

Plot Outline for A Midsummer Night's Dream



A brief introduction to the play A Midsummer Night's Dream:

A Midsummer Night's Dream is an unusual play in that it has three quite distinct groups of characters whose activities form their own plots. The play's tangled structure creates the atmosphere of a dream where we are sometimes a little confused as to which way the plot is going!

The play opens in Ancient Athens with the first group of characters: members of the Athenian Court. The Duke of Athens, Theseus, is preparing for his wedding to Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. Egeus, a wealthy courtier wants his daughter Hermia to marry Demetrius but is angry that she is in love with Lysander. Hermia and Lysander decide to elope. Meanwhile, Hermia's friend Helena is herself in love with Demetrius and she tells Demetrius of the planned elopement. All four young Athenians journey into the forest.

Meanwhile the second group of characters, The Workmen, meet in the forest to rehearse a play they are performing as part of the wedding celebrations of Theseus and Hippolyta.

After this we meet a third group of characters: The Fairies. The King and Queen of the fairies, Oberon and Titania are arguing. Oberon wants to play a trick on Titania and arranges for his servant Puck to source a magic potion so he can enchant Titania with it while she sleeps. The enchantment means she will fall in love with the first thing she sees when she wakes. Having also witnessed Demetrius being unkind to Helena, rejecting her profession of love – Theseus orders Puck to enchant him with the same potion.

Puck mistakenly puts love potion in the eyes of Lysander instead of Demetrius however, and when Helena finds him in the forest, Lysander wakes and falls in love with her, much to her confusion.

When Titania wakes from her sleep, the first person she sees is Bottom, one of the Athenian workmen rehearsing the play. As another act of mischief, Puck has transformed Bottom's head into that of a donkey and so Titania falls in love with a man with a donkey's head.

The resulting action is a comedic chain of events with confusion, magic, and complicated love at its centre.

The play ends with order restored – with Oberon and Titania making up, Lysander and Hermia's love rekindled and Demetrius now loving Helena. The workmen successfully perform their play at the wedding.

At the end, Puck speaks directly to the audience and urges them to think of the play as if it were a dream...

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