**. nA Midsummer Night's Dream -**LITERATURE NOTES

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR (William Shakespeare)**  
*See*[Introduction to Shakespeare](http://www.bulbsoup.com/lt-intro--shakespeare.html)  
  
**SUMMARY**  
This play is a love story that is split between four sets of lovers; Hippolyta and Theseus, Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius and Titania and Oberon. The story begins with a distraught father, Egeus, asking the Duke, Thesus, to bring the law upon his daughter, Hermia’s head. His request is made because he wants her to marry Demetrius and she has disobeyed him by seeing Lysander in secret. The Duke gives Hermia up to the day of his wedding to decide to obey her father or suffer the consequence of consignment to a nunnery if she chooses to oppose him. This decision spurs Hermia and Lysander to meet in the woods to facilitate their elopement. Things get interesting at this point because Puck, a fairy, carries out Oberon’s request to meddle in the lovers’ lives. Mistaken identity occurs with hilarious consequences. The tale of Titania, Oberon and Bottom intersect as a subplot, as well as the play within the play. The play ends with all the lovers being wed.  
  
**SETTING**

* The play is set in Athens
* Some scenes occur within the palace walls
* While others occur in the wood, outside of Athens

**CONVENTIONS OF A SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDY**

* See [Introduction to Shakespeare](http://www.bulbsoup.com/lt-intro--shakespeare.html)

**CHARACTERS**  
***Puck***

* Puck, also known as Robin Goodfellow, is a mischievous fairy who delights in playing pranks on mortals.
* His antics are responsible for many of the complications that propel the other main plots
* He mistakes the young Athenians, applying the love potion to Lysander instead of Demetrius, thereby causing chaos within the group of young lovers
* He also transforms Bottom’s head into that of an ass.

***Oberon***  

* The king of the fairies, Oberon is initially at odds with his wife, Titania, because she refuses to give him a young Indian prince.
* Oberon’s desire for revenge on Titania leads him to send Puck to obtain the love‐potion flower (love in idleness) that creates so much of the play’s confusion.

***Titania***  

* Titania is very stubborn because she resists her husband’s attempts, Oberon to obtain the child.
* She has a brief, potion‐induced love for Nick Bottom, whose head Puck has transformed into that of an ass.

***Lysander***  

* A young man of Athens who is in love with Hermia.
* Lysander’s relationship with Hermia highlights the theme of love’s difficulty
* He cannot marry Hermia openly because Egeus, her father, wishes her to wed Demetrius
* He becomes the victim of misapplied magic and wakes up in love with Helena.

***Demetrius***

* A young man of Athens who is initially in love with Hermia
* He ends up, ultimately, falling in love with Helena.

***Hermia*** 

* Egeus’ daughter.
* A young woman of Athens.
* Hermia is in love with Lysander and is a childhood friend of Helena.
* She is in love with Lysander
* She is left without a lover when both Lysander and Demetrius suddenly fall in love with Helena.
* She ends up marrying Lysander

***Helena***   

* A young woman of Athens.
* She is in love with Demetrius.
* Demetrius and Helena were once courted, but when Demetrius met Helena’s friend Hermia, he fell in love with her and abandoned Helena.
* Lacking confidence in her looks, Helena thinks that Demetrius and Lysander are mocking her when the fairies’ mischief causes them to fall in love with her.

***Egeus*** 

* Hermia’s father, who brings a complaint against his daughter to Theseus:
* Egeus has given Demetrius permission to marry Hermia, but Hermia, in love with Lysander, refuses to marry Demetrius.
* Egeus’s severe insistence that Hermia either respect his wishes or be held accountable to Athenian law places him squarely outside the whimsical dream realm of the forest.

***Theseus***

* He is the duke of Athens.
* He is engaged to Hippolyta.
* Theseus represents power and order throughout the play.
* He appears only at the beginning and end of the story, he is therefore removed from the dreamlike events of the forest.

***Hippolyta***

* The queen of the Amazons.
* She is engaged to Theseus.
* Like Theseus, she symbolizes order.

***Nick Bottom*** 

* The overconfident weaver chosen to play Pyramus in the craftsmen’s play for Theseus’s marriage celebration.
* He is full of advice and self‐confidence.
* He frequently makes silly mistakes and misuses language.
* He is the comic relief in the play because of he is unaware that he possessed an ass’ head.

***Peter Quince*** 

* A carpenter.
* The ‘leader’ of the craftsmen’s attempt to put on a play for Theseus’s marriage celebration.
* Quince is often ignored by the overly confident Bottom.
* He plays the Prologue in the play within the play.

***Francis Flute*** 

* The bellows‐mender.
* He is chosen to play Thisbe in the play within the play.
* Forced to play a young girl in love.

***Robin Starveling***  

* The tailor.
* He was to chosen to play Thisbe’s mother in the play within the play
* He ends up playing the part of Moonshine.

***Tom Snout***

* The tinker.
* He is chosen to play Pyramus’s father in the play within the play.
* He ends up playing the part of Wall, dividing the two lovers.

***Snug***  

* The joiner.
* He is chosen to play the lion in the play within the play.
* Snug worries that his roaring will frighten the ladies in the audience.

***Philostrate*** 

* Theseus’s Master of the Revels.
* He isresponsible for organizing the entertainment for the duke’s marriage celebration.

***Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed***   

* The fairies ordered by Titania to attend to Bottom after she falls in love with him.

**SUMMARY**  
***Act 1***  
***Scene 1***  
Theseus and Hippolyta are ecstatic about their wedding day. The scene continues with Egeus, who wants his daughter, Hermia, to marry Demetrius instead of Lysander. Egeus visits the duke of Athens, Theseus, to request the enforcing of the old Athenian law which states that a disobedient daughter may be sent to her death by her father. Hermia could accept the death sentence, marry Demetrius, or join the nunnery. The chapter ends with Lysander and Hermia planning their elopement, and telling Helena, Hermia’s childhood friend, of their plans.   
  
***Scene 2***  
Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout and Starveling meet to discuss a play that they will enact on the Duke’s wedding night. Quince is the main organizer and Bottom appears to be the person that wants to play everyone’s part. Quince gives everyone their roles and asks them to meet the following night in the palace woods.  
  
***Act 2******Scene 1***  
This scene opens with the fairy and Puck conversing. Both Oberon and Titania enter and start arguing. The audience learns that nature is being affected negatively by this and Oberon suggests that she should just give him the changeling boy to end it all. She refuses, and Oberon retaliates by plotting, with Puck, to acquire the flower, ‘love‐in‐idleness’, to let her fall in love with the first creature that she sees. This scene continues with Demetrius’ blatant rejection of Helena in the woods. The scene continues with Oberon informing Puck that he is going to drop the love juice on Titania’s eyelids. He instructs Puck to do the same to Demetrius.     
  
***Scene 2***  
Titania enters the wood and instructs her fairies to sing her to sleep. Oberon then arrives and places the love juice on her eyelids. As a result, Titania falls in love with Bottom, the first ‘creature’ that she sees. Lysander and Hermia then make their entrance in the woods, where Hermia suggests that Lysander sleep further away from her, for the sake of propriety. After this scene, Puck enters and mistakenly anoints the Lysander, instead of Demetrius, with the love juice. Lysander awakes to see Helena and declares his love for her. Helena believes that he is mocking her and storms off angrily, with Lysander in tow. Hermia then awakes from a bad dream finding herself alone.  
  
***Act 3***  
***Scene 1***  
The craftsmen met in the woods to rehearse the play.  They discuss, and decide, on changes that are to be made to the play and the rehearsal begins. During the rehearsals, Puck is watching and sees Bottom leave the scene. Puck follows him and, without his knowledge, transforms Bottom’s head into that of an ass.  Most of the artisans flee in terror. Bottom suspects that his companions are trying to make an ass of him and decides to sing to himself.  The song awakens Titania, who immediately sees Bottom and falls in love with him. Titania asks him to remain with her in the woods; she will have him attended to and cared for by her fairies.  She summons Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustardseed, and tells them to lead Bottom to her bower.  
  
***Scene 2***  
Puck speaks to Oberon about the mischief that has occurred. He reports that Titania has fallen in love with Bottom. Hermia and Demetrius enter, with Hermia accusing Demetrius of killing her beloved Lysander, who has vanished. The argument reveals no truths so Hermia departs in search of Lysander, leaving Demetrius to sleep. At this point, Puck and Oberon realized that a mistake has been made and Puck is sent in search of Helena while Oberon enchants the sleeping Demetrius. They unintentionally wake Demetrius who immediately falls in love with Helena because she is the first person that he sees. Helena now thinks that Demetrius is a part of the prank because of his sudden change of heart. The situation escalates when Hermia enters. Lysander and Demetrius fight over Helena, while Helena starts a fight with Hermia. Helena thinks Hermia is also a part of the prank. Oberon rushes to retrieve the Indian boy from Titania, while Puck leads the lovers away from each other before a life is lost. They get lost in a fog and fall asleep to wake up in love.   
  
***ACT 4***  
***Scene 1***  
Titania and Bottom get acquainted, with Titania being completely enamored with Bottom. She offers him the services of her fairies and they both fall asleep. Oberon decides to take the spell from Titania's eyes, after she consents to giving up the Indian boy. After Puck removes the asses head from Bottom, the fairies leave the wood. Theseus and his followers then arrive for a celebration in the wood. They meet upon the lovers and awaken them. After a conversation with the pairs of lovers, Theseus declares that both pairs of lovers should marry, along with himself and Hyppolyta, in the palace. They all leave, then Bottom wakes up and makes his way to Athens.  
  
***Scene 2***  
The actors are worried about the missing Bottom, and about whether or not the play can go on without him. He then makes a dramatic entrance.  
  
***ACT 5***  
***Scene 1***  
Theseus and Hyppolyta are back at the palace discussing the experiences that the lovers described. All the couples choose Bottom's play for the evening's entertainment.The play progresses, the actors leave, and then Puck gives a closing speech.  
   
**THEMES -**click here for [ADDITIONAL NOTES](http://www.bulbsoup.com/lt-additional-notes-csec-2012--2015.html)  
Romantic love  
Infatuation  
Power and authority  
Magic vs. reality  
Women in society  
Class