

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM (New Folger Edition)

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

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SYNOPSIS

Act I, Scene i: At the court of Theseus, Duke of Athens, who is five days away from marriage with Hippolyta, Egeus, an angry father, brings his errant daughter Hermia before the tribunal to complain that she will not marry Demetrius, Egeus's choice of a suitable husband. Hermia, mindful that Demetrius had once loved Helena, her best friend, pleads to wed Lysander. Egeus accuses Lysander of having bewitched Hermia with a profusion of love trinkets and other forms of wooing. Theseus follows the law of the land and commands Hermia to accept Egeus's choice. Her only alternatives are death or life as a priestess.

With only a few days to decide, Hermia plots with Lysander to run away the next night. They plan to meet in the woods outside the city on Midsummer's Night (June 24) and travel to Lysander's aunt's house seven leagues from Athens, where they will be safe from the harshness of Athenian law. Hermia divulges her plans to Helena, who in turn tells Demetrius. Helena hopes to win Demetrius's affection, but succeeds in setting him on the runaway lovers' trail.

Act I, Scene ii: Preparations for the wedding proceed as Peter Quince and a group of local laborers plan a skit to entertain guests at the royal nuptial feast. Nick Bottom, enthusiastic to play every role, accepts the part of Pyramus in the reenactment of "Pyramus and Thisby." The other players take the parts of Thisby, the lion, moonlight, and the fathers of Pyramus and Thisby. The next night, Peter, Nick, and the four other laborers plan to meet in the woods outside Athens to rehearse in secret by moonlight.

Act II, Scene i: A third plot shapes up as Oberon, king of the fairies, quarrels with Titania, his queen, over the possession of a serving boy. The lad, the offspring of a devoted priestess of Titania, reminds the queen of pleasant times when the boy's mother served at Titania's court. She maintains that she will keep him even if Oberon sulks and creates havoc in the natural world, causing crop failure, unpredictable weather, and other dire happenings to local people. Oberon, adamant in his resolve to have the servant boy, sends Puck, a mischievous sprite, on an errand. Puck locates a magic herb called love-in-idleness which, when squeezed on eyelids, causes the victim to fall in love with the first person who comes into view.

Act II, Scene ii: Oberon drops the juice on Titania's eyes. Puck confuses Lysander with "the Athenian man" and anoints his eyes. When he awakens, he falls in love with Helena. Hermia wanders away to find Lysander.

Act III, Scene i: Peter and the other laborers convene in the woods to rehearse. Puck decks Bottom with an ass's head. When the tradesmen flee from him, Bottom is left alone near Titania, who falls in love with him.

Act III, Scene ii: Puck admits the mix-up to Oberon. After Oberon anoints Demetrius, he falls in love with Helena. Hermia quarrels with her childhood friend, who is now pursued by two men. When the male rivals square off for a duel, Oberon dispatches Puck to separate them. When the women fall asleep, Puck re-applies the nectar to correct misplaced spells.

Act IV, Scene i: On May Day, Bottom sits at the center of attention from Titania and her followers. Eventually, Oberon recovers the Indian attendant and removes the spell. Bottom returns to his normal shape; Lysander and Hermia reunite; Demetrius rekindles his love for Helena. The two sets of human lovers and Bottom, unable to recall their enchantment, suffer temporary confusion. Duke Theseus, while hunting with Egeus and Hippolyta, comes upon the couples in the forest and forgives all, commanding them to join him and Hippolyta at the temple for a triple wedding ceremony.

Act V, Scene i: The newlyweds, eagerly awaiting their wedding night, pass the intervening three hours between supper and bedtime with light entertainment. Peter Quince's troupe bungle their way through the classic tragedy in which Pyramus and Thisby, a pair of thwarted lovers, commit suicide. The assemblage, which has had quite enough of amateur theatricals, rejects an epilogue and departs for bed. Oberon and Puck speak the final lines. Oberon blesses the offspring of the three newlywed couples. Puck begs the audience to accept their merry play without taking offense.

TIME LINE

- 1558 Elizabeth I becomes queen of England.
- 1564 **April 23** Shakespeare is born, the son of John and Mary Shakespeare.
Shakespeare attends a Latin grammar school.
London's first theater is built.
- 1570 John Shakespeare suffers failing finances.
- 1577 **Nov. 28** Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway of Shottery.
- 1582 **May** Susanna Shakespeare is born.
- 1584 Sir Walter Raleigh claims Virginia for England.
- 1586 **February** The twins, Judith and Hamnet, are born.
- 1587 Shakespeare moves to London.
- 1592 Shakespeare receives critical acclaim.
- ca. 1596 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is written.
- 1596 Hamnet dies.
- 1597 Shakespeare builds New Place, a country estate.
- 1599 The Globe Theatre is built.
- 1600 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is published.
- 1603 James VI of Scotland becomes King James I of England.
- 1604 An adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is performed at court.
- 1605 Shakespeare buys real estate.
- 1606 A law forbids foul language on the English stage.

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- 1608** Shakespeare holds stock in Blackfriars Theatre. Mary Shakespeare dies.
- 1611** Shakespeare retires to Stratford.
- 1612** Shakespeare writes *Henry VIII*, his last play.
- 1613** The Globe Theatre burns.
- 1616** **late March** Shakespeare revises his will. **April 23** Shakespeare dies.
- 1623** The First Folio is published.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Shakespeare (ca. April 23, 1564–April 23, 1616) attended a Latin grammar school in his hometown of Stratford-on-Avon. At eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway of Shottery, eight years his senior, and fathered a daughter, Susanna, and twins, Judith and Hamnet. He moved to London at the age of 23 or 24, joined the Lord Chamberlain's company, later known as the King's Men, and remained active in theater until 1611. Much about his early adulthood is a mystery, but it is clear that he obtained a thorough knowledge of his chosen field—acting—and was well-known by 1592.

Shakespeare gained the approval of Elizabeth I and James I, both regular theatergoers. His success as an actor-playwright enabled him to invest in real estate, build the Globe Theatre, and purchase a coat of arms for his father, John Shakespeare, a glover and bailiff in Stratford. Having written and produced thirty-seven plays, a sonnet sequence, and two long poems, Shakespeare retired to a large house in Stratford. As a country gentleman, he lived out his life in gentility and was buried in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Shakespeare's stage works are divided into three general categories—comedies, tragedies, and histories, although some plays cannot be accurately placed in any of the three. Critics describe *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (ca. 1595), one of Shakespeare's most original works, as a romantic comedy because it combines the romance of mythological, stylized characters, the formal presentation of a masque, and a distant setting with the elements of comedy. The addition of music, spectacle, magic, and the play-within-a-play, "Pyramus and Thisby," make *A Midsummer Night's Dream* one of the most performed of Shakespeare's canon, especially for young audiences.

The play, which draws on Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, was probably presented at the wedding of English nobles. It may have been adapted as *A Play of Robin Goodfellow*, presented at the court of James I in 1604, but, according to available information, was not presented in its original form during Shakespeare's lifetime. The play's fantasy and humor have often been revived in modern versions as well as in ballet, jazz, and operas by Carl Orff and Benjamin Britten. A 1935 film version starred James Cagney, Dick Powell, Olivia de Havilland, and Mickey Rooney. In 1999, a version directed by Michael Hoffman moved the setting to 19th century northern Italy and starred Kevin Kline and Michelle Pfeiffer. Segments which lend themselves to imaginative setting, notably Bottom's transformation and the attendance of Titania's fairy troupe, played in Shakespeare's day by boy companies, remain favorites with audiences.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To experience a Shakespearean comedy

2. To identify romantic conventions and explain their purpose
3. To place *A Midsummer Night's* in the Shakespearean canon
4. To envision the staging of a complicated play
5. To experience the beauty of Elizabethan poetry and song
6. To isolate and explain examples of Elizabethan idiom in context
7. To set the play in its social and geographical context
8. To comprehend the power of jealousy as a motivation
9. To evaluate the Elizabethan concept of a worthy match for a stable marriage
10. To discuss love and reconciliation as unifying factors

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To determine why Oberon wars with Titania
2. To analyze the importance of the magic plant to the plot
3. To discuss the importance of Theseus and Hippolyta as secondary characters.
4. To account for conflict and confusion among the laborers
5. To discuss Shakespeare's concept of woman's place in society
6. To contrast the fairy world with the social milieu in which the story takes place
7. To enumerate poetic devices that play a major role in the dialogue, such as parallelism, assonance, allusion, simile, metaphor, rhyme, and alliteration
8. To discuss the nature of lovers' quarrels
9. To describe Puck's role in creating and ending confusion

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

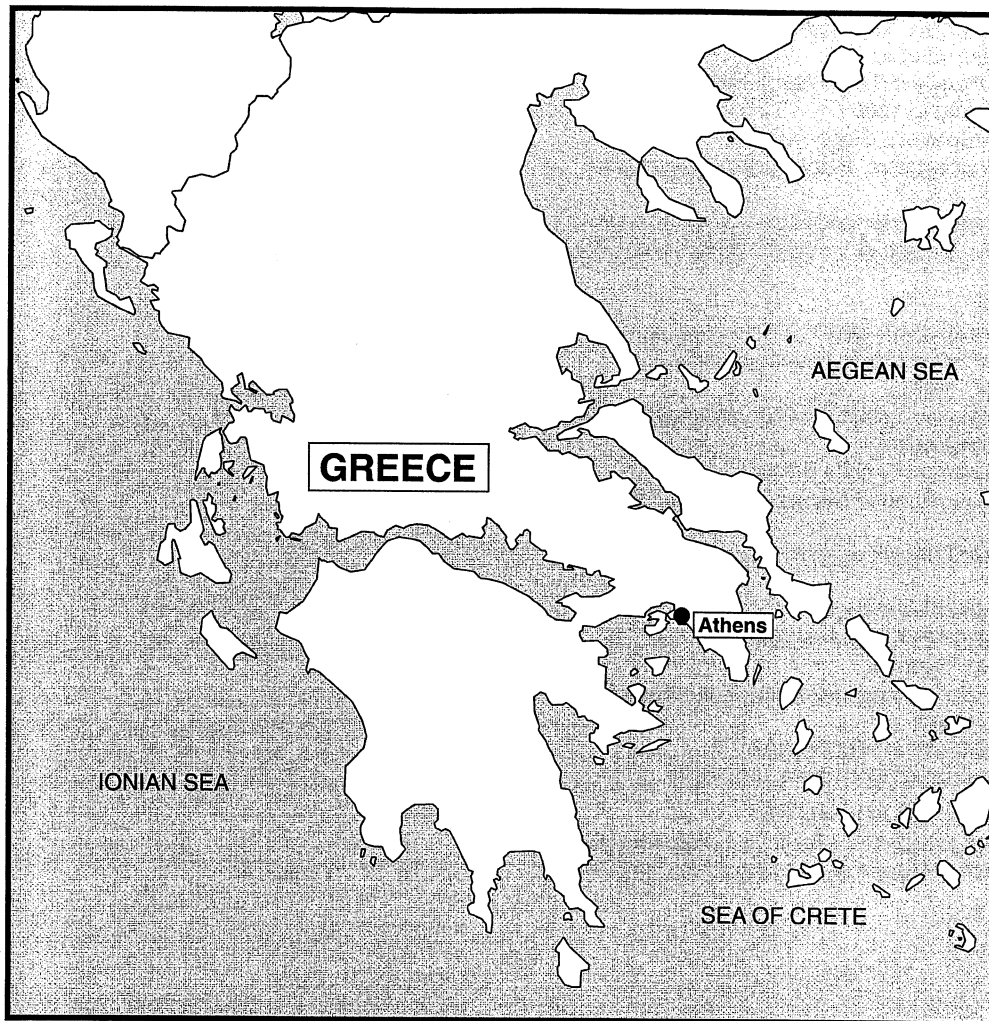
For a better understanding of William Shakespeare's style, present the following terms and applications to the play:

fantasy a dimension of imaginative literature that blends the real world with incredible characters, talking beasts, and unreal beings, and may be interpreted as allegory or symbolism. After opening on a stark and unpleasant court case, Shakespeare relieves the fearful consequences of Egeus's complaint against his daughter with the light and unpredictable adventures of humans and fairies in a forest outside Athens. The use of Robin Goodfellow as Oberon's agent and the Indian changeling as Titania's servant creates an atmosphere of young, light-limbed creatures performing the commands of the king and queen of fairies. The gross humor of Bottom and his pals provide balance and a bridge to the wedded life of three human couples.

myth a form of folklore that accounts for creation of all things, the origin of good and evil, and the salvation of the soul, for example, the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe, one of a canon of Greek stories that deal with love gone awry or failed love that leads to death. Shakespeare uses the somber myth in droll form to lighten the court scene and complete a day of formal ceremony and dining. By parodying tragedy, the playwright wipes away the fearful tone of the first act and presages happy marriages for all.

verse a body of highly compressed, unified literary works that appeal to emotion, rhythm, sense impressions, imagination, and theme as a means of giving pleasure or expressing a significant or esthetic truth, as found in Oberon's rhymed

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iambic pentameter couplets in Act II, Scene i, when he describes the rich profusion of forest flowers and vines where Titania sleeps. In the next scene, fairies contrast the majestic lines of the king of the fairies with light quatrains in iambic tetrameter, pleasant rhyme, and the repeated euphony of "Lulla, lulla, lullaby." The final scene extends the epilogue of *Robin Goodfellow* from a description of fearful beasts to the quiet house, undisturbed by mice. In trio, Titania, Oberon, and Puck round out the play with best wishes for happy marriages all round.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

The milieu of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is one of his most creative. Beginning in the stark reality of an Athenian court of law, the plot threatens to overwhelm a girl who is guilty of refusing her father's choice of a husband. The lovers' only choice is to flee Athens and live on the edge of structured society at the aunt's house. As the characters depart from the grim, male-centered aristocracy, they enter a blithe, non-threatening forest setting that bears a stronger resemblance to England than Greece. Shakespeare overlays references to wild flowers and herbs, twining tendrils, and fragrant moss with additional information on birds and insects. The most dangerous beast the lovers encounter in the forest is a bee.

The use of fairyland as a setting frees the imagination and enables a producer to design the backdrops from a variety of places and climes. In productions at Stratford Playhouse near the playwright's birthplace, the play usually features a children's company as the fairies. To simplify the change of setting from Athens to the forest, they bring in a light net sprinkled with leaves and blossoms. After spreading the net like a picnic blanket, the fairies dance, frolic, and interact as though they were in a surreal world.

The return to the duke's court in the final act again brings the play into a civilized and highly structured social milieu. However, the characters are no longer haggling over law. Having completed their marriage vows, they have three hours to spend between supper and bedtime in court entertainment. Shakespeare's use of a fanciful court masque allows leeway onstage as Peter Quince's ignorant, awkward troupe garb up for a ridiculous reenactment of the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe. The parody of itinerant players reaches absurd heights as one player becomes the moon by hanging a lantern over the scene. Another poses as a wall. When the play-within-the-play is done, the setting gives place to soft moonlight, serenity, and the departure of newlyweds to bed.

CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

For more information about *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,

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the Renaissance, patriarchy, Shakespeare, Charles and Caroline Lamb's Shakespeare summaries, and the new Globe Theatre, consult these sources:

Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her*, a history of women's lives from 1500 to 1800

J. R. Mulryne, *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt*

Wolfgang Riehle, *Shakespeare, Plautus, and the Humanist Tradition*

Also, consult these websites for additional background data on Shakespeare, the text of the play, and the Globe Theatre:

"The Globe Theatre,"

<http://home.earthlink.net/~feiffer/bard/content/globe.html>.

"The Globe Theatre," http://naples.net/ent_th/globe.htm.

"The Globe Theatre,"

<http://www.twingroves.district96.k12.il.us/renaissance/Globe/GlobeTheatre.html>.

"Lamb Tales: A Midsummer Night's Dreams,"

<http://daphne.palomar.edu/shakespeare/lambtales/LTMND.HTM>.

"Search Shakespeare," <http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/search.html>.

"Shakespeare's Works: Summaries,"

<http://www.csf.org/1997/97Dreamsyn.html>

"William Shakespeare" (audio),

http://town.hall.org/Archives/radio/MS/Harper.Audio/020994_harp_ITH.html.

"The Worlds of A Midsummer Night's Dream,"

<http://virtual.park.uga.edu/cdesmet/worlds.htm>

THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* should include these aspects:

Themes

- contention
- patriarchy
- law
- young love
- deception
- revenge
- rivalry
- intrigue
- magic
- reconciliation
- marriage

Motifs

- a judge's attempt to settle a family matter
- the intervention of a sprite in human affairs
- misguided plots to foil true love
- amateur theatricals
- court marriages and nuptial entertainment

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the play. Explain each. Act, scene, line, and page numbers are provided so that you can reread the passage from which the item is taken.

1. Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
[New]-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities. (I, i, 7-11, p. 7)

(There are many references in the play to the new moon,

which indicates by its changes the span of time in which events take place. Another purpose of the moon is to emphasize the fact that the more devious aspects of the plot take place at night. The slender shape of the moon suggests Cupid's bow, from which is loosed the arrow of love.)

2. Take time to pause, and by the next new moon
(The sealing day betwixt my love and me
For everlasting bond of fellowship).
Upon that day either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will,
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would,
Or on Diana's altar to protest

For aye austerity and single life. (I, i, 85-92, p. 13)

(Hermia has a choice—she must marry the man whom her father has selected for her or choose between entering a religious order to serve the goddess of chastity for the rest of her life or be put to death. Lysander breaks up this solemn moment with a quip: he suggests that Demetrius, the potential son-in-law whom Egeus prefers, should marry Egeus and let Lysander have Hermia. Egeus, who is angered to the breaking point, refuses to be jollied by such absurdity.)

3. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring. (I, ii, 66-67, p. 27)
(Because Snug is "slow of study," he asks for a written part. Quince encourages Snug to make up his lines in the play at will, since Snug plays the lion and has nothing but roars to utter. Bottom, eager to try all the roles, asks for that part too so he can impress the Duke.

In Act V, Scene i, lines 232-239, Snug actually speaks to the audience. Fearful that his roaring will terrify the women in the audience, he comments that he is merely Snug the joiner, an actor. He adds that he himself would be terrified if a lion were truly in the area.)

4. Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest steep of India,
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskined mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity? (II, i, 70-75, p. 39)
(Hippolyta is the leader of the Amazons, a troop of boot-ed female warriors who each sacrificed one breast in order to make themselves better archers. According to Homer, the Amazons fought on the Greek side during the Trojan War. Note Theseus's martial boast to his fiancée that he "wooed thee with my sword, and won thy love doing thee injuries.")
5. His mother was a votaress of my order,
And in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossiped by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking th' embarkèd traders on the flood;
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait,
Following (her womb then rich with my young squire),
Would imitate, and sail upon the land
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise. (II, i, 127-142, p. 43)
(Titania refuses to give up the changeling who was still

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unborn when his mother, a priestess and companion of the Queen, sat near Titania, entertained her with pleasant conversation, and ran errands. The imagery of this passage compares the votaress to a sailing vessel in that her belly is as full as the ship's sails and that she carries goods to her mistress in the same way that a vessel bears merchandise. An additional meaning of "merchandise" is the infant boy himself, who is the cause of the estrangement between the King and Queen of the fairies.)

6. I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you. (III, i, 188-190, p. 81)
(An old method of first aid employs a cobweb placed over a fresh cut to stop the bleeding. Americans of English ancestry who live in the coves and hills of the Appalachian Mountains still consider this folk remedy effective.)
7. I go, I go, look how I go,
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow,
(III, ii, 102-103, p. 89)
(Puck compares his supernatural flight to that of the arrow loosed from a bow native to a Mongolian or Turkish tribe. As compared to the slender English longbow, the Tartar bow is faster, but probably not so accurate as the English version, which remained a model for accuracy and distance well into modern times. Oberon expands on this image with reference to "Cupid's archery," the mythological love-shot that caused the victim to fall in love.)
8. Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us—O, is all forgot? (III, ii, 203-205, p. 97)
(Helena describes her earlier close friendship with Hermia as though they were sisters. At one time, she continues, they even sewed a sampler "sitting on one cushion, both warbling of one song, both in one key, as if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds had been incorporate.")
9. Thy love? Out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathèd med'cine! O, hated potion, hence!
(III, ii, 274-275, p. 101)
(Lysander refers to Hermia as a blond mercenary from Mongolia or Turkey, a statement that unites the unlikely combination of yellow hair and swarthy complexion. Since he has fallen under Puck's spell, he can hardly contain his loathing for his former love, who now seems as unpalatable as medicine.)
10. No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May, and hearing our intent,
Came here in grace of our solemnity.
(IV, i, 137-139, p. 131)
(Theseus refers to traditional celebrations of spring when participants collect flowers early in the day, decorate a Maypole, and dance around it in delight at the arrival of warm weather and nature's unfolding. He comments that their courtship rituals come late since "Saint Valentine is past." Note that these traditions are typically English rather than Athenian. Shakespeare, in his usual fashion, is composing an English play but setting it on Greek soil.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the play.

Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. What reasons does Theseus give for rejecting the other plays on the list that Philostrate gives him?
(After the triple wedding, Theseus calls on Philostrate, lord of revels, to "say what abridgment" he has in store for the evening to "beguile the lazy time." Philostrate, a dutiful staff member, presents the choices to his master. The battle with the Centaurs is already familiar to Theseus. "The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals, tearing the Thracian singer in their rage" is also old and out of style. "The thrice three Muses mourning for the death of learning, late deceased in beggary" is too satiric and critical for a wedding celebration.
Intrigued by the paradoxical title, "A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisby, very tragical mirth," Theseus asks Philostrate who the players are and learns that they are "Hard-handed men that work in Athens here, which never labored in their minds till now." After a brief quibble with Philostrate, Theseus explains his decision to choose a play acted by laborers: "For never anything can be amiss when simpleness and duty tender it.")
2. What is Egeus's main complaint against his daughter and Lysander?
(According to Egeus, Hermia refuses to marry the man her father has chosen for her. Furthermore, he accuses Lysander of having "bewitched the bosom of my child" by sending her poems and love tokens, singing songs beneath her window, giving her "bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits, knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats—messengers of strong prevailment in unhardened youth." As Egeus sums up, in general, Lysander has "filched" her heart by the standard methods of romantic young men.
As is true of patriarchy, Egeus seems less concerned for his daughter's future than to assure punishment for her disobedience, which, under Athenian law, he has the "ancient privilege" to demand. As Egeus summarizes the situation, "As she is mine, I may dispose of her, which shall be either to this gentleman or to her death, according to our law immediately provided in that case.")
3. How do Oberon and Puck end the last act?
(The fifth act reflects the rewards of love and reconciliation. As the three pairs of lovers take their leave, Oberon sings a wedding blessing, promising perfect children with "never mole, harelip, nor scar, nor mark prodigious, such as are despised in nativity." He dispatches fairies to sprinkle field-dew at each chamber, blessing the palace and its inhabitants with "sweet peace." He departs until daybreak.
At last, Puck stands alone on the stage and begs that the audience take no offense at their harmless presentation. Placing his own reputation in the balance, Puck vows that he will amend all and shake hands in friendship. The conciliatory message is aptly spoken by a cheery sprite who can alter any quandary with a drop

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of his magic potion.)

4. Describe Bottom's reaction to Titania's infatuation with him.

(Bottom at first chides Titania for exhibiting a lack of reason, but admits that he, too, likes a good joke. Titania calls him wise and urges him to stay in the wood and allow her to love him. She introduces her attendants—Peaseblossom, Moth, Cobweb, and Mustardseed—and orders them to wait on him. Bottom takes it all in good-natured fun, joshing the fairies for their fanciful names.

His outlandish requests for an unbroken honey-bag from "a red-hipped humblebee on the top of a thistle," a scratch on his hairy face, some music, a bottle of hay, and an undisturbed sleep, reflect his obvious enjoyment of the fairies' service. More and more, he gives in to his animal needs, begging "a peck of provender" and "good hay, sweet hay." Cuddled in the arms of his royal consort, Bottom sleeps contentedly among woodbine, honeysuckle, and ivy.)

5. How does Helena change during the episode on the woods outside Athens?

(Helena carefully observes the aspects of Hermia's beauty. Helena tries to emulate Hermia's style so that she can capture Demetrius's attention. She enumerates Hermia's most appealing traits: "My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye, my tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody... O, teach me how you look, and with what art you sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.")

Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. How does the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisby become a comedy?

(The prologue begins with a blundering introduction to the setting and situation and ends with a humorously alliterated description of violent death: "Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade, he bravely broached his boiling bloody breast... His dagger drew, and died." The bumbling characters take their places, with Bottom and Flute playing the human roles of Pyramus and Thisby, Quince speaking the prologue, and Snout, Starveling, and Snug playing a wall, moonshine, and a lion.

In the famous love scene, Bottom mouths Pyramus's melodramatic lines, "And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall," and holds up his fingers, which take the place of scenery. The remainder of the play consists of other instances of overstatement, melodrama, and bungled sentiment. To add to the travesty, the audience makes its own wisecracks about the play. The lion respectfully asks if the viewers would like to hear the epilogue. Theseus, who has had enough, declines.)

7. How does Shakespeare draw on the pathetic fallacy in his description of the effects of Oberon's quarrel with Titania?

(To intensify her tiff with Oberon, Titania describes the pathetic fallacy—the reflection in nature of an emotional turmoil. The winds blow in a fog from the sea, the rivers flood their banks, and the farmer suffers the consequences: "the green corn hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard. The fold stands empty in the drownèd field, and crows are fatted with the murrain flock." A long list of complaints follows these catastrophes, including mud in the

play yards, rheumatic diseases, and a topsy-turvy exchange of seasons.

In Oberon's concluding comments to Act V, he reverses the order of things. Since all is amended and the lovers have found their rightful mates, Oberon is willing to bless their union with strong, healthy children and to send his emissaries about the palace, distributing blessing. At his command to "Trip away. Make no stay. Meet me all by break of day," the fairies depart on their beneficent errand.)

8. Why is Theseus a key factor in the resolution of the plot?

(As the lovers awaken from their sleep, Egeus demands "the law, upon his head" to repay Lysander and Hermia for defying both a father's rule and Athenian law. Theseus, the voice of authority in Athens, overrules Egeus's crotchety mouthings and calls for a multiple wedding in the temple. He smooths the way for a general reconciliation by calling for "a feast in great solemnity."

Before the players begin their command performance, Theseus turns to his bride and comments on the necessity for charity in human relations. In his words, "The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing." He compares the situation of a humble local entertainment to other times, when "great clerks have purposed to greet me with premeditated welcomes." To smooth any bad situation, he recommends, "out of this silence yet I picked a welcome and in the modesty of fearful duty I read as much as from the rattling tongue of saucy and audacious eloquence." His wisdom is worth remembering: "Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity in least speak most, to my capacity.")

Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. What vision of matrimony does the playwright create in the play?

(Against the patriarchal law of old Athens, the romantic philosophy of the Renaissance is simplistic and idealistic: Shakespeare describes the mating of man and woman as though it were a simple matter of selection and marriage. Puck speaks the philosophy in short lines that suggest a popular ditty:

*And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown:
Jack shall have Jill, naught shall go ill,
The man shall have his mare again,
And all shall be well.)*

10. How does poetry of the play reflect an idyllic setting?

(By its emphasis on the untamed beauties of the natural forest, the play's poetic descriptions create an atmosphere of tranquility and delight. As Oberon states in Act II,

*I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet muskroses, and with eglantine.
In this idyllic bower, Titania sleeps "lulled in these flowers with dances and delight."*

The forest obviously contrast Athens, where city laws exact harsh penalties and quash the spontaneous love of young people. In contrast, the wild envelops all the characters in a mutual environment of blissful harmony. The forest is a florid, tranquil Eden where the snake

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provides an "enameled skin, weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in." Seven leagues from the city, the sylvan setting is a place where love and nature's laws prevail, where disagreements are resolved with whimsical solutions, and where male/female relationships can flourish like the wildflowers that intertwine on the forest floor.)

Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Create an additional scene in which the wedding party enjoys a festive meal and looks forward to long years of wedded bliss. Include a few comments from Egeus to indicate that he is willing to forego his anger and accept his new son-in-law.
12. Choose some lines from the play to paraphrase into modern English and to set to music. Reset the meter so that it suits the melody.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art and Music

1. Use desktop publishing or other artistic forms to create a handbill which will catch the eye of prospective audiences. Use an illustration that intrigues an illiterate viewer to see the play and learn how it ends. Emphasize action and contrast in your drawing. Include the symbol of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre—Atlas hoisting the world on his shoulders.
2. Select music to delineate the contrast between love scenes, suicide and violence, arguments, and the anguished opening scene at Theseus's court.

Cinema

1. Make a list of dramatic scenes from the novel that would require intense use of lighting, costume, makeup, music, props, and stunts, particularly Bottom's enchantment, Titania's dalliance with the ass-headed monster, Puck's flight to find the magic flower, Theseus's discovery of the lovers in the forest, Titania's argument with Oberon, and the performance of "Pyramus and Thisby."
2. View current movie versions of Shakespeare's plays that capture a sense of time and place along with his poetry, notably *Hamlet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Henry V*.

History and Social Studies

1. Compose a list of Shakespeare's plays and long poems and their settings. Note whether the places are real or imaginary. Locate real settings on a map along with the names of the plays. Place a star on Stratford-on-Avon, Shakespeare's birthplace.
2. Write a complete account in English money of Elizabethan times of Shakespeare's expenditures for a production of this play. Include costumes and props, especially the ass's head.
3. Contrast a laborer's job and wages with the court responsibilities and remuneration of Philostratus, lord of revels. Note social levels and prestige.

Language Arts

1. Choose a series of lines from the play that illustrate the playwright's skill with poetry, such as Oberon's description, "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows." Post the phrases on the bulletin board and lead a discussion of their significance to theme, setting, characterization, and romantic tone. If you have questions about how the words have changed since the English Renaissance, refer to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

2. List and explain mythological, literary, and historical and geographical allusions in the play.

Mathematics

1. Create an estimated time line of events in the play, beginning with the opening scene in Duke Theseus's court in Athens and concluding with the wedding supper, masque, and departure to bed.
2. Use historical data to determine the height, width, and depth of the Globe Theater. Include figures on how many people could stand or sit to view a play. Contrast these figures to copies of the Globe, particularly the Elizabethan stage in the Folger Library, Washington, D. C.

Psychology

1. Discuss the psychological problems faced by young girls who are forced to agree to an unwanted marriage or else choose between death and immurement in a convent.
2. Using Bottom as a model, create an extended definition of clown. Explain how his antics and egotism extend the humor of setting up play rehearsal and of the performance itself. Explain why humor is a healthful way to work off such negative emotions as fear, helplessness, anger, jealousy, envy, and rivalry.
3. Report on real evidence of love-sickness.

Science and Health

1. Explain references to the heavens, such as phases of the moon and myths concerning midsummer madness. Determine what effect the moon has over human emotions.
2. List natural elements in the play, including eglantine, woodbine, cowslips, violet, oxlips, cankers, muskrose, mustardseed, pard, ounce, hedgehogs, blindworms, newts, long-legged spinners, and leviathan. Give the common name for each.
3. Define murrain and rheumatic in modern terms.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Sketch the layout of the last scene. Emphasize the arrangement of the scenario for "Pyramus and Thisby." Include a list of props, costumes, lighting, and music necessary for its presentation. Note items that remain imaginary.
2. Write a report on Shakespeare's method of presenting comedy. Include the use of different stage levels and trapdoors, musical instruments, dancing, boy companies, and special effects, such as fake blood, smoke, thunder, and cannon fire.
3. Compose a ballad that captures the joys of Puck's life among the fairies. Keep the rhythm and lyrics light and pleasant. Include a refrain to summarize the basic philosophy of Titania and Oberon.
4. Write a diary entry describing a presentation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as seen from the point of view of an orange-seller, grounding, or wardrobe mistress. Stress the parts of the play that would entertain a poorly educated but thoroughly experienced playgoer.
5. Choose a series of lines from the textual notes that demonstrate variances with earlier texts. Explain how small changes, such as new/now, yours would/your words, and sleep/slippe, alter meaning.
6. Interview Egeus in order to elaborate on his view of a father's duty in matters of love and marriage of his chil-

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- dren. Compare Egeus's attitude to modern concepts of parental authority.
7. Compose a short congratulatory message to Shakespeare from Ben Jonson, Anne Hathaway, John Webster, Queen Elizabeth, or Sir Walter Raleigh upon the success of this comedy.
 8. Write a note to Elizabeth I from the Lord Chamberlain's Men in which you invite her to the opening night of the play. Tell her what you think are the highlights of the plot.
 9. Compose a TV commercial in which Puck plays a major role. Create a product for him to sell and write the dialogue.
 10. Make an illustrated list of dates that are linked to love, magic, danger, or spells. Include May Day, midsummer night, Valentine's Day, St. Agnes's Eve, Halloween, All Saints' Day, New Year's Day, Sadie Hawkins Day, and the winter solstice.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List in chronological order significant events in Hermia's flight from her father's tyranny, particularly confusion after Oberon lifts the spell, her escape into the woods, the separation from Lysander, quarreling with Helena, and attending the masque after the triple wedding.
2. Make a list of scenes from the play that express strong attitudes toward obedience, longing, friendship, selfishness, loss, valiance, love, deception, fairness, and heroism. Indicate what you think is Shakespeare's personal philosophy on each subject.
3. Compose brief definitions of love and courtship as they apply to Theseus, Demetrius, Hermia, Helena, Hippolyta, Titania, Oberon, Pyramus, Thisby, and Lysander.
4. Analyze scenes that depict conflict, particularly Oberon's demand of the Indian votaress's boy, Pyramus's attempts to woo Thisby, Theseus's ruling on Egeus's formal request, and Hermia's fights with Helena.

SHAKESPEARE'S OTHER WORKS

All's Well That Ends Well (ca. 1604)
Antony and Cleopatra (ca. 1605)
As You Like It (ca. 1599)
The Comedy of Errors (ca. 1580s-1594)
Coriolanus (ca. 1605-1609)
Cymbeline (ca. 1608-1610)
Hamlet (ca. 1599-1600)
Henry IV, Part I (ca. 1596)
Henry IV, Part II (ca. 1597-1598)
Henry V (1599)
Henry VI, Part 1 (ca. 1589)
Henry VI, Part 2 (ca. 1590-1591)
Henry VI, Part 3 (ca. 1590-1591)
Henry VIII (ca. 1612-1613)
Julius Caesar (ca. early 1599)
King John (1590)
King Lear (ca. 1603-1606)
Love's Labours Lost (ca. 1593-1595)
Macbeth (ca. 1603-1606)
Measure for Measure (1604)
The Merchant of Venice (1596-1598)
Merry Wives of Windsor (ca. 1597)
Much Ado About Nothing (ca. 1598)
Othello (ca. 1603-1604)

Pericles (ca. 1606-1608)
Rape of Lucrece (1594)
Richard II (ca. 1595-1596)
Richard III (ca. 1589)
Romeo and Juliet (ca. 1593-1595)
Sonnets (ca. 1592-1598)
The Taming of the Shrew (ca. 1589)
The Tempest (ca. 1610-1611)
Timon of Athens (ca. 1606-1608)
Titus Andronicus (ca. 1588-1594)
Troilus and Cressida (ca. 1602)
Twelfth Night (ca. 1599 to 1601)
The Two Gentlemen of Verona (ca. 1613)
The Two Noble Kinsmen (possibly written by Shakespeare and John Fletcher in 1613)
Venus and Adonis (1593)
The Winter's Tale (ca. 1610-1611)

RELATED READING

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*
Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*
Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale*
Karen Cushman, *Catherine, Called Birdy*
Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

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A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

VOCABULARY TEST

Match the underlined words or phrases in each item with a synonym from the lettered list. Place the letter of your response in the blank.

- | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| A. accustomed | F. eyes | K. indeed | P. notice | U. symbol |
| B. born | G. follower | L. influence | Q. senility | V. travel |
| C. cabinetmaker | H. forever | M. liberty | R. shame | W. unprepared |
| D. change | I. garments | N. maiden | S. skill | X. voice stress |
| E. dressing room | J. hilltop | O. monster | T. stop | Y. withdraw |

- _____ 1. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up.
- _____ 2. This plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the duke.
- _____ 3. This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!
- _____ 4. To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
- _____ 5. Fairy king, attend, and mark:
I do hear the morning lark.
- _____ 6. Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practised accent in their fears
- _____ 7. Weeds of Athens he doth wear
- _____ 8. Marry, our play is, The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.
- _____ 9. Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am
A lion-fell, nor else no lion's dam
- _____ 10. And in the wood, where often you and I
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie
- _____ 11. For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd
- _____ 12. Either to die the death or to abjure
For ever the society of men.
- _____ 13. Of strong prevailment in unharden'd youth
- _____ 14. Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west
- _____ 15. You do me mischief. Fig, Demetrius!
- _____ 16. I am, my lord, as well derived as he
- _____ 17. You do advance your cunning more and more
- _____ 18. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.
- _____ 19. Love can transpose to form and dignity
- _____ 20. His mother was a votaress of my order
- _____ 21. Since once I sat upon a promontory
- _____ 22. Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.
- _____ 23. At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards: damned spirits all,
- _____ 24. O weary night, O long and tedious night,
Abate thy hour!
- _____ 25. Her dotage now I do begin to pity.

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match the following quotations with the speakers. Choose your answers from the list of characters below. You may use some of the answers more than once and some not at all.

- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|------------|
| A. Bottom | D. Helena | G. Lysander | J. Puck |
| B. Demetrius | E. Hermia | H. Oberon | K. Theseus |
| C. Egeus | F. Hippolyta | I. Philostrate | L. Titania |

- _____ 1. I wooed thee with my sword and won thy love doing thee injuries, but I will wed thee in another key, with pomp, with triumph, and with reveling.
- _____ 2. My mistress with a monster is in love.
- _____ 3. I will hear that play, for never anything can be amiss when simpleness and duty tender it.
- _____ 4. 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.
- _____ 5. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.
- _____ 6. This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child.
- _____ 7. If thou lovest me, then steal forth thy father's house tomorrow night.
- _____ 8. And now I have the boy, I will undo this hateful imperfection of her eyes.
- _____ 9. I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay.
- _____ 10. For my sake, my dear, lie further off yet; do not lie so near.
- _____ 11. Fairies, skip hence. I have forsworn his bed and company.
- _____ 12. This is to make an ass of me, to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can.
- _____ 13. O, teach me how you look, and with what art you sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.
- _____ 14. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.
- _____ 15. Relent, sweet Hermia; and, Lysander, yield thy crazed title to my certain right.

Part II: Short Answer (10 points)

Explain the significance of the following details from the story.

1. Robin Goodfellow
2. love-in-idleness
3. Athenian garments
4. calendar
5. epilogue

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Part III: True/False (30 points)

Mark each statement either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- 1. Bottom suggests that Pyramus whisper through his fingers to represent the cranny in the wall.
- 2. Oberon, King of the Fairies, wishes to have the Indian boy in his retinue.
- 3. If Hermia refuses to marry the man of her father's choice, she will be condemned to death on Diana's altar.
- 4. Egeus, Hippolyta, and Theseus find Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia asleep in the forest.
- 5. Helena is glad to part from her childhood friendship with Hermia after Helena's quarrel with Egeus.
- 6. The players plan to warn the ladies of their audience that the lion is only Bottom playing the part of a wild beast.
- 7. Titania remembers her votaress with love and wants to keep the Indian boy.
- 8. Demetrius urges Hermia to meet him at his aunt's house outside of Athens so that they can avoid the harsh Athenian law.
- 9. Theseus puts Philostrate in charge of entertainment for the wedding.
- 10. Puck brags about deliberately fixing the likeness of an ass on Bottom's head.
- 11. Titania is horrified when she discovers herself to be in love with a common working-man like Bottom.
- 12. Puck is eager to see "Pyramus and Thisby," even though it spoils his plans to play a trick on Titania.
- 13. Bottom wants Quince to write a ballet about Bottom's dream.
- 14. Titania's quarrel with Oberon is so severe that no marriages can take place in Athens until it is settled.
- 15. As he pursues Lysander and Hermia through the forest, Demetrius states clearly his wish that Helena leave him in peace.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Compare Theseus, Demetrius, and Lysander as lovers.
2. Describe how the two young couples settle their differences.
3. Account for Egeus's harshness toward his daughter.
4. Analyze parts of the play that depend on the supernatural.

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COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose a correct answer to complete each statement. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. Titania and the fairies make a great effort to
A. hide the Indian boy from Oberon. B. please Bottom.
C. find love-in-bloom. D. help Helena win her love.
- _____ 2. When Hermia awakens from a nightmare, she
A. sees Puck squeezing the juice of the herb on Lysander.
B. begs Demetrius to save her from a dream about a snake.
C. hurries back to Athens.
D. finds herself alone in the forest.
- _____ 3. Oberon plans to humiliate his queen because
A. she refuses to give up the Indian boy.
B. Titania has left him and moved into the forest.
C. she refuses to help with the wedding plans for Theseus.
D. Titania has fallen in love with a monster.
- _____ 4. After Quince assigns the parts in the play,
A. the players agree to meet in the forest for a rehearsal.
B. Philostrate refuses to allow a lion in the production.
C. Bottom suddenly disappears.
D. Theseus asks Bottom to omit the epilogue.
- _____ 5. Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus plan to take part in a
A. country dance. B. trick Puck is playing on Titania.
C. hunt. D. May Day celebration.
- _____ 6. Pyramus grieves because
A. the lion threatens to eat him.
B. there is not enough moonlight for him to see his love.
C. there is a wall separating him from Thisby.
D. Thisby has stabbed herself.
- _____ 7. Helena runs away because
A. Hermia orders her to leave. B. she feels that Lysander is mocking her.
C. Lysander has abandoned her in the forest. D. Egeus threatens to have her put to death.
- _____ 8. After Bottom receives an ass's head,
A. Puck hurries to rescue him from humiliation. B. Titania recognizes him despite the change.
C. Peter Quince is happy about the change. D. the other players run away from him.
- _____ 9. After Lysander and Demetrius get into an argument,
A. Oberon commands Puck to bring on the night.
B. Egeus orders them to stop fighting.
C. both Helena and Hermia try to keep them from fighting.
D. Robin Goodfellow casts a spell on them.
- _____ 10. Oberon ends his quarrel with Titania by
A. taking the ass's head off Bottom.
B. graciously receiving the Indian boy.
C. following her into the forest and taking the boy by force.
D. declaring that he has no interest in Hippolyta.

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Part II: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Identify who speaks the following quotations (A) and to whom they are spoken (B). Place your answers in order on lines A and B.

_____ 1A. If we shadows have offended, think but this and all is mended: that you have but slumbered
_____ 1B. here while these visions did appear.

_____ 2A. What visions have I seen! Methought I was enamored of an ass.
_____ 2B.

_____ 3A. My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye, my
_____ 3B. Tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.

_____ 4A. O, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.
_____ 4B.

_____ 5A. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays.
_____ 5B.

Part III: Fill-In (30 points)

Fill in the blanks with answers which complete each statement.

1. Philostrate requests permission of _____ to begin the prologue.
2. _____ squeezes love-in-bloom over Titania's eyelids.
3. The person who plays Moonshine must carry a bush of thorns and a _____.
4. _____ makes a formal complaint to the Duke about Hermia's behavior.
5. Theseus admits wooing _____ with weapons and roughness.
6. The laws in _____ allow a father to choose a husband for his daughter.
7. Theseus gives _____ until the next new moon to make a decision.
8. Oberon tries to help _____ win the man she loves.
9. With their _____ the huntsmen awaken the sleeping lovers from their beds in the forest.
10. _____ explains to Theseus that the players are laborers who have never acted in a play before.
11. Bottom plays the part of _____.
12. Before wooing Hermia, _____ pursued Helena.
13. Titania orders her fairies to bring purple grapes and green figs to _____.
14. The house of Lysander's aunt is _____ from Athens.
15. Hippolyta compares the _____ to a silver bow.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. How do the players turn "Pyramus and Thisby" into a parody of myth?
2. Describe Titania's retinue of fairies.
3. Explain why Shakespeare mixes serious subjects, like a death sentence and a suicide, into the scenes of his comedy.
4. Using scenes from the play, prove or disprove Puck's pronouncement, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

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ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. M | 6. X | 11. H | 16. B | 21. J |
| 2. E | 7. I | 12. Y | 17. S | 22. O |
| 3. U | 8. K | 13. L | 18. W | 23. V |
| 4. F | 9. C | 14. W | 19. D | 24. T |
| 5. P | 10. A | 15. R | 20. H | 25. Q |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. K | 6. C | 11. L |
| 2. J | 7. G | 12. A |
| 3. K | 8. H | 13. D |
| 4. G | 9. A | 14. F |
| 5. A | 10. E | 15. B |

Part II: Short Answer (10 points)

- Another name for Puck, the mischievous sprite who performs the deeds that Oberon commands.
- The pansy, an enchanting plant that Oberon squeezes over Titania's eyes in order to make her fall in love with the first male she sees.
- Oberon orders Puck to put a spell on a young man in Greek clothing, but Puck selects the wrong person and causes a grand mix-up in lovers.
- The players need to know whether the moon will be full for their evening's performance, so they call for a calendar and check the phases of the moon.
- Bottom offers to include an epilogue at the end of "Pyramus and Thisby," but Theseus feels that, since the characters are all dead, no blame is necessary.

Part III: True/False (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F | 11. F |
| 2. T | 7. T | 12. F |
| 3. F | 8. F | 13. T |
| 4. T | 9. T | 14. F |
| 5. F | 10. T | 15. T |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. C |
| 2. D | 7. B |
| 3. A | 8. D |
| 4. A | 9. A |
| 5. C | 10. B |

Part II: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1A. Puck | 4A. Pyramus |
| 1B. audience | 4B. Thisby |
| 2A. Titania | 5A. Bottom |
| 2B. Oberon | 5B. Titania |
| 3A. Helena | |
| 3B. Hermia | |

Part III: Fill-In (30 points)

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Theseus | 6. Athens | 11. Pyramus |
| 2. Oberon | 7. Hermia | 12. Demetrius |
| 3. lantern | 8. Helena | 13. Bottom |
| 4. Egeus | 9. horns | 14. seven leagues |
| 5. Hippolyta | 10. Philostrate | 15. moon |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

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TEACHER'S NOTES



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