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A Midsummer Night's Dream

William Shakespeare , SparkNotes

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A Midsummer Night's Dream William Shakespeare , SparkNotes

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The **complete text** of the original play

A **line-by-line translation** that puts Shakespeare into everyday language

A complete list of **characters** with descriptions

Plenty of **helpful commentary**

A Midsummer Night's Dream Details

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From Reader Review A Midsummer Night's Dream for online ebook

Riku Sayuj says

Man, being reasonable, must get drunk;

The best of life is but intoxication:

Glory, the grape, love, gold, in these are sunk

The hopes of all men and of every nation;

Without their sap, how branchless were the trunk

Of life's strange tree, so fruitful on occasion:

But to return,—Get very drunk; and when

You wake with headache, you shall see what then.

~ Lord Byron, Don Juan, Canto II, Stanza 179.

If we offend, it is with our good will.

That you should think, we come not to offend,

But with good will. To show our simple skill,

That is the true beginning of our end.

Consider then we come but in despite.

We do not come, as minding to content you,

Our true intent is. All for your delight

We are not here. That you should here repent you,

The actors are on hand; and, by their show,

You shall know all, that you are like to know.

~ (V.i.108-117)

The Lightweight Satire

A Midsummer Night's Dream is often viewed as a lightweight play, but it is much more than that. It is one of Shakespeare's most polished achievements, a poetic drama of exquisite grace, wit, and humanity. It has perhaps become one of Shakespeare's most popular comedies, with a special appeal for the young. But belying its great universal appeal it might be a stinging social satire too, glossed over by most in their dreamy enjoyment of the magnificent world Shakespeare presents and also by the deliberate gross-comedy in the end that hides the play from itself.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is an Archetypal play where charm, innocence, violence and sexuality mix in giddy combinations. In this fantastic masterpiece, Shakespeare moves with wonderful dramatic dexterity through several realms, weaving together disparate storylines and styles of speech.

It offers a glorious celebration of the powers of the human imagination and poetry while also making comic capital out of its reason's limitations and societies' mores. It is also perhaps the play which affords maximum inventiveness on stage, both in terms of message and of atmosphere.

The Course of True Love

“The course of true love never did run smooth.”

1. In some ways Lysander's well-known declaration becomes one of the central themes, as the comedy interlocks the misadventures of five pairs of lovers (six if one counts Pyramus and Thisby) - and uses their tribulations to explore its theme of love's difficulties.
2. Also central to the play is the tension between desire and social mores. Characters are repeatedly required to quell their passion for the sake of law and propriety.
3. Another important conflict is between love and reason, with the heart almost always overruling the mind. The comedy of the play results from the powerful, and often blinding, effects that love has on the characters' thoughts and actions.
4. Third antipathy is between love and social class divisions, with some combinations ruled out arbitrarily, with no appeal to reason except for birth. This when combined with upward aspirations and downward suppressed fantasies form a wonderful sub-plot to the whole drama. Represented best by Bottom's famous dream.

Each of these themes have a character representing them that forms the supporting cast to the lovers' misadventures, defining through their acts the relationship between desire, lust and love and social customs:

1. The unreasonable social mores is represented by Egeus, who is one character who never changes. (Also perhaps by Demetrius who appeals to the same customs to get what he wants)

2. Unloving desire by Theseus who too never changes, and also perhaps by the principal lovers (H&L) in their original state. (Helena could be said to represent 'true' love but Shakespeare offers us nothing to substantiate this comforting assumption. It is also important that the women's loves not altered by the potion, which is very significantly dropped into the eyes, affecting vision - i.e. it can affect only superficial love.)

3. Lack of reason, though embodied in all the lovers, are brought to life by Puck as the agent of madness and of confusion of sight, which is the entry-point for love in Shakespeare.

4. Finally, class aspirations and their asinine nature by Bottom himself

Love, Interrupted

Out of all these, every character is given a positive light (or an extra-human light, in the case of the fairies) except Egeus, who is the reason for the night-time excursion and all the comedy. In fact, Shakespeare even seems deliberately to have kept the crusty and complaining Egeus out of the 'joy and mirth' of the last celebrations - he disappears along with the over-restrictive society he is supposed to represent - of marriages, reasoned alliances and 'bloodless' cold courtships.

Hence, it is social mores that compel the wildness on love which is not allowed to express itself freely. When freed of this and allowed to resolve itself in a Bacchanalian night all was well again and order was restored to the world.

This reviewer has taken the liberty of assuming that this is the central theme of the play - which is also deliciously ironic since it is supposed to have been written for a wedding. What better time to mock the institution of marriage than at a wedding gala?

So in a way the four themes - **difficulties of true love, restrictions by propriety and customs, and the comical unreason that beset lovers, and class differences that put some desires fully into the category of fantasies** - are all products of social mores that impose artificial restrictions on love and bring on all the things mocked in this play by Shakespeare.

In fact this is one reason why Bottom could be the real hero of the play (as is the fashion among critical receptions of the play these days) - he was the only one comfortable in transcending all these barriers, at home everywhere and in the end also content with his dreams and in the realization that he would be an ass to try to comprehend what is wrong with the world.

The Subtle Satire

The lovers' inversions of love could be taken to be a satire on the fickle nature of love but I prefer to see it as another joke at the expense of social mores - of the institution of marriage and courtship, in which each suitor professes undying love in such magnificent lines until he has to turn to the next and do the same. This is reinforced by allusion to how women are not free to 'pursue' their loves as men are since social mores allow only the man to pursue and the woman has to choose from among her suitors. It is quite telling that it was Bottom who accepted love and reason seldom go together and expresses the hope that love and reason should become friends. His speech echoes Lysander's in the previous scene. Lysander, the aristocrat instead

is just another attempting to find a way to understand the workings of love in a rational way, the failures emphasize the difficulty of this endeavor. Lysander thus ends his speech by believing/claiming his newfound love for Helena was based on reason, quite absurdly, but yet quite convinced - representing most of mankind.

By taking the lovers to the enchanted forest of dreams, far from the Athenian social customs and into land where shadows and dreams rule, and then resolving everything there, even allowing Bottom a glimpse of aristocratic love, Shakespeare seems to say that it is the society that restricts love and makes it artificial - all that is needed is bit of madness, a bit of stripping away of artificiality - throughout he cupid's potion. Again the need for a bit of madness (lunacy, mark the repeated moon ref). It is almost an appeal to the Dionysian aspects of life - see alternate review on Nietzsche for detail. (Also see these two Plato-based reviews for important and balancing takes on 'rational' love - Phaedrus & The Symposium

Puck Vs Quince (or) Diana Vs Cupid (or) Art Vs Entertainment

Significantly the final words of the play belong to the master of misrule, the consummate actor and comedian, Puck. In some sense, Puck, with his ability to translate himself into any character, with his skill in creating performances that seem all too real to their human audiences, could be seen as a mascot of the theater. Therefore, his final words are an apology for the play itself. Also mark how Puck courteously addresses the audience as gentlefolk, paralleling Quince's address to his stage audience in his Prologue.

Thus, the final extrapolation on the theme could be that Shakespeare ultimately points out that though a bit of madness and wildness is needed to bring love back into the realms of the truth, it can also be achieved through great art, through sublime theater - not by bad theater though! This could be a statement that Art and thus Theatre is a substitute for the madness of love that is needed to escape the clutches of society (and live the fantasies away from the constricting artificial 'realities') and find yourself, to rediscover yourself away from 'cold reason'.

When the actor playing Puck stands alone on the stage talking to the audience about dreams and illusions, he is necessarily reminding them that there is another kind of magic - the magic of the theatre. And the magic it conjures is the magic of self-discovery. Continuing the play's discourse on poetry, Puck defines the poetry of theater as an illusion that transports spectators into the same enchanted region that dreams inhabit. Thus the spectators have not only watched the dream of others but have, by that focus of attention, entered the dream state themselves.

This 'finding yourself' seems to be the most essential part of love and as long as you are constrained by imposed restrictions, this is impossible. That is why Shakespeare has made it easy for us and created an art-form of a play that allows us to dream-in-unreason and wake up refreshed. But there is a caveat too, highlighted by the parallel prologues of Puck and Quince - A 'Crude' entertainment like 'Pyramus and Thisbe' might only allow one to while away an evening happily. It might not give the transport and release and inward-looking that is necessary to achieve the madness that true art is supposed to confer. So Shakespeare uses the play to educate us on what is needed to find ourselves and then the play-within-the-play to also show us what to avoid.

Lord, What Fools Mortals Be

“Art, like love, is a limited and special vision; but like love it has by its very limits a transforming power, creating a small area of order in the vast chaos of the world At the moment when the play most clearly declares itself to be trivial, we have the strongest appeal to our sympathy for it. . . .” ~ Alexander Leggatt

“I will get Peter Quince to write a ballet of this dream. It shall be call’d “Bottom’s Dream,” because it hath no bottom.”

In one of the most philosophically transcendent moments in the play, Bottom wakes up from his grand aristocratic/magical dream and is disoriented. Bottom decides to title his piece “Bottom’s Dream” because it has no bottom - all literature and art are bottomless, in that their meaning cannot be quantified, cannot be understood solely through the mechanisms of reason or logic. Here it parallels life and love, both beyond reason, limited only by the imagination.

Of course, this is a very simplistic representation of a wonderfully complicated play. It can be read in many different ways based on the viewpoint you chose to adopt. I have tried out a few and felt the need to comment slightly at length on this viewpoint. This is not to diminish the play, which I fully concur with Shakespeare is indeed a ‘Bottom’s Dream’ since it has no bottom in the wealth of meaning to be mined from it.

Lord, what fools these mortals be, Puck philosophizes, mockingly. And perhaps we are indeed fools - for entering into the dangerous, unpredictable world of love or of literature; yet what fun would life be without it?

Raeleen Lemay says

I really liked it when Lysander called Hermia an acorn.

Kat Kennedy says

It's still as awesome as I remember. Though, unfortunately, causes me some initial irritation with The Iron King.

Robbie Goodfellow is a wicked spirit running around having fun and pulling ridiculous pranks. He's not a serious teenage boy who is dramatic and suspenseful or mysterious or sexy.

Why do we have to turn everything into sexy these days? Why does every male character have to suddenly

fit the romantic male archetype?

Why are mythological creatures becoming obsessed with teenage girls?

?ntellecta says

"Ein Sommernachtstraum" is one of the top references as a classic. In the beginning, it is difficult to get there, but once you get used to the style, it is quite an entertaining, beautiful and confused story about the back and forth of the love affair. A must for interested in Shakespear and theater.

Whitney Atkinson says

if i had a professor who actually talked about this and made it interesting then im sure i wouldve liked it more but i was just like ??????????

Mohammed Arabey says

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**Theseus**

I wonder if the lion be to speak.

**Demetrius**

No wonder, my lord. One lion may when many asses do.

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Lysander

You have her father's love, Demetrius.
Let me have Haemis's. Do you marry him.

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"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy"

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"The Tempest"

"The Merry Wives of Windsor"

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"A tedious short drama about young Pyramus and his love Thisbe, a very sad and tragic comedy."

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No Fear Shakespeare

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Happy Shakespeare Day...Happy Earth Day...Happy Spring . :)
23 April 2016

Reading , Act a Day,
From 18 April 2016
To 22 April 2016

Bill Kerwin says

Re-reading the play this time, I couldn't stop thinking of of *The Magic Flute*.

Like Mozart's opera, Shakespeare's play may have a silly plot composed of fanciful, seemingly arbitrary elements, yet, through the power of absolute artistic mastery, the framework of what might otherwise be nothing but a second-rate masque is transformed, by unwearied attention of geni--and in Shakespeare's case, sublime poetry--into a work of great resonance, an archetypal myth.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

A Midsummer Night's Dream, William Shakespeare

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a comedy written by William Shakespeare in 1595/96. It portrays the events surrounding the marriage of Theseus, the Duke of Athens, to Hippolyta, the former queen of the Amazons. These include the adventures of four young Athenian lovers and a group of six amateur actors (the mechanicals) who are controlled and manipulated by the fairies who inhabit the forest in which most of the play is set. The play is one of Shakespeare's most popular works for the stage and is widely performed across the world.

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Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

I'm sure there's some keyboard commando all primed and ready just *waiting* for a chance to chime in about how "this isn't Facebook" or "talk about books and don't post stupid pictures." To him/her/them I shall quote ol' Bill himself and say

Fucketh off with thee!

Because **I have** read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and I've read it more than once. Originally I read it back in the stone age as a high schooler who opted for additional literature classes as electives rather than other selections such as "Home Ec" and asked for things like this for Christmas, which although unattractive still holds a prime location on the 'puter desk

I've re-read it occasionally over the years because I enjoy the Shakespeare comedies **cough supernerd cough**. But I never loved it as much as I loved it last night when this happened

And my baby boy made his acting debut as Francis Flute in a modernized in music/wardrobe, but not in content version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Yeah, this is a post that should probably go on Facebook, but I deleted that motherfucker and never looked back so you're getting my proud momma moment here. Haters can eat a bag of weiners.

(Additional tidbit: Robin Goodfellow (a/k/a "Puck" to those of you in the know) was played by a girl and she kicked all||| of the ass.)

Cait • A Page with a View says

Fairies + Shakespeare is like the best mix ever.

Bionic Jean says

"The course of true love never did run smooth;" is a famous, often-quoted line - a truism throughout all ages and cultures. Where does it come from? It is spoken by a character called Lysander, in Shakespeare's play **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, and articulates possibly the play's most important theme.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a fanciful tale, full of poetry and beautiful imagery, such as,

*"I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:"*

and,

*"Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm nor snail, do no offence."*

It is thought that **A Midsummer Night's Dream** was written between 1595 and 1596, probably just before Shakespeare wrote *"Romeo and Juliet"*, although both underwent many revisions, both on-stage and off. And as with all Shakespeare's plays, it is impossible to be sure of any dates or an exact order. Unusually, the main plot seems to have been entirely his own invention, although some characters are drawn from Greek mythologies. Theseus, for instance, the Duke whom we learn at the start of the play is to marry the Amazon queen Hippolyta, is based on the Greek hero of the same name. Plus there are many references to Greek gods and goddesses in the play. The play is set in Athens, and there is a "play within a play" (a theme to which Shakespeare returned time after time) which is based on an epic poem by the Roman poet Ovid.

The play also includes many English fairy characters such as "Puck" - or "Robin Goodfellow", to give him his alternative name. "Robin Goodfellow" is a particularly English figure, who was very popular in the sixteenth-century. Fairies had been very much respected and feared for time immemorial. People were in awe of their magical powers. They were believed to often be mischievous at the very least, if not positively malignant, and names such as "Goodfellow" were meant to appease or pacify them, so as not to incur their vengeance. The moon was a source of myth and mystery, to be wondered at and its influence possibly feared. Oberon's,

"I'll met by moonlight, proud Titania"

And Puck's,

*"Now it is the time of night,
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide:"*

are indicative of the audience's superstitions and the common beliefs of the time. Many such elements in Nature were viewed as supernatural; what we now term "pagan" was the norm, and although people were fascinated by the fairies and "little people", they also feared them. Puck's comment,

"Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

could be voiced by any fairy up to mischief. The woodland at night would be both enchanting and thrilling to an Elizabethan audience - an unpredictable place of danger and possible bewitchment. The fantastical atmosphere, and the magic of the surreal fairy sphere which Shakespeare conjures up, are important and unique elements of this play.

The third component is the depiction of ordinary working trade and craftsmen in London of the time, and the theatrical conventions such as men playing the roles of women. The scenes where these foolish and absurd characters are involved provide much of the humour. They often make laughing stocks of themselves via Shakespeare, for our entertainment, and although much of this play seems strange and whimsical to a modern audience, it is classed as one of his comedies. It is completely different from any other of the plays which Shakespeare had written up to that point, although some of the themes present themselves again in *"Romeo and Juliet"*, but given an entirely different emphasis and dramatic intent.

One such theme is the ownership of females by their father. The play opens with Egeus asking for Theseus's support, in insisting that Hermia (Egeus's daughter) should marry whom he chooses,

*"As she is mine, I may dispose of her:
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law"*

(The third choice, if his daughter refuses to do her father's bidding, is for her to live a life of chastity as a nun, worshipping the goddess Diana.) This was the prevailing ethos in Elizabethan times, and there is no question that a daughter was the legal property of her father. Additionally, a common justification for choosing a future husband for his daughter could be summed up in the idea that "love is blind". Egeus is not merely insisting on his rights as a father, but wants the best for his daughter, and according to the Elizabethan view, thinks that an arranged marriage is the best way of protecting her from any irrational romantic nonsense.

Hermia herself is refusing to submit to her father's demands, as she is in love with Lysander. This theme, of a young girl's rebellion against her father, is against all conventions of the time, and is taken up with a devastating conclusion in *"Romeo and Juliet."* Shakespeare's own views on the power of love are unclear. Helena says,

*"Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:"*

which could easily be the author's voice, and tends towards the opposite view. Perhaps one could speculate that this could have been the reason why he developed the idea further, to make a much more serious

statement in his tragic play.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, however, is a much more frivolous and fanciful affair. Not one love affair but three are intertwined throughout the play. Demetrius, whom Hermia has been commanded to wed, is in turn loved by Helena. So Hermia loves Lysander, and Lysander loves Hermia. Helena loves Demetrius - but Demetrius also loves Hermia rather than Helena. So one young woman has two suitors, the other none, but since four are involved the audience are hoping for a traditional "happy ending". In the meantime, there are plenty of chances for misunderstandings.

As the play proceeds we are invited to laugh at this hapless group, in their lovelorn afflictions, rather than feel any true sympathy, because the whole affair is portrayed in such a light-hearted way, as opposed to the tragic story of young love, "*Romeo and Juliet*", which has probably not yet been completed. In that play there is tension throughout, and the sure knowledge, (as the audience had been told in the prologue) that there would be no happy outcome. Here we are free to poke fun at the young lovers' "torments", as we are fairly sure of everything ending happily.

Other characters who become involved in the confusion are "Titania", queen of the fairies, and "Oberon" king of the fairies. Shakespeare has taken the character of "Titania" from Ovid's "*Metamorphoses*", and his "Oberon" may have been taken from the medieval romance "*Huan of Bordeaux*", translated by Lord Berners in the mid-1530s.

In **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, Oberon is jealous of Titania's favourite, a changeling Indian child. She is keeping the child as a page, but Oberon wants to train him as a knight. All the young lovers from Athens, plus the main fairy characters, are in the woodland for various reasons at the same time. The woodland of course being also the realm of the fairies, much confusion is bound to follow. The audiences of the time will have greatly anticipated and appreciated this devilment, as "Robin Goodfellow"'s pranks and tricks will have been well known to them.

To a modern audience, the events seem farcical, and the play does require quite a leap of faith to enjoy the fairytale whimsy of the woodland scenes. Nevertheless, the scenes of passion between the beautiful, graceful Titania and the clumsy Bottom, with a grotesque ass's head, are so incongruous that its humour is timeless and crosses any boundaries with ease.

There are other "opposites" which tickle our funnybones even after so many centuries. Helena is tall, a "*painted maypole*", whereas Hermia is short, "*though she be but little she is fierce*," and both their scuffles and the enchanted lovers' declarations seem deliberately ridiculous in this context. They are overly earnest and serious - and followed immediately by joking, merry, clumsy workmen. All the fairies are ethereal, Titania being particularly beautiful; all the craftsmen earthy and clumsy, Bottom being particularly grotesque. Puck plays pranks, whereas Bottom is an easy and natural victim. Puck uses his magic with ease, whereas the craftsmen's attempts to stage their play is laborious and ridiculous by contrast. The incompetent acting troupe's enactment of the "play within a play", "*Pyramus and Thisbe*", is still humorous even now. Juxtaposing these extraordinary differences to exaggerate the contrast, meant that Shakespeare ensured laughs from his audience, while heightening the surreal fantastical elements.

The idea of dreams is perhaps the central pivot of the play. Events happen in a haphazard fashion, and time seems to lose its normal motion and progress. No one in the woodland scenes is ever in control of their environment - even Puck makes mistakes with his love potions. He gleefully revels in such mistakes,

"Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

...

*"Then will two at once woo one, -
That must needs be sport alone;
And those things do best please me
that befall preposterously."*

Yet Theseus and Hippolyta are always entirely in control of their rational world. The audience is given no explanation for the fantastical woodland sphere, with its illusions and fragile grip on reality. Shakespeare is clearly manipulating our sense of understanding throughout, inducing a dream-like feeling to the action.

The love potions are magical or supernatural symbols of the power of love itself, inducing the same symptoms that true romantic lovers exhibit in their natural state, of unreasoning, fickle and erratic behaviour. No one who has been given a love potion in the play is able to resist it, much as falling in love appears to others to be inexplicable and irrational.

Towards the end of the play we have a delightful rendering of the bumbling tradesmen's attempts to stage *"Pyramus and Thisbe,"* which Shakespeare has taken from Ovid's epic poem "Metamorphoses". He also incidentally uses the plot again for *"Romeo and Juliet,"* which seems quite bizarre, given the way it is used as a ludicrous farce here. Theseus and Hippolyta are well aware that the enactment of this play may be farcical and clumsy. They have been warned by Philostrate that the production is by *"hard-handed men,"* (or as Puck calls them *"rude mechanicals"*) and that their production is,

*"Merry and tragical! tedious and brief
That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow"*

and this adds to their anticipation. And Theseus will welcome the diversion of such fancies. His wise words earlier, about his world of the rational,

*"Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends"*

could refer both to the action which we have seen so far, and the workmen's play we are about to see.

The audience views this absurd little play through the eyes of Theseus and Hippolyta. The young Athenian lovers are also present, having been satisfactorily paired off, as we suspected they would be. Everyone is relaxing and poking fun at the hapless players,

"This is the silliest stuff I ever heard"

protests Hippolyta, but Bottom, the bumbling buffoon, breaks out of character every now and then, to earnestly assure his audience that all is as it is meant to be - they merely need to keep watching and they'll understand...

Shakespeare has written their performance as a delicious satire of the overly melodramatic earlier actions of the young lovers, and recognising this makes it even more hilarious to the audience. The young Athenians' overpowering emotions are made to seem even more ridiculous by virtue of these clumsy actors and this provides a comic ending to the play. Since the Pyramus and Thisbe of the craftsmen's play were themselves facing parental disapproval, it encapsulates and echoes the whole play within which it is set.

The final speech by Puck highlights the thematic idea of dreams. If the audience does not care for the play, he says, or if we have been offended by it, then he suggests it should be considered as nothing but a dream. It is interesting that the fairies are all still present as the wedding are about to take place. Shakespeare's message is not entirely clear here; it is as if he is merging the fairies and their magic with Theseus and Hippolyta's rational world. Perhaps it is to convey that we will never be free of the irrationalities and unpredictabilities of romantic love; either that or that the fairy folk will always be around us to create havoc. The workmen's play was mocked by Theseus and Hippolyta, perhaps the message is that human behaviour and ceremonies of the larger play, that is the real rational world, are unknowingly mocked by the fairy folk. Who knows?

A Midsummer Night's Dream is not one of Shakespeare's greatest masterpieces. Although it remains popular and is staged quite regularly, this may be down to imaginative staging and the exceptional production values we now have. On the page it reads as an inconsequential play, all whimsy, candyfloss and fluff. It is both significant and noticeable, how Shakespeare revisited some of the themes here, in *"Romeo and Juliet,"* but in that play he used them with such skill that he created an abiding and deeply tragic drama. In both plays we have the intoxicating and overwhelming influence of romantic love, the powerlessness of young women to rise up against their families and conventions, and the "potions" to influence a particular course of events; all those elements are here too, but combined to make a fantastical, frivolous, illusory bit of nonsense.

However there is much beautiful poetic imagery in this play, such as,

"My soul is in the sky"

"Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;"

"...by thy gracious, golden, glittering streams" and,

"O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!" (even if this last is to an ass...)

Yes, **A Midsummer Night's Dream** does provide a few smiles even now. And if your taste runs to flights of fancy; if you like to read tales of fairies such as Peas-Blossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustard-Seed, using language and imagery such as,

*"Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours:"*

"[I] heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back..." or

*"Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it love-in-idleness"*

if you are attracted by gauzy fragility and a sense of illusion, then you may enjoy the fantasy and whimsy of Shakespeare's play. For as "The Bard" says,

*"... as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen*

*Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."*

James says

Book Review

4 out of 5 stars to A Midsummer Night's Dream, a comedy written in 1595 by William Shakespeare. What a fun read! I first read this in high school and then again in college as part of a course on Shakespeare. Then I watched a few movie versions. It's full of so much humor and creativity. The plot is essentially the impacts of magic, as some fairy dust causes everyone to fall in love with the first person they see -- once the dust falls on them. Imagine the hilarity that ensues in a chain reaction of who loves who. If you want to read a comedy, this would be one of the top 3. It's got lovable characters, lots of understandable metaphors and a ton of memorable and enjoyable scenes.

About Me

For those new to me or my reviews... here's the scoop: I read A LOT. I write A LOT. And now I blog A LOT. First the book review goes on Goodreads, and then I send it on over to my WordPress blog at <https://thisismytruthnow.com>, where you'll also find TV & Film reviews, the revealing and introspective 365 Daily Challenge and lots of blogging about places I've visited all over the world. And you can find all my social media profiles to get the details on the who/what/when/where and my pictures. Leave a comment and let me know what you think. Vote in the poll and ratings. Thanks for stopping by.

emma says

mini-review, as I do for classics:

this was my first time reading Shakespeare on my own, and I kind of...saw that as a negative. I like discussing Shakespeare in a classroom setting, and being motivated to mark up the text and otherwise process it fully. I felt like I missed out on stuff here.

also, this play felt so short. maybe it's my edition's fault, for being 111 pages. maybe it's how abrupt the ending was (which is very). or how flat the characters were, or how there were a sh*t ton of them. long story short, it's not my fave Shakespeare.

all that being said, this was very readable and funny at some points. I think this is one of the plays you really need to see performed, rather than read it.

bottom line: I recommend watching this (I sure want to!) but I don't think I recommend reading it.

Madeline says

A Midsummer Night's Dream, abridged.

DEMETRIUS: I love Hermia!

LYSANDER: Shut up, I love her MORE. Anyway, you already hooked up with Helena.

DEMETRIUS: Who?

HERMIA: I want to marry Lysander but I'm already engaged to Demetrius and he won't leave me alone!
Two hot boys are in love with me, WHY IS MY LIFE SO HARD?

HELENA: FUCK. YOU. ALL.

TITANIA: Hey Oberon, I got a new Indian baby from one of my dead servants.

OBERON: I want that kid - hand it over, or I'll punish you with bestiality.

PUCK: Holy shit, there's so much awkward in that sentence I don't even know where to start.

HELENA: I'm lost in the woods and for some reason Demetrius likes me now! WTF?

HERMIA: I'm lost in the woods and for some reason Lysander hates me! WTF?

DEMETRIUS AND LYSANDER: We're lost in the woods and WE LOVE HELENA OMG.

PETER QUINCE AND COMPANY: We're lower-class actors, and therefore hilarious.

BOTTOM: I got turned into a donkey. And just in case anyone's missed out on the subtle humor of my name, I'm going to be called an ass by just about everyone in this play.

EVERYONE: Hee hee! Butt jokes.

PUCK: Well, this is an epic clusterfuck. How are we supposed to get this all sorted out?

OBERON: Easy. Just use my patented Make Everything Better potion!

POOF

DEMTRIUS: I love Helena!

HELENA: I love Demetrius!

LYSANDER: I love Hermia!

HERMIA: I love Lysander!

TITANIA: I love Oberon!

OBERON: And we'll just keep your little fling with Donkey Man between me and the internet, okay?

TITANIA: My who with a what?

PETER QUINCE AND COMPANY: Hey, look! We're still hilarious!

THESEUS: Okay, everybody's married to everybody - time to fuck like bunnies!

EVERYONE: YAY!

THE END.

Ted says

3 1/2 stars

3 3/4

Upped the rating when I realized that I'd given 3 1/2 to King John, Pericles, and The Taming of the Shrew

Here I've decided to add some comments about this project, finding myself about 30 months into it.

- I've read 10 of the plays so far, so I'm on schedule; all but one (The Tempest) reviewed; I trust I'll get to that one soon.

- The plan outlined below has been altered some, which can be seen by taking a look at some of my more recent reviews. I've tried to just go where I please instead of being rigid.

- I've tried different strategies for ordering the reading list. For whatever reason, the ten plays I've read are five comedies, three histories, and two - Pericles & The Tempest - well, what the heck are they? See my reviews if you care what I thought.

- I've added links to the plays I've reviewed inside my review of the Complete Works (link below, right under Resources.)

- The bit about watching a movie of the play didn't last too long, since I found it difficult to find a movie for some.

- Making up for that, I'm now seeing at least three plays a year on stage.

- I'm still kickin'. I guess that's the best part. 8)

I made a plan in early 2014 to read all of Shakespeare's plays. Not in 2014, but in the rest of my days.

Naturally this plan relied on some assumptions.

First, all plays would be treated as if I'd never yet read them (which was true for most of them).

Second, I assumed that reading one play every three months would be reasonable. There are 37 plays, hence a little over nine years. I would be 78. Seems okay.

Problems

1. What order to read the plays in?

A. Best guess as to the order they were written?

A'. The order that they appear in my Complete Shakespeare? (close to the same thing)

B. By sets of the types of Play? (comedy, history, tragedy, problem plays)

C. Random?

Wresting with this question occupied me until about August. (view spoiler)
(view spoiler)

2. I only got one play read.

Okay, this is not huge. I now have 36 to go. An even nine years? Perhaps this is a *very favorable*, even *unrealistic*? assumption. Yet ...
anyway. So I'll be 79. Seems okay.

3. My answer to 1, and the fact of 2, may be related.

I've never much enjoyed reading plays that are comedies. Seems to me that they're much more fun to watch than to read. There's not much to engage the mind in a comedy, nor is there anything to learn from them (like there is from a history, for example). (view spoiler)

Resources

The edition of Shakespeare's works that I have is this one.

The books of commentaries that I have are The Wheel of Fire, Shakespearean Tragedy and Coleridge's Writings on Shakespeare.

WoF contains analyses of seven of the plays, together with other essays.

ST (Bradley) contains very lengthy pieces on four of Shakespeare's play, with some other lectures.

The Coleridge book discusses to varying degrees many of the plays.

I have one other book, *Engagement with Knavery* by Robert Jones, which deals with only one of the plays, Richard III. This book seems to be unheard of on GR. (Duke Univ. press, 1986)

For movies, I have Netflix.

Plan of attack

[Read the introduction](#)
(view spoiler)

[Read the play](#)
(view spoiler)

Watch a movie of the play

(view spoiler)

Read any commentaries on the play that I have

(view spoiler)

”extroitive?” (view spoiler)

(hide spoiler)]

Write a review.

(view spoiler)

I'd appreciate any advice you care to give on Problem 1 above! 8)

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Previous review: Coleridge on Shakespeare

Random review: Mile Failte a *Goodreads amateur writing project*

Next review: 2014 on *Goodreads a Goodreads imaginary book*

Previous library review: The Tragedy of King Richard the Second

Next library review: The Life and Death of King John
