



# *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

## STUDY GUIDE

2016



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## About the Play

Theseus, the duke of Athens, after defeating the Amazonians in battle, is attempting to woo their queen, Hippolyta, and planning for their wedding day. Their preparations are interrupted by Egeus, who comes to complain about his daughter, Hermia. Egeus has commanded Hermia to agree to marry Demetrius; however, Hermia refuses due to being in love with another guy, Lysander. She begs her case before Theseus to no avail. Theseus tells her to either act according to her father's wishes or suffer execution or confinement to a convent. After hearing of the duke's decision, Lysander and Hermia agree to meet in the forest the next day and steal away from Athens together. They tell Helena, Hermia's best friend and the jilted lover of Demetrius, about their plans, and she passes the information on to Demetrius, in the hopes that her loyalty and help will win back his love. In the meantime, a group of Athenian tradesmen meet in order to create a plan to perform for Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding festivities.

In the forest surrounding Athens, Titania, the fairy queen, and Oberon, the fairy king, are arguing over an Indian boy that she refuses to give him. Oberon asks Puck to retrieve a flower whose juice has the power to cause people to fall in love with the first thing that they see when they wake up. This juice must be poured on someone's eyelids, and Oberon plans on pouring it on Titania's. While Oberon is waiting for Puck, he observes Demetrius harshly rejecting Helena. Once Puck returns, Oberon tells him to put some of the juice on Demetrius's eyes, so that he will fall in love with Helena. Lysander and Hermia stop in the forest, and Puck, mistaking Lysander for Demetrius, puts the love juice on his eyes. Lysander wakes up just as Helena is wandering by and falls in love with her. He abandons Hermia in pursuit of Helena.

At this point in time, the Athenian tradesmen are practicing their play in the same forest that all of the action is taking place. Puck stumbles upon them and decides to cause some mischief. He turns Bottom's head into the head of a donkey. Titania wakes up and falls in love with Bottom.

Oberon finds out that Puck has put the love juice on the wrong Athenian's eyes, so he spreads the love juice on Demetrius's eyes. When Demetrius wakes up, he sees Helena and falls in love with her. He notices that Lysander is also attempting to woo Helena, so he challenges Lysander

to a fight. Puck fixes his mistake by spreading a different herb on Lysander's eyes to counteract the love juice. This will bring order to everything; Hermia and Lysander will be in love, and so will Helena and Demetrius. Titania continues



to dote on Bottom, until Oberon's anger disappears, and he lifts the spell from Titania. Bottom's donkey head disappears, and he returns to his fellow tradesmen.

Theseus and Hippolyta discover the four Athenian youths in the forest on the morning of their wedding. The duke finds out that Hermia and Lysander are happy together, and so are Helena and Demetrius. He blesses the pairings and decides that the three couples will all get married today. Bottom and the other actors present their unintentionally hilarious production. At the end of the play, everyone retires for the night, and the fairies bless Theseus and Hippolyta's marriage.

## The Director's Vision: Robert Quinlan

**Q. Why did you choose to direct *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?**

A. I asked Rebekah if she would consider me for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* because I think the play is so joyful and beautiful. I think this a perfect production to inaugurate the new outdoor space on the grounds of UCA. I think it will be a magical outdoor Shakespeare experience.

**Q. What inspired you to set your production in the 1930s?**

A. Jordan Coughtry (who is playing Puck) has written a series of songs for the production in a folk revival style. For me, the music evoked an America of the 1930s... a time of struggle, but also an age of new possibilities. I like the idea that the young characters have not yet seen a world at war...though their parents and the older generation can still remember WWI.



**Q. What do you hope that the audience takes away from this production?**

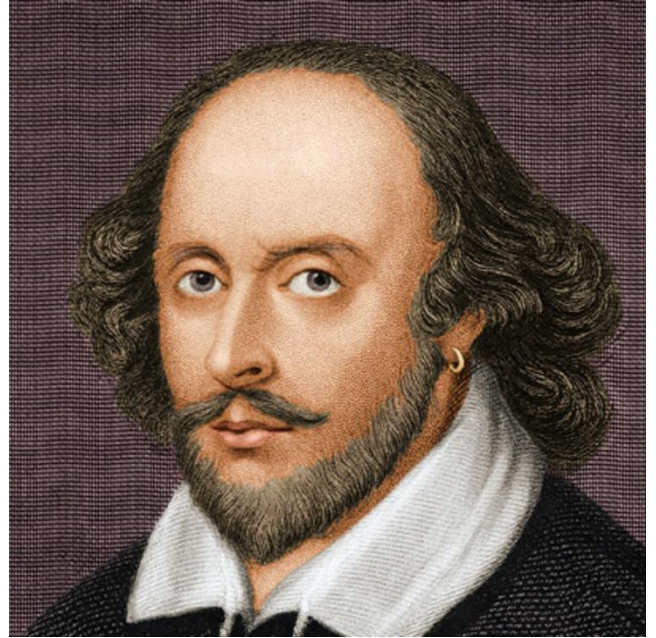
A. I hope the audience is able to relate to the madness of falling in love, and enjoys being swept away into a world of magic and playfulness. And I hope they walk away singing some of the songs, remembering a dreamlike summer evening in Conway.

## About the Playwright

Shakespeare's works are incredibly well-known; however, how much do we know about the man behind the plays? The answer is not much. Since William Shakespeare lived over 400 years ago, many records from that time are lost or never existed in the first place, which causes there to be many gaps in his life story. Despite all of that, there is some information that we do know about the man.

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564 to John and Mary Shakespeare. There is not an exact date of his birth on record; however, he was baptized on April 26<sup>th</sup>, so modern scholars believe that he was born on April 23<sup>rd</sup> ("Shakespeare's Life").

Because William was the son of an important citizen in Stratford, he probably attended Stratford's grammar school, where he would have been exposed to Latin literature and plays. A few years after he left school, William married Anne Hathaway in 1582. He was 18 years old, and she was 26. They had three children: Susanna, born in 1583 (only six months after they got married), and the twins, Hamnet and Judith, born in 1585.



The seven years of Shakespeare's life after the birth of the twins are a complete mystery- these years are called "the lost years" ("Shakespeare's Life").

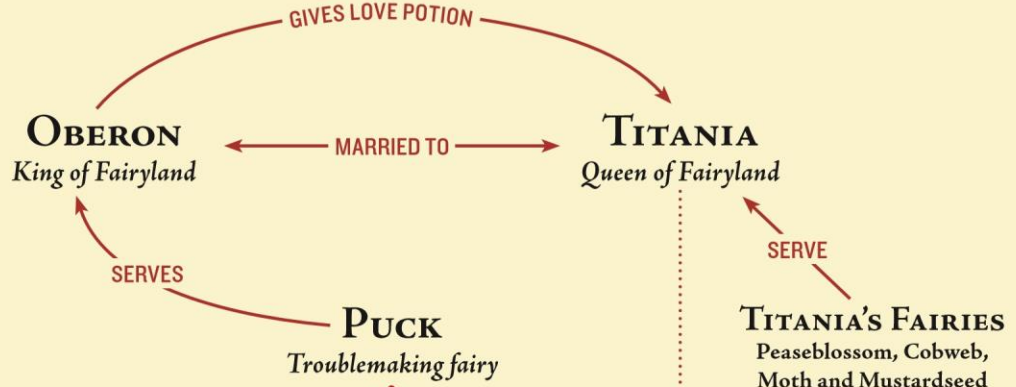
William Shakespeare is mentioned in 1592 as an established London actor and playwright. During the next two decades, Shakespeare had multiple roles in the theatres of London; along with being an actor and playwright, he was a business partner in a major acting company known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men). Over the course of his career, Shakespeare wrote at least 37 plays as well as 154 sonnets. William Shakespeare died on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1616. He is buried at Stratford church in England ("Shakespeare's Life").

# A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

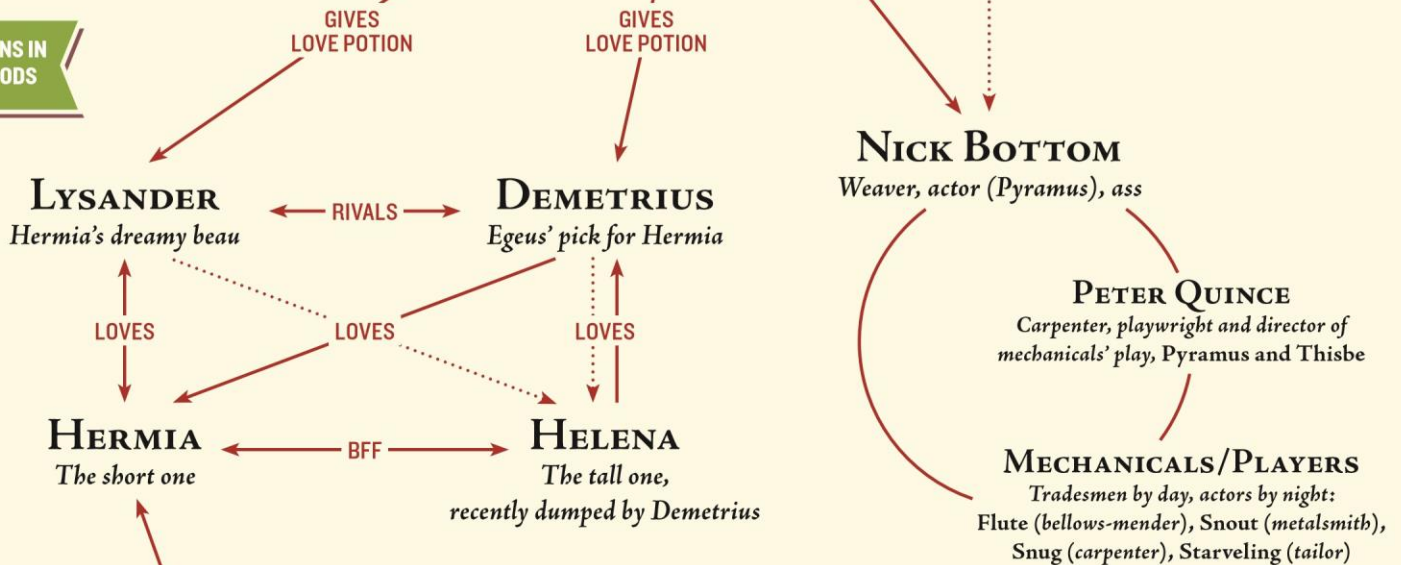
## Character Muddle

### FAIRIES IN THE WOODS

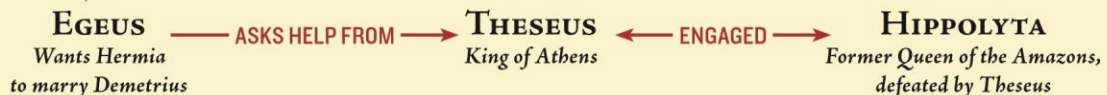
.....  
via love potion



### ATHENIANS IN THE WOODS



### ATHENIANS IN ATHENS



# Gender Matters: A Woman's Place within Elizabethan Society

In Elizabethan England, men were thought to be superior to women in all aspects of life. According to one historian, “. . . all forms of public and domestic authority in Elizabethan England were vested in men: in fathers, husbands, masters, teachers, preachers, magistrates, [and] lords” (Montrose 68). Women had virtually no role within society, other than taking care of domestic affairs. They were not able to take part in any scholarship or political/public activities because “for a woman, a public reputation was dishonorable, a sure sign of immorality and scandal” (Wiesner 12). This caused women to be excluded from any position of authority within society (Zuber).

Along with being inferior to men socially, women also did not have any rights legally. Unlike men, women did not have the ability “to be witnesses, make wills, act as guardians for their own children, make contracts, and own, buy, and sell property” (Wiesner 4). Before a woman was married, her father made all of the decisions for her, including who she would marry (Zuber).



When a woman got married, power over her was transferred from her father to her husband. A woman's role within a marriage is clearly defined in the marriage contract: “. . . the wife must obey the husband. This obedience or submission extends not only to the performance of duties required by the husband, but also to the abstinence from those activities which are displeasing to him.” Throughout a woman's life, she was never able to make decisions on her own; it was thought that her father or husband knew what was best for her (Zuber).

# Shakespeare's Language

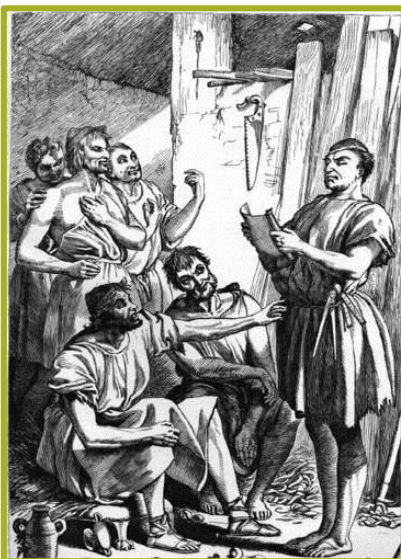
## Prose

vs.

## Verse

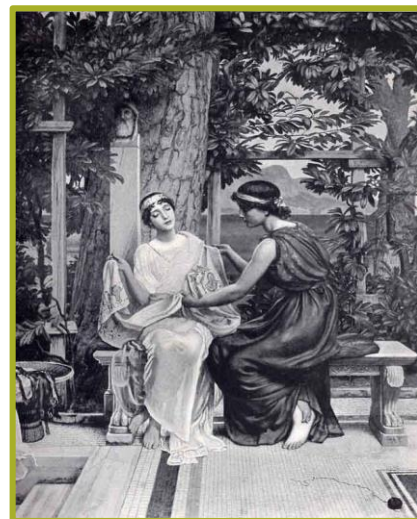
"Bottom: That will aske some teares in the true performing of it: If I do it, let the audience looke to their eies: To the rest yet, my chief humour is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to teare a Cat in, to make all split *the raging Rocks; and shivering shocks shall break the locks of prison gates, and Phibbus carre shall shine from farre and make and marre the foolish Fates.* This was lofty..." (1.2.19-33).

When common people speak in Shakespeare's plays, they usually speak in prose. Prose is the language that people use in everyday life; there is no rhythm or meter in each line. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, all of the Athenian tradesmen speak in prose. This is because they are commoners within the Athenian society ("Shakespeare's Language").



"Helena: Things base and vile, holding no quantity, Love can transpose to forme and dignity, Love looks not with the eyes, but with the minde, And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blinde. Nor hath loves minde of any judgement taste: Wings and no eyes, figure, unheedy haste" (1.1.232-237).

Shakespeare uses verse whenever a noble or member of the upper class speaks. The verse form he favored was blank verse. In blank verse, there is no rhyme; however, each line has an internal rhythm. Shakespeare typically used iambic pentameter as his internal rhythm, which consisted of ten-syllable lines with alternating stressed and unstressed syllables. The four young lovers, Theseus and Hippolyta, and the fairies speak in verse ("Shakespeare's Language").

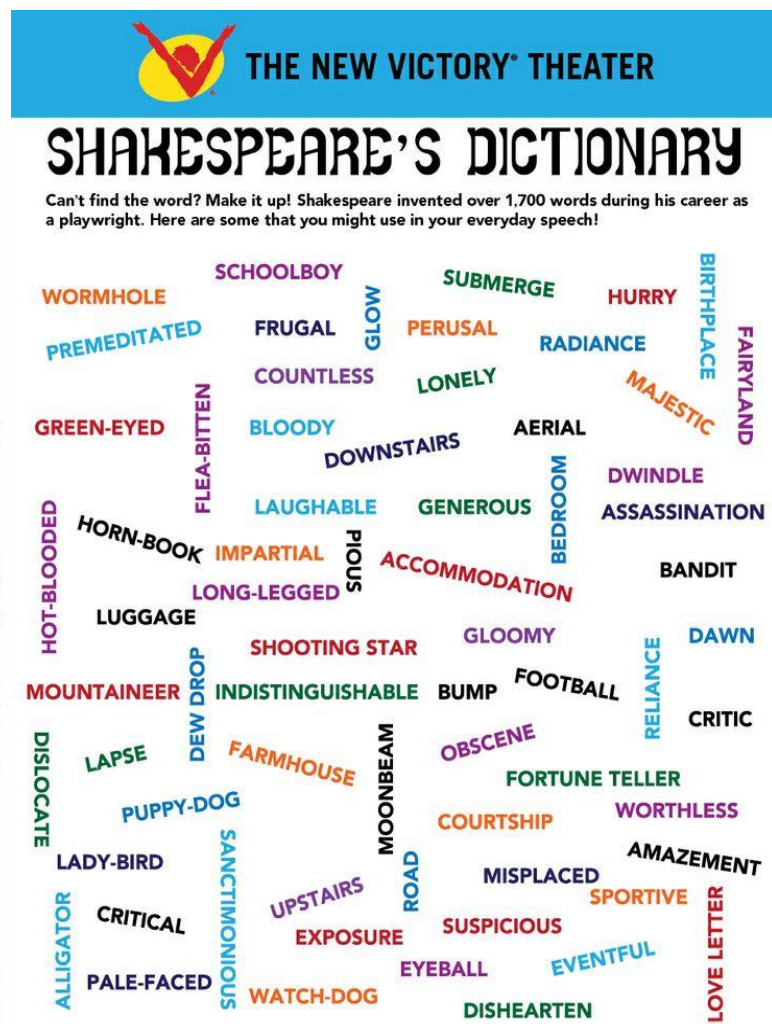


# Shakespeare's Influence on Language

The modern English languages owes quite a bit to Shakespeare. He invented over 1,700 words that are commonplace today! Below are some examples of words and phrases that we wouldn't have today without Shakespeare's works (Mabillard).

## THINGS WE SAY TODAY, WHICH WE OWE TO SHAKESPEARE:

"KNOCK, KNOCK! WHO'S THERE?"  
 "IN A PICKLE" "SET YOUR TEETH ON EDGE" "HEART OF GOLD"  
 "FAINT HEARTED" "SO-SO" "GOOD RIDDANCE"  
 "LIE LOW" "FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE" "BAITED BREATH" "SEND HIM PACKING"  
 "COME WHAT MAY" "THE GAME IS UP"  
 "WEAR YOUR HEART ON YOUR SLEEVE"  
 "NOT SLEPT ONE WINK" "FULL CIRCLE" "OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH"  
 "WHAT'S DONE IS DONE" "NAKED TRUTH" "TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING"  
 "LAUGHING STOCK" "BREADED HIS LAST" "WILD GOOSE CHASE"  
 "HEART OF HEARTS" "VANISH INTO THIN AIR"  
 "SEEN BETTER DAYS" "MAKES YOUR HAIR STAND ON END"  
 "DEAD AS A DOORNAIL" "FOR GOODNESS' SAKE" "LOVE IS BLIND"  
 "GREEN EYED MONSTER" "FAIR / FOUL PLAY / PLAY" "OFF WITH HIS HEAD"  
 "THE WORLD IS MY OYSTER" "BRAVE NEW WORLD" "A SORRY SIGHT"  
 "BE ALL / END ALL"



## Vocabulary Specific to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

While our vocabulary is similar to the vocabulary of Elizabethan England, there are several words in which the meaning has changed, or the word has disappeared altogether. Try taking the definitions given and figuring out what each quotation means ("Shakespeare's Words").

**Loadstarres:** guiding stars

**Ayre:** melody

**Tuneable:** tuneful

"Your eyes are **loadstarres**, and your tongue's sweet **ayre**

More **tuneable** than larke to shepheard's eare."

—Helena (1.1.184–85)

**"Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase":** myth in which the nymph, Daphne, fleeing from Apollo, was transformed into a laurel tree to escape him

**Griffin:** monster with a lion's body and an eagle's head and wings

**Hinde:** doe

**Bootlesse:** useless, futile

"The wildest hath not such a heart as you.

Runne when you will; the story shall be chang'd:

**Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase**

The dove pursues the **griffin**; the milde **hinde**

Makes speed to catch the tyger—**bootlesse** speede,

When cowardise pursues and valour flies."

—Helena (2.1.229–234)

**May:** can

**Anticke:** ancient or strange/grotesque

**Fairy toyes:** trifling tales about fairies

"More strange than true. I never **may** beleieve

These **anticke** fables, nor these **fairy toyes**."

—Theseus (5.1.2–3)

## Creating the Look

The costume design is inspired by the time period of the production: the 1930s. Despite the fact that the 1930s were plagued by the Great Depression, the fashion was full of glamour and style. A typical woman's dress during the 30s had "an accentuated natural high waist, fitted hips, longer mid-calf or floor length hemline, high neckline, and wide shoulders" ("What Did Women Wear in the 1930s"). Men continued to wear suits; however they differed from past decades because in the 1930s, their suits were "tailored to create the illusion of a large torso, with wide, padded shoulders and tapering sleeves" ("Men's Fashions"). In the human world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, you will see the fashion of the 30s come to life.



Demetrius



Helena



Hermia



Lysander



Titania

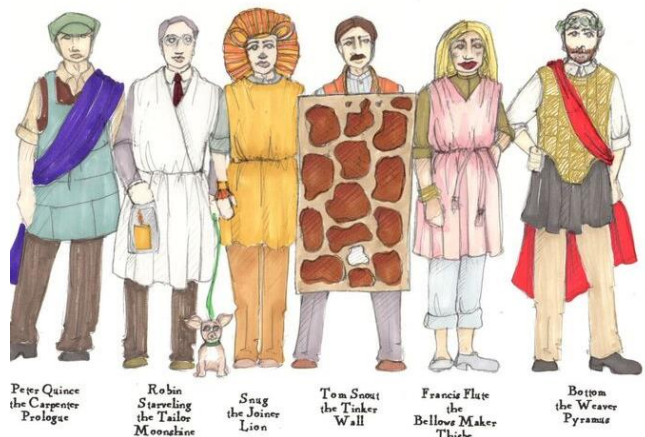


*A Midsummer Night's Dream*



Oberon

Setting the Scene



Peter Quince  
the Carpenter  
Prologue

Robin Starveling  
the Tailor  
Moonshine

Snug  
the Joiner  
Lion

Tom Snout  
the Tinker  
Wall

Francis Flute  
the Bellows Maker  
Thurio

Bottom  
the Weaver  
Pyramus

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*

## Setting the Scene

Thanks to designer Joe Klug, the acting space for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is made up of tons of different levels. There are areas of the stage that are 8 inches from the ground and other areas that are 16 inches from the ground. There are also several ladders that lead to platforms that are several feet off of the ground. This gives the playing space varied levels. This play space also gives the actors several areas to enter and exit. They can enter/exit through the sides, the back, and even through the audience.



## Before the Play

### *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

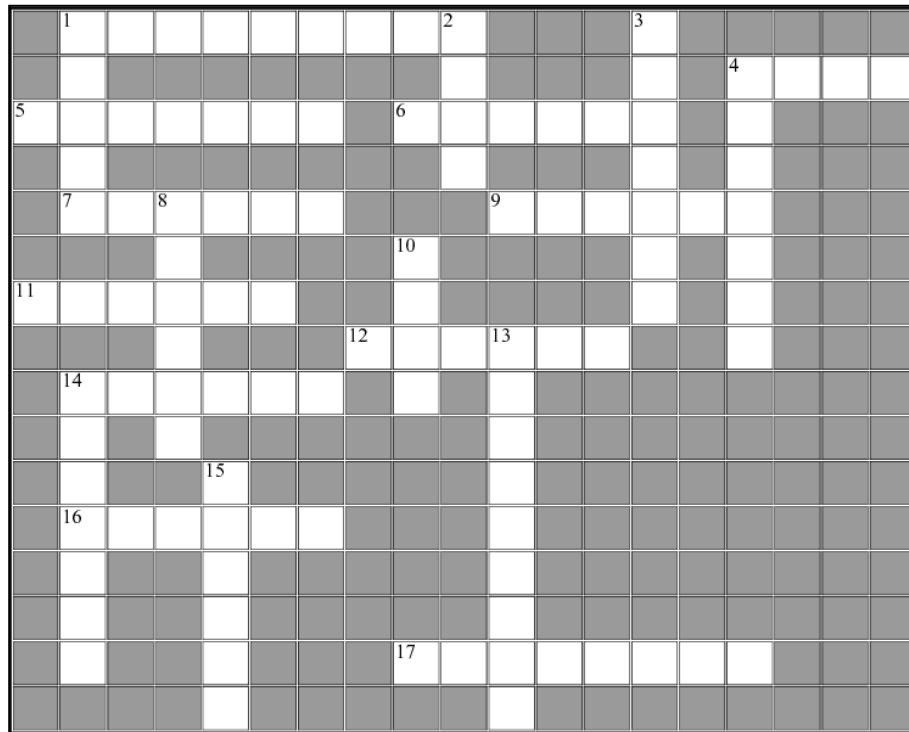
E M A T C T L U J S R I M M Z T S K I T  
P U T P H O Y P Q E U W V Z O E S Y Z I  
D L Y I V E N S D Q L I H F U F P S I T  
P P L E L E S N F F A I R I E S N O J A  
G Y O F B N A E W I B O T T O M T S Z N  
W I P N I S S E U N E V Z M E K C U P I  
U N P F Y S D G A S O K Z A I M R E H A  
S Z I L L D E C J I E Y I D C J E T B Z  
A G H Q I O J D N B M S H N Z P N D L T  
C W C N W S W K Q B D O C D P H X A G O  
L Q G C C X J E W G N O H F Z J T O X U  
X W Y E T R S R R N X S I P A C J B S Y  
H C J Z N N U P W N Y V B S R N C H E Z  
F X P E E M X M C J O O U T F N E M D C  
N A O H F X E R A E P S E K A H S L U E  
O V T Y D R X I R Q V N E W C W B X E Z  
R A A S A X W K E U H H R F P O V M L H  
E A O W F J O V P R S J A O Y O M U E M  
B R R H B R W M N J Y Y G A M D B V S O  
O S N A R K M B X A A O G N A S L K C S

ATHENS  
BOTTOM  
DEMETRIUS  
FAIRIES  
FLOWER  
HELENA  
HERMIA  
HIPPOLYTA  
LOVE  
LYSANDER  
OBERON  
PUCK  
SHAKESPEARE  
THESEUS  
TITANIA  
WEDDING  
WOODS

# After the Play

## *Shakespeare's Crazy Crosswords*

### *A Midsummer Night's Dream*



#### ACROSS

1. Who says, "I love thee not; therefore pursue me not."
4. Who says, "That you have but slumbered here while these visions did appear."
5. Titania is queen of what?
6. Who writes the play called, "The most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe."
7. This play takes place in and around which Greek city?
9. Girl who chases Demetrius even though he hates her at first.
11. King of the Fairies
12. Who turns into a donkey?
14. Who says, "I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all."
16. Helena compares Demetrius to the Roman god of the sun, music, light, among other things, whose name is \_\_\_\_\_.
17. Hermia wants to run away with this man.

#### DOWN

1. The Roman goddess of chastity to whom Hermia must pledge her life if she does not marry Demetrius.
2. \_\_\_\_\_, the joiner
3. The Duke of Athens
4. "A lover that kills himself most gallant for love." Who is Quince describing?
8. Egeus does not want Lysander to marry this girl.
10. Pyramus thinks this animal kills Thisbe.
13. The man in the moon has a dog, a lantern, and a \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Says to Bottom, "Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful."
15. Oberon asks Puck to find him this in the forest.

# Theater Etiquette

- Arrive to the theater on time.
- Visit the restroom before the performance begins.
- Turn off your cell phone or, if it must be on, put it on mute. Do not speak on the phone during the performance. If you must call the person back, do it outside during intermission or after the show has finished.
- Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to many shows about the rules of the theater you are attending and the location of the fire exits.
- Don't speak during the performance...whispering is still speaking, so only in an emergency.
- Do not take pictures during the performance. It can be very distracting to the actors and can cause a mishap.
- Remain in your seat for the entire performance. If you must leave, exit during intermission. In an emergency, wait for an appropriate break in the show. It is rude to get up in the middle of a quiet moment...rude to the actors and your fellow audience members.
- Do not eat or drink in the theater. If you must have a cough drop, or something of that nature, do not make noise with the wrapper.
- Do not put your feet up on the seats or balcony and do not kick the seat in front of you.
- Do not angle your head together with your "special someone" as you obstruct the view of the people behind you.
- Don't put or throw anything on the stage.
- Do laugh when the performance is funny.
- Do applaud when it is appropriate during the performance.
- Do applaud when the performance is over...this tells the performers and crew that you appreciate their work.
- Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great.



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