

A Midsummer Night's Dream – Comprehension Questions

Your answers should be written in complete and proper sentences! You should try to make direct reference to the play (use line numbers and quotes!) as much as possible.

Please do not write on these sheets, as they will be collected and re-used!

Act I, scene i

1. Describe the setting of the play, giving all relevant details.
2. How do marriages in ancient Athens come about?
3. What are we told about the traditional father-daughter relationship in ancient Athens?
4. Explain the various conflicts introduced thus far.
5. Which characters do you think are most responsible for the conflicts? Explain why.
6. Theseus gives Hermia three choices. What are they?
7. Outline in detail Lysander's plan to elope.
8. Compare Demetrius to Lysander. Make direct reference to lines in the play in your comparison.
9. What impression do you have of Helena? Why?
10. Why does Helena betray Hermia?
11. Lysander states "The course of true love never did run smooth;" (line 134). What barriers do he and Hermia face?

Act I, scene ii

1. If you were directing this play, how would the props for this scene differ from those in scene i?
2. Why are the workers preparing a play?
3. Why is their plan to meet in the wood significant?
4. Name the workers and give the profession of each.
5. Describe how their names represent their trades.
6. Pick three adjectives you would use to describe Bottom, and provide quotes to support your opinion.

Act II, scene i

1. The play has shifted into a different world. Remember, in Shakespeare's time, the audience had only his language and their own imaginations to envision the change of venue. Describe this new setting, giving as many possible details as possible.
2. Why are Oberon and Titania quarreling?
3. Oberon sends Puck on an errand. What is it?
4. What does Oberon intend to do to Titania? Why?

5. What do we learn about Puck at the beginning of the scene? List some of his qualities/characteristics, and support your view with quotes from the play.
6. Re-read Demetrius and Helena's argument. Choose 3-4 lines which show Helena's obsessive love for Demetrius. Choose 3-4 lines which show Demetrius' loathing of Helena.
7. What is your reaction to Helena's plea to Demetrius to "Use me but as your spaniel"?
How would you describe this type of love?

Act II, scene ii

1. Examine the first eight lines to determine some of the duties and dangers that exist in the fairy world.
2. What will happen to Titania when she wakes up?
3. Puck was not there when Oberon cast his spell on Titania. What might Oberon have said to Puck as (a) he boasts about what he has done to her; (b) he explains how he feels about Titania at this point. You can use modern language!
4. What does Puck think he is doing in lines 72-89?
5. What is he actually doing? Why would the audience find this funny?
6. Summarize Lysander's speech at line 117.
7. How does Helena react to Lysander's sudden declaration of undying love for her?

Act III, scene i

1. Describe the problems that the workmen foresee during their rehearsal (lines 1 – 120).
2. Do you think they need to be so worried and careful? Why or why not?
3. How does Bottom react to suddenly being surrounded by fairies? (Would most people react this way?) What does this tell you about Bottom's character?
4. After Titania declares her love for Bottom, he replies that she has little reason to feel that way. He then continues by saying "And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays" (lines 140-141). What does he mean? Which relationships from the play support this opinion?

Act III, scene ii

1. What does Hermia think happened to Lysander?
2. What does Demetrius do after Hermia leaves, and why is this important to the play?
3. Oberon instructs Puck to fix his mistake (lines 366-371). What is he supposed to do?
4. How does Puck feel about all of the mischief he has caused? Find proof from the play.

5. What does Helena think her friends are doing to her? Why does she think this? (lines 145-161 and 192-197)
6. What are Demetrius and Lysander prepared to do to prove their love for Helena?
7. In the very first scene, Lysander declares that “The course of true love never did run smooth” (line 134). How do the events thus far in the play support this opinion? Explain your answer.

Act IV, scene i

1. Approximately how many days have passed since the beginning of the play? How do you know? (cite the lines)
2. How does Oberon now feel about his wife being in love with an ass?
3. How does he intend to release her from the spell?
4. Explain Titania’s lines “How come these things to pass? O how mine eyes do loathe his visage now.” (lines 78-79).
5. Why are Theseus and Hippolyta in the forest?
6. What does Theseus suggest at the end of the scene?
7. Why does Bottom say “exposition of sleep”? (line 39) Is this typical of his language elsewhere in the play? What does this tell us about him?
8. How does Egeus respond when he hears that Lysander and Hermia were in the woods because they planned to elope?
9. What does he demand that Theseus do?
10. Remind yourself of the choices that Theseus gave to Hermia in Act I, scene I (lines 86-90). Why do you think he has changed his mind? Hint: Use Demetrius’ lines 160-176 and Lysander’s lines 151-153 to help you.
11. All the characters who wake from sleep in this scene behave in a puzzled, confused manner. Pick our words and phrases which prove that the following characters believe they have been dreaming:
 - Titania
 - Any of the lovers
 - Bottom

Act IV, scene ii

1. Reread line 5: “If he come not, then the play is marred.”
 - Who is speaking?
 - Who is he referring to?
 - Discuss the truth of this line with reference to BOTH the interlude and the play *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* itself.

Act V, scene i

1. How has the setting in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* come full circle?
2. Reread the sections of the play where the Mechanicals talk about the problems of presenting a lion to an audience which includes “ladies” (Act I, scene ii, lines 66-78 and Act III, scene I, lines 26-45). Now read Lion’s actual

- performance (Act V, scene I, lines 215-222). How well did Snug the lion cope with their anticipated problems?
3. Why do you think the play ends with fairy rather than mortal characters?
 4. Quince introduces their play by reciting a Prologue. Does he do a good job? Why or why not?
 5. Throughout the performance of "Pyramus and Thisbe" members of the audience pass comment. Pick out THREE of these asides and write them down. What do you feel about the characters making these asides? Write down your opinions.
 6. What connection does the theme of "Pyramus and Thisbe" have with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?
 7. Do you think it was an appropriate choice of entertainment for a wedding celebration? Why or why not?