Daily Bard

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

A Midsummer Night's Dream: study questions and answers

More than fifty questions on A Midsummer Night's Dream, act by act, each with a full answer. Comprehension questions check what happens, analysis questions model how to write about it, and five essay questions come with outline plans.



How to use these questions

Read an act first, then cover the answers and try the questions for that act. The comprehension questions check that you know what happens, to whom and in what order, which matters in a play with four plots. The analysis questions ask how and why, and their answers are short models of the kind of paragraph an essay needs: a point, a quotation, a method and its effect. The whole-text questions and the essay questions with outline answers are for revision once you know the play. Every quotation is exact to the Folger text. For background and themes, use the study guide; for lines to learn, the quotation sheet.

Act 1

Comprehension

1 **What is the situation between Theseus and Hippolyta when the play opens?**

They are to be married in four days, at the new moon. Theseus, Duke of Athens, is impatient; Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons, says the time will pass quickly. He reminds her that he won her in war, "I wooed thee with my sword", and promises to marry her "in another key", with celebration.

2 **What does Egeus want, and what choices does Theseus give Hermia?**

Egeus wants his daughter Hermia to marry Demetrius. She loves Lysander, so Egeus claims the Athenian law that lets a father have a disobedient daughter put to death. Theseus adds a third possibility, life as a nun, and gives her until his wedding day to choose: marry Demetrius, die, or "abjure / Forever the society of men".

3 **What arguments does Lysander make in his own favour?**

He says he is as well born and as wealthy as Demetrius, that his love is greater, and, above all, that Hermia loves him. He then attacks his rival's record: Demetrius courted Helena and won her love before dropping her, which makes him a "spotted and inconstant man". Theseus admits he had heard as much.

4 **What do Lysander and Hermia plan, and why does Helena tell Demetrius?**

They will meet the next night in the wood outside Athens and travel to the house of Lysander's widowed aunt, seven leagues away, where Athenian law cannot reach them and they can marry. They confide in Helena. She decides to tell Demetrius, hoping to earn his thanks and to be near him on the journey: "To have his sight thither and back again".

5 **Who are the workmen in Scene 2, and what are they doing?**

Six Athenian tradesmen are casting a play, "Pyramus and Thisbe", to perform at the Duke's wedding. Quince the carpenter directs. Bottom the weaver is Pyramus and Flute the bellows-mender is Thisbe. Snug the joiner is the lion. Starveling the tailor, Snout the tinker and Quince are given the lovers' parents, parts that are never performed. They agree to rehearse in the wood the following night.

Analysis

6 **How does Shakespeare present the power of fathers in Act 1, Scene 1?**

Shakespeare presents a father's power as ownership enforced by law. Egeus's claim, "As she is mine, I may dispose of her", joins the possessive "mine" to a verb that belongs to property. He describes courtship as theft: Lysander has "filched my daughter's heart". Theseus supports him with a metaphor in which Hermia is "a form in wax", stamped by her father and his to destroy. Hermia's answer is brief and brave. "I would my father looked but with my eyes" meets ownership with a claim to her own sight. The scene makes the law sound orderly and feel unjust, so the audience wants the lovers to escape. More on this in quotes about order and misrule.

7 **What does Helena's soliloquy at the end of Scene 1 reveal about love?**

Helena argues that love is made by the lover's mind and is not a response to merit. All Athens thinks her "as fair" as Hermia, yet Demetrius "thinks not so". Her conclusion comes in a rhyming couplet (two consecutive rhymed lines) with the ring of a proverb: "Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind; / And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind". Love is pictured as a child because he is "in choice ... so oft beguiled". The irony is that understanding this does not free her. She at once decides to betray her friend's secret for a look from Demetrius. The speech states the theory that the wood will prove.

8 **How does Shakespeare make Bottom comic in Act 1, Scene 2?**

The comedy comes from confidence that outruns ability. Bottom wants every part: Pyramus, then Thisbe in "a monstrous little voice", then the lion. He directs the director, telling Quince how to call the roll. His language reaches for grandeur and misses. He will roar "as gently as any sucking dove", which defeats the point of roaring, and rehearse "most obscenely", a malapropism (a wrong word used for one that sounds similar). His sample of a tyrant's speech, "The raging rocks / And shivering shocks", parodies ranting, old-fashioned verse. Yet the scene is affectionate. Bottom's enthusiasm holds the company together, and Quince manages him with flattery, not rebuke.

Act 2

Comprehension

9 **Why are Oberon and Titania quarrelling?**

Over a boy in Titania's care. Robin calls him a changeling "stolen from an Indian king". Titania says his mother was a mortal follower of hers who died giving birth, and that she is raising him "for her sake". Oberon wants the boy as his "henchman" and she refuses. Each also accuses the other of past love for Hippolyta or for Theseus.

10 **According to Titania, what has the quarrel done to the human world?**

It has upset the weather and the seasons. Fogs have flooded the rivers, the corn has rotted, "The fold stands empty in the drowned field", and sickness is common. Frost falls on roses and the seasons can no longer be told apart. Titania blames them both: "We are their parents and original".

11 **What is the flower Oberon sends for, and what does he plan to do with it?**

It is "love-in-idleness", once white, turned purple when Cupid's arrow missed its target and struck it. Its juice, laid on sleeping eyelids, makes the sleeper dote on the next living creature seen. Oberon will anoint Titania, and will not lift the charm, which he can do "with another herb", until she gives him the boy.

12 **Why does Robin put the juice on the wrong man?**

Oberon, invisible, has watched Demetrius reject Helena and pities her. He tells Robin to anoint the scornful young man, who can be recognised "By the Athenian garments he hath on". Robin finds Lysander, also in Athenian clothes, asleep at a distance from Hermia, assumes this is the unkind lover, and anoints him.

13 **What happens when Lysander wakes, and when Hermia wakes?**

Helena, left behind by Demetrius, finds Lysander on the ground and wakes him. He instantly declares love for her and contempt for Hermia. Helena thinks he is mocking her and leaves; he follows. Hermia then wakes from a nightmare in which "a serpent ate my heart away", finds herself alone, and goes to look for him.

Analysis

14 **How does Shakespeare introduce Robin Goodfellow in Act 2, Scene 1?**

Robin is introduced through his reputation before he describes himself. The Fairy knows him as a "shrewd and knavish sprite" who spoils the churning and leads travellers astray, "laughing at their harm". Robin accepts the portrait with relish: "I am that merry wanderer of the night". His own examples are small and domestic, such as pretending to be a stool so that an old woman falls. Shakespeare draws on English folklore here, and the rhymed couplets keep the tone light. But the noun "harm" matters. Robin finds human discomfort funny, which prepares us for his delight when the lovers suffer in Act 3.

15 **How does Titania's account of the boy's mother affect our view of the quarrel?**

It gives Titania a motive and leaves Oberon without one. She remembers a friendship between women, sitting and laughing on the shore, and her imagery links pregnancy to trade: the ships' sails "conceive / And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind", and her friend imitates them. The tone changes on a line of plain monosyllables: "But she, being mortal, of that boy did die". The repetition of "for her sake" at the start of two lines turns the memory into a vow. Oberon offers no reason beyond wanting "a little changeling boy". Our sympathy leans towards Titania, which makes his trick harder to enjoy.

16 **How does Shakespeare present Helena and Demetrius in the wood?**

Shakespeare reverses the convention in which the man pursues, and makes the result comic and uneasy together. Helena abases herself with an animal metaphor, "I am your spaniel", and a list of verbs that invites cruelty: "spurn me, strike me, / Neglect me, lose me". Demetrius answers with disgust, "I am sick when I do look on thee", and she caps the line with its mirror image, a pattern that makes us laugh. His warnings are not funny. He reminds her of "the rich worth of your virginity" and threatens "mischief in the wood". Oberon's pity, as an onstage spectator, guides the audience's response.

Act 3

Comprehension

17 **What problems do the workmen find in their play, and how do they solve them?**

Four. Pyramus's suicide may upset the ladies, so a prologue will explain that nobody is hurt and that Pyramus is really Bottom. The lion may frighten them, so Snug will show half his face and give his name. The lovers meet by moonlight, so a man with a lantern and a thorn bush will represent Moonshine. They talk through a wall, so a man covered in plaster will play Wall.

18 **What does Robin do to Bottom, and how do Bottom and his friends react?**

When Bottom steps aside to wait for his cue, Robin fixes an ass's head on him. The others run away in terror, and Quince cries "Thou art translated". Bottom does not know he is changed. He thinks they are trying to frighten him and sings to show he is not afraid. The song wakes Titania.

19 **How does Titania treat Bottom?**

She declares her love on first sight and tells him he will stay in the wood "whether thou wilt or no". She calls four fairies, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote and Mustardseed, to wait on him and feed him fruit and honey, and has him led to her bower. Her last order is "Tie up my lover's tongue".

20 **How does Oberon discover Robin's mistake, and what does he do about it?**

Hermia enters, accusing Demetrius of murdering Lysander. Robin recognises her but not him: "This is the woman, but not this the man". When Demetrius lies down to sleep, Oberon anoints his eyes and sends Robin to fetch Helena. Lysander follows her in, Demetrius wakes, and now both men love Helena.

21 **How is the confusion brought to an end?**

Lysander and Demetrius go off to fight over Helena. On Oberon's orders, Robin covers the night with fog and imitates each man's voice to lead them apart until they fall asleep exhausted. Helena and Hermia arrive separately and sleep too. Robin then squeezes the remedy on Lysander's eyes, so that he will love Hermia again when he wakes.

Analysis

22 How does Shakespeare make the lovers' quarrel in Act 3, Scene 2 both comic and painful?

The comedy depends on dramatic irony (the audience knows what the characters do not). We know about the flower, so each reasonable inference is wrong: Helena decides that all three have "conjoined" to mock her. The speed and symmetry are funny, and so are the insults about height, "thou painted maypole" and "you dwarf". The pain comes when the pattern pauses. Helena's appeal to "schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence" drops the lovers' rhyme for blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) and sounds sincere. Hermia's "Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?" is simple bewilderment. Lysander's abuse of her dark colouring, "Away, you Ethiop", shows how fast the language of love becomes contempt.

23 How does Shakespeare present Bottom's response to Titania's love?

Bottom is unshaken, and the contrast of styles carries the comedy. Titania speaks lyrical verse; he answers in prose. His first reaction is doubt, "you should have little reason for that", followed by the play's wisest remark: "reason and love keep little company together nowadays". He would like to leave the wood. With the fairies he is courteous and homely, joking that Cobweb will be useful if he cuts his finger. He is neither awed nor corrupted. But Shakespeare also shows Titania's power. "Thou shalt remain here" is a command, so the weaver is a captive as well as a favourite. See quotes about love.

24 What is the significance of Oberon's claim that the fairies are "spirits of another sort"?

It separates the fairies from the evil spirits of the night. Robin warns that dawn is near, when ghosts "Troop home to churchyards" and damned spirits return to "wormy beds". Oberon replies "But we are spirits of another sort", and describes walking the groves until sunrise turns the sea to "yellow gold". The imagery moves from the graveyard to light. For an audience that could take night spirits to be devilish, this matters. The fairies are careless and dangerous, but they are not wicked, and they can bear the day. The speech prepares for Act 5, where they bless a house instead of haunting it.



Halfway through the play is a good place to slow down. **Daily Bard** shows one Shakespeare passage a day, checked against the Folger text, with a plain-English reading on the back of the leaf.

Act 4

Comprehension

25 **How does Oberon get the changeling boy, and what does he do next?**

He tells Robin that he met Titania gathering flowers for Bottom and taunted her; she begged his patience, and when he asked for the boy she gave him up at once. Having what he wanted, Oberon pities her, releases her with the antidote he calls "Dian's bud", and orders Robin to remove the ass's head.

26 **Why are Theseus and Hippolyta in the wood, and what do they find?**

They are out early to hunt, and discuss the music of their hounds. They find the four lovers asleep on the ground. Theseus supposes they rose early for "The rite of May", then remembers that this is the day Hermia must give her answer. He has the huntsmen wake them with horns.

27 **What does Demetrius tell Theseus, and what does Theseus decide?**

Demetrius says he followed the others in fury, but that by some power he does not understand his love for Hermia has "Melted as the snow". He now loves only Helena, to whom he was betrothed before he saw Hermia. Egeus demands the law. Theseus refuses him, "Egeus, I will overbear your will", and announces that both couples will be married alongside him.

28 **What does Bottom say and do when he wakes?**

He wakes thinking he is still at rehearsal, waiting for his cue. Then he remembers "a most rare vision" that he cannot put into words. He decides that Quince will write a ballad about it called "Bottom's Dream", which he will sing before the Duke at the end of the play.

29 **What happens in Act 4, Scene 2?**

The workmen fear their play is ruined, since nobody else in Athens can play Pyramus. Snug brings news that the Duke is coming from the temple and that other lords and ladies have been married with him. Flute mourns the pension Bottom has lost, "sixpence a day". Bottom arrives, refuses to tell his story, and announces that their play is "preferred", meaning put forward for the Duke's choice. He sends them to get ready.

Analysis

30 How does Shakespeare present the lovers as they wake?

Shakespeare gives them wonder and doubt, not triumph. Lysander replies “Half sleep, half waking”. Demetrius cannot explain his change: “I wot not by what power / (But by some power it is)”. Similes of dissolving and distance follow. His old love has “Melted as the snow”, and the night looks like “far-off mountains turned into clouds”. Hermia sees “with parted eye”, as if double. There is irony in Demetrius’s metaphor of illness and health. He says he has “come to my natural taste”, yet he is the one lover still under the flower. The happy ending begins in uncertainty. See **quotes about dreams and illusion**.

31 How far is the reconciliation of Oberon and Titania a happy one?

This is open, and the text supports two readings. On one, harmony is restored: the pair dance, Oberon declares “Now thou and I are new in amity”, and they go to bless the weddings. Music and rhyme present this as a real mending, and the disordered seasons are implicitly mended with it. On the other, the peace is bought by humiliation. Oberon reports that he “at my pleasure taunted her” and that she “in mild terms begged my patience”. The boy she defended so eloquently is given up off stage, while she is drugged. Her question, “How came these things to pass?”, is not answered in our hearing. A strong answer holds both readings together.

32 Why is Bottom’s speech on waking important?

It makes the least educated character the one who senses that the night meant something. Bottom, in prose, refuses to explain: “Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream”, a pun he cannot hear. His confusion of the senses, “The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen”, is comic, and it also suggests an experience beyond ordinary perception. His instinct is to turn it into art, a ballad named “because it hath no bottom”. In the next scene he keeps it to himself: “Not a word of me”. Set this humility beside Theseus’s confident dismissal of the lovers’ story in Act 5.

Act 5

Comprehension

33 What do Theseus and Hippolyta disagree about at the start of the act?

Whether to believe the lovers’ account of the night. Theseus does not. He says lovers, like madmen and poets, are ruled by imagination, which invents what it hopes for or fears: “How easy is a bush supposed a bear”. Hippolyta answers that four stories which agree amount to “something of great constancy”.

34 **What entertainments is Theseus offered, and why does he choose "Pyramus and Thisbe"?**

Philostrate's list offers a song about the battle with the Centaurs, the drunken Bacchanals tearing apart the Thracian singer, the Muses mourning the death of learning, and the workmen's play. Philostrate warns that the play is worthless. Theseus chooses it because it is offered in good faith: "never anything can be amiss / When simpleness and duty tender it".

35 **What goes wrong in the performance?**

Almost everything. Quince mispunctuates the prologue so that it insults the audience. Wall and Lion explain who they really are. Moonshine is heckled until he abandons his verse and simply lists his props. Bottom steps out of his part to correct the Duke. The lovers' death speeches are absurd, with Thisbe praising Pyramus's "cherry nose" and eyes "green as leeks".

36 **How do the onstage spectators behave during the play?**

Theseus, Lysander and Demetrius keep up a stream of jokes at the actors' expense. Hippolyta is impatient, calling it "the silliest stuff that ever I heard", but later admits "I pity the man". Hermia and Helena say nothing at all in Act 5. Theseus declines the epilogue and asks for the dance instead.

37 **What happens after the mortals go to bed?**

At midnight Robin enters with a broom to sweep the house. Oberon, Titania and their train follow, sing and dance, and bless the three marriages: the couples will be true and their children free of blemish. The fairies leave, and Robin stays to speak the epilogue, asking the audience to think of the play as a dream and to applaud.

Analysis

38 **How does Shakespeare create comedy in Quince's prologue, and what is its point?**

The joke is in the punctuation. Quince stops in the wrong places, so compliments turn into insults: "All for your delight / We are not here". The opening line, "If we offend, it is with our goodwill", says the reverse of what he means. The courtiers supply the analysis. Theseus compares the speech to "a tangled chain", with "nothing impaired, but all disordered". The point is more than mockery. Meaning in the theatre depends on delivery, a joke Shakespeare's actors would enjoy. It also tests Theseus's promise, made moments earlier, to value the intention behind a nervous speech. The right words in the wrong order is a small image of the whole night in the wood.

39 **Why does Shakespeare end a comedy about lovers with the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe?**

Because it is the lovers' own story with the other ending. Pyramus and Thisbe are kept apart by their fathers, agree to meet by night outside the city, and die through a mistake. That is how Act 1 might have turned out, and it is close to the plot of Romeo and Juliet, written at about the same time. Played badly, the tragedy becomes "very tragical mirth", and the newly married lovers laugh without recognising themselves. The inner play is also about theatre. Actors who explain every illusion destroy it, and Theseus has to remind Hippolyta that "The best in this kind are but shadows". Only Hippolyta is touched.

40 **How does Shakespeare change the mood in the final moments of the play?**

He lets in the darkness that the comedy has kept out, and then answers it. Theseus jokes that "'Tis almost fairy time". Robin's speech then lists night terrors in short four-beat lines: "Now the hungry lion roars", the "screech-owl" reminds the wretched of a "shroud", and graves open. The repeated "Now" builds the threat before the turn to "Now are frolic". Oberon's blessing is protective, and it names what it wards off: no "mole, harelip, nor scar" shall mark the children. Happiness at the end is guarded, not guaranteed. The epilogue then hands the play to the audience with a request for applause: "Give me your hands, if we be friends".

Whole-text questions

41 **Why does Shakespeare make Hermia and Helena distinct but Lysander and Demetrius alike?**

The design carries the play's argument about love. Hermia is short, dark and quick to fight: Helena remembers her as "a vixen when she went to school". Helena is tall and fair, inclined to self-pity, and the play's sharpest analyst of love. The men, by contrast, are equal in birth and wealth, as Lysander says in Act 1, and they use the same inflated praise. If the men are interchangeable, the women's steady preferences cannot be explained by merit, and the men's changes look arbitrary. Notice who is constant. Neither woman's love alters all night. Among the mortals, the flower is only ever put on men's eyes.

42 **What is the significance of the changeling boy?**

He is the cause of the fairy quarrel, and so of the disordered seasons, yet he has no lines and no entrance in the text. The accounts of him differ. Robin says he was stolen; Titania says she took him in out of loyalty to his dead mother. For her he stands for a bond between women. For Oberon he is a test of obedience: he wants the boy as "Knight of his train" and resents that Titania "makes him all her joy". Keeping him off stage makes him a prize, not a person. Like Hermia in Act 1, he is a child disputed as property, and he ends in the possession of the male ruler.

43 How are the four plots connected?

By an occasion, a place, a device and a person. The occasion is the Duke's wedding: it is Hermia's deadline, the reason for the workmen's play, and the event the fairies have come to bless. The place is the wood, where three of the four groups spend the same night. The device is the flower, used on Titania and on the lovers. The person is Bottom, the only mortal who meets the fairies face to face. The plots also mirror each other. Each contains a quarrel between a man and a woman over who decides, and the workmen's play repeats the lovers' story as tragedy turned to farce.

44 How does holiday custom help to explain the shape of the play?

The title points to Midsummer, and the text twice mentions the customs of May: Lysander recalls "a morn of May" in the wood, and Theseus assumes the lovers rose to "observe / The rite of May". Both were holidays linked with going out to the woods, courtship and a temporary release from ordinary rules. That is the play's structure: the young leave the city and its law, pass a night of licence and confusion, and return to be married. The pattern explains why the disorder feels safe. It is expected to end. A good answer then asks whether everyone gains equally from the return, since Titania and Egeus are both simply overruled.

45 How does Shakespeare use verse, rhyme and prose to distinguish the groups of characters?

Each group has its own sound. Theseus and Hippolyta speak blank verse, the measured form of authority. The lovers speak largely in rhymed couplets, whose predictability makes their passion sound conventional, as in "The more I hate, the more he follows me" and its rhyming reply. The fairies use blank verse for argument and short chanting lines for spells: "Flower of this purple dye". The workmen speak prose until they act, when they produce comically bad verse such as "Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade". The shifts matter most. Helena drops rhyme to mourn a friendship, and Titania's verse meets Bottom's prose in a collision of two worlds.

46 Is the ending of the play happy?

The question is open, and the best answers argue for a qualified yes. In favour: the death sentence is lifted, three couples marry, the fairy rulers are reconciled, and the last voices bless and reassure. The form is comic, moving from "discord" to "concord". Against: the harmony has costs the play does not hide. Demetrius is never released from the flower, so Helena's marriage rests on a spell. Titania loses the boy by a trick. Hermia and Helena are silent in Act 5, and their friendship is not visibly repaired. The epilogue's offer to treat everything as a dream can be heard as comfort or as evasion.

Essay questions with outline answers

I **"We laugh at the four lovers because we are never allowed to feel for them." How far do you agree?**

Thesis: Shakespeare limits our sympathy for the lovers in order to make a point about love, but he lets real feeling through at chosen moments, and the comedy needs both.

- **Point 1:** The lovers are designed as a pattern. The men are equals and the verse is formal, as in the matched lines of Act 1, Scene 1: "The more I hate, the more he follows me". Pattern keeps us at a distance.
- **Point 2:** Dramatic irony places us above them, beside Robin. In Act 3, Scene 2 he invites us to watch a "fond pageant" and concludes "Lord, what fools these mortals be".
- **Point 3:** Feeling breaks the pattern. Hermia's nightmare in Act 2, Scene 2 and her "Am not I Hermia?", and Helena's appeal to "childhood innocence", are written to hurt.
- **Counter-argument:** The dangers are real even when the tone is light: a death sentence, Demetrius's threat of "mischief in the wood", and a tragic version of the story in Act 5.

Conclusion: We laugh at the lovers as a group and feel for them one at a time, which is how the play shows that love is absurd and sincere at once.

II **"Theseus is the play's voice of reason and justice." How far do you agree?**

Thesis: Theseus is a reasonable ruler whose reason has limits: he is a conqueror who learns to bend the law, and a sceptic whom the play proves wrong.

- **Point 1:** In Act 1, Scene 1 he upholds a harsh law, calling it one "Which by no means we may extenuate", and by his own account he wooed his bride "with my sword". Yet he adds the option of the convent and grants time.
- **Point 2:** In Act 4, Scene 1 he reverses himself: "I will overbear your will". The outcome is just, but it rests on his will, not on principle.
- **Point 3:** In Act 5 his reason fails. He refuses to believe "These antique fables", and the audience, who saw the fairies, knows better. Hippolyta corrects him.
- **Counter-argument:** He is a generous patron, choosing the workmen's play because "simpleness and duty tender it". But his kindness is mixed with sport: "Our sport shall be to take what they mistake".

Conclusion: Theseus represents daylight judgement at its best, and the play honours it while showing how much it cannot see.

III **Explore the significance of Robin Goodfellow (Puck) in the play.**

Thesis: Robin is the play's agent of misrule and its link to the audience: careless more than malicious, he turns suffering into spectacle and so shows how comedy works.

- **Point 1:** He comes from folklore as a household trickster. Act 2, Scene 1 presents a "shrewd and knavish sprite" who misleads travellers, "laughing at their harm".
- **Point 2:** His error drives the plot. He anoints the wrong man because of "Weeds of Athens", pleads "I mistook", and then enjoys the result: "those things do best please me / That befall prepost'rously". Love's confusion is shown to be chance.
- **Point 3:** He is a spectator and a performer. At the rehearsal he says "I'll be an auditor" and perhaps "An actor too", and he speaks the epilogue for the "shadows".
- **Counter-argument:** Robin is not free. He serves Oberon's purposes, applies the remedy, promises "Jack shall have Jill", and ends by sweeping the house. Misrule works for order.

Conclusion: Robin makes the audience his accomplices, and the epilogue asks us to admit it. More in quotes about order and misrule.

IV **How does Shakespeare use the workmen to explore ideas about social class?**

Thesis: The workmen are laughed at for their art and respected for their good faith, and through them Shakespeare shows a hierarchy that runs on deference and gently questions those who mock from above.

- **Point 1:** They are defined by trade and by prose, and they fear their superiors. In Act 1, Scene 2 a frightening lion would be "enough to hang us all"; in Act 4, Scene 2 the hope is "sixpence a day".
- **Point 2:** Others speak of them with contempt. Robin calls them "rude mechanicals" and "hempen homespuns"; Philostrate calls them "Hard-handed men" who never "labored in their minds till now".
- **Point 3:** In Act 5 the courtiers heckle while the workmen persevere. Bottom answers the Duke without fear: "No, in truth, sir, he should not". The wit is on one side and the goodwill on the other.
- **Counter-argument:** The satire is aimed at bad acting more than at labour, and the play's one vision is given to a weaver. His friends' affection, "O, sweet bully Bottom", is the warmest in the play.

Conclusion: Shakespeare lets the audience laugh with the court and then notice that the court's manners are worse than the workmen's play.

V **Explore how Shakespeare uses images of eyes and seeing in the play.**

Thesis: Eyes are where love enters and where it is deceived, and the pattern of sight imagery argues that seeing is never neutral: it is directed by authority, by desire or by magic.

- **Point 1:** In Act 1 sight is a matter of power. Hermia wishes her father "looked but with my eyes"; Theseus demands the opposite. Helena concludes that "Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind".
- **Point 2:** The flower makes this literal. It is laid on "sleeping eyelids", and its victims praise what they see. Lysander says reason "leads me to your eyes"; Titania's eye is "enthralled to thy shape".
- **Point 3:** Night removes sight and day does not fully restore it. Hermia finds Lysander by ear because darkness "from the eye his function takes", and wakes seeing "with parted eye". The cure is a command: "See as thou wast wont to see".
- **Counter-argument:** Sight is also creative. Theseus's "poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling" makes worlds, and the workmen's "I see a voice" parodies the whole pattern. The audience's own eyes are part of the theme.

Conclusion: By the end, the play has taught its audience to distrust what lovers see and to value what imagination sees, without pretending the two are easy to tell apart.



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