain in his or her place.

Woods: The place where Hermia and Lysander plan to meet before running away. This setting takes on greater significance as the play proceeds. The woods represent disorder, irrational passion, and a loss of reason.

The Royals – Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus: Theseus and Hippolyta are characters from Greek mythology. They are the King and soon-to-be Queen of Athens. Hippolyta was the Queen of the Amazons, whom Theseus defeated and so won her to be his new Queen.

Egeus: Hermia's father and a duke, a British nobleman holding the highest title outside of the royal family.

The Lovers – Hermia and Lysander; Helena and Demetrius: Shakespeare adopted their names from the classical world and their story from one of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Because the setting is ancient Greece, the lovers serve and relate to the gods of Greek mythology.

The Tradesmen – Quince, Bottom, Flute, Snout, Starveling, Snug: They are also called Mechanicals or Workmen. Though they are Athenian tradesmen, they clearly behave and talk like English tradesmen in Shakespeare's day. Their names represent their occupations: **Quince**, a carpenter; **Bottom**, a weaver; **Flute**, a bellows-mender; **Snout**, a tinker; **Starveling**, a tailor; and **Snug**, a joiner. (See p. VIII of the Introduction in the text for an explanation of how each name derives from the occupation.)

Blank verse: Poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter. It was the preferred form of verse by playwrights in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century and would ultimately become the most common and influential form of English poetry. It is Shakespeare's main form. Though it does not rhyme, it has a regular rhythm.

Iambic pentameter: From the Greek *ιαμβικός πεντάμετρος* (*iambikos pentametros*). Each line is ten syllables long, divided into five pairs of syllables called *feet*. Each *iambic* foot contains one stressed syllable and one unstressed syllable.

Simile: The comparison of two unlike things with the use of *like*, *as*, or *than*.

Personification: A figure of speech in which a thing, an animal, or an abstract term (*truth*, *nature*) is given human qualities.

VOCABULARY:

1. Like to a step-dame or a **dowager** (1.1.5) _____
a woman who has inherited wealth or property from her deceased husband
2. New bent in heaven, shall behold the night / Of our **solemnities**. (1.1.11) _____
ceremonies; celebrations
3. Full of **vexation** come I, with complaint (1.1.22) _____
anger
4. With **feigning** voice verses of **feigning** love (1.1.31) _____
deceiving
5. Of strong **prevailment** in unhardened youth (1.1.35) _____
power
6. With cunning hast thou **filch'd** my daughter's heart (1.1.36) _____
taken
7. One that compos'd your beauties; **yea**, and one / To whom you are but as form in wax (1.1.48)
indeed
8. But in this kind, **wanting** your father's voice (1.1.54) _____
lacking

9. I do **entreat** your grace to pardon me. (1.1.58) _____ to ask earnestly; to beseech
10. Either to die the death, or to **abjure** / For ever the society of men (1.1.65) _____ to renounce
11. My soul consents not to give **sovereignty**. (1.1.82) _____ mastery
12. For aye **austerity** and single life. (1.1.90) _____ simplicity
13. Which by no means we may **extenuate** (1.1.120) _____ to make exception for
14. Against our nuptial, and **confer** with you (1.1.125) _____ to discuss
15. It stands as an **edict** in destiny. (1.1.151) _____ law, decree, command
16. Because in choice he is so oft **beguiled**. (1.1.239) _____ deceived
17. You may do it **extempore**; for it is nothing but roaring. (1.2.60) _____ spontaneously

QUOTES:

1. *Speaker 1:*

*Ay me! For aught that I could ever read,
 Could ever hear by tale or history,
 The course of true love never did run smooth;
 But either it was different in blood—*

Speaker 2: O cross! too high to be enthrall'd to low.

Speaker 1: Or else misgraffed in respect of years—

Speaker 2: O spite! too old to be engag'd to young.

Speaker 1: Or else it stood upon the choice of friends—

Speaker 2: O hell, to choose love by another's eyes! – 1.1.132-140

Speaker 1: _____ Lysander

To whom (Speaker 2): _____ Hermia

Situation: _____ Hermia has been denied from marrying Lysander.

Meaning: _____ One of the play's most important themes: true love is often a difficult course filled with many obstacles. Something always comes along to spoil love.

2. *And to that place the sharp Athenian law
 Cannot pursue us. If thou lov'st me, then
 Steal forth thy father's house tomorrow night,
 And in the wood, a league without the town
 (Where I did meet thee once with Helena
 To do observance to a morn of May),
 There will I stay for thee. – 1.1.162-168*

Speaker: _____ Lysander

To whom: _____ Hermia

Situation: _____ Lysander asks Hermia to meet him in the woods the following night so that they can run away to his aunt's house, far out of reach of Athenian law, to be married.

3. *Things base and vile, holding 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 judgment taste;
Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste;
And therefore is love said to be a child
Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd.* – 1.1.232-239

Speaker: Helena

Situation: She laments that Demetrius does not love her.

Meaning: Love is irrational; it can see ugly things as beautiful. Demetrius does not see her with favorable eyes—he is blind to her beauty. Like a child, love is foolish and is tricked into loving the wrong thing. (This foreshadows Titania and Bottom.)

4. *Let me play the lion too. I will roar that I will do any man's heart good to hear me. ... but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove. I will roar you and 'twere any nightingale.* – 1.2.61-62; 70-72

Speaker: Bottom

To whom: other tradesmen

Situation: Bottom argues that he should be allowed to play the lion and that he will roar loudly. But Quince responds that he would frighten the ladies out of their wits, so Bottom changes his story—he will now roar gently to avoid frightening the ladies.

Meaning: Another example of Bottom's foolishness. He will say anything to convince everyone that he is the best actor.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. The play opens with what image? How do each of the three characters—Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus—make use of this image differently? _____
Theseus complains of the slowness of the moon, like a dowager who makes a man wait to inherit her money. Hippolyta answers that the days and nights will pass quickly, and then the moon will behold their wedding. Egeus views the moon as the medium allowing Lysander to bewitch his daughter.
2. Why is Egeus angry with Hermia? _____
She has fallen in love with Lysander and defied his desire for her to marry Demetrius.
3. What is Lysander's argument against Demetrius? _____
Demetrius wooed and won the heart of Helena, but then left her to pursue Hermia.
4. When Theseus says to Hermia, "To you your father should be as a god ... and one / to whom you are but as a form in wax" (1.1.47-49), it reveals what about the social order of ancient Athens?
It was very fixed and hierarchical; Hermia must marry according to her father's directive.

5. What three options does Theseus give to Hermia concerning her situation with Lysander?

Theseus says she can die for disobedience, give up society and become a nun, or marry Demetrius

6. What argument does Lysander make to Egeus when he compares himself to Demetrius?

He says he is from just as good of a family (nobly descended), that he is just as rich in possessions and position, and that, most importantly, he is "beloved of beautiful Hermia."

7. Describe Bottom's character in Scene 2.

Bottom behaves like the ass he will become. He talks a lot, wanting to demonstrate his acting skill, and he often misuses words. His question of whether Pyramus is a lover or a tyrant could apply to himself.

8. Several lines throughout the play feature examples of **personification** and **simile**. Identify two examples of each from Act 1.

She lingers my desires, / Like to a step-dame or a dowager (1.1.5) *simile*

Four nights will quickly dream away the time (1.1.8) *personification*

And then the moon, like to a silver bow / New bent in heaven, shall behold the night / Of our solemnities. (1.1.9-11) *simile* and *personification*

There are many others throughout Act 1 and the rest of the play.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Quince: *Marry, our play is 'The most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe'*

Bottom: *What is Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?*

Quince: *A lover that kills himself, most gallant, for love.* – 1.2.10-11; 18-19

By having his tradesmen produce a play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare creates a **play within a play**, a **literary device** first used by Thomas Kyd in *The Spanish Tragedy* in 1587. The play within a play (or story within a story) usually has **symbolic**, **psychological**, or **figurative significance** for the characters in the outer play.

From what you understand of Act 1, why might Shakespeare have had his tradesmen stage a play about Pyramus and Thisbe?

2. What's in a title? *Everything*. What key elements do you find in the title *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?
3. In 1.1.22, Egeus says, "Full of vexation come I." The **syntax** (word order) here suggests a pattern found in which other language? Why might Shakespeare have written some lines in this manner?