SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE AND TIMES

Who was William Shakespeare? What was life like in Stratford-upon-Avon and London when he was alive?

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SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

Very little is known for certain about William Shakespeare. What we do know about his life comes from registrar records, court records, wills, marriage certificates and his tombstone in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-
William Shakespeare was baptised on 26 April 1564 at Holy Trinity in Stratford-Upon-Avon. Traditionally his birthday is celebrated three days earlier, on 23 April, St George's Day.

**SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHPLACE**

John Shakespeare married Mary Arden, the daughter of Robert Arden, a farmer from the nearby village of Wilmcote. In 1556 John bought the main part of the house in Henley Street which is now known as the 'Birthplace' and their family, including William, grew up there (see photo). John's principal business was that of a glover, but he also traded as a wool and corn merchant, and he is recorded in 1570 as being involved in money-lending.

**SHAKESPEARE'S PARENTS**

William's father, John Shakespeare, was an affluent glove maker, tanner and wool dealer who owned property in Stratford. For a number of years he played a prominent role in the municipal life of the town. He served on the town council and was elected bailiff (mayor). However, around 1576 John Shakespeare was beset by severe financial difficulties and he was forced to mortgage his wife's inheritance.

William's mother, Mary Arden, was the daughter of a prosperous farmer, Robert Arden, who had left her some land in Wilmcote, near Stratford. John and Mary Shakespeare had eight children: four daughters, of whom only one (Joan) survived childhood. William was the eldest of the four boys.

**EDUCATION**

William almost certainly went to one of Stratford's 'petty' or junior schools where he would have learnt his letters with the help of a hornbook. From the age of seven or thereabouts, he would have progressed to the King's New School where the emphasis would have been on Latin, it still being the international language of Europe in the 1500s. Shakespeare probably left school at the age of 14 or 15.

Shakespeare's plays reveal a detailed knowledge of the curriculum taught in such schools which were geared to teaching pupils Latin, both spoken and written. The classical writers studied in the classroom influenced Shakespeare's plays and poetry; for example, some of his ideas for plots and characters came from Ovid's tales, the plays of Terence and Plautus, and Roman history.

It is not known what Shakespeare did when he left school, probably at the age of 14, as was usual.

**MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN**

In 1582, when he was 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. She was 26. Anne was the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, Richard Hathaway of Hewlands Farm in nearby Shottery. Their first child, Susanna, was born in May 1583. Twins, Hamnet and Judith, were christened in February 1585. Anne’s home, now known as Anne Hathaway’s Cottage, still stands in the village of Shottery.

From 1585 until 1592, very little is known about Shakespeare. These are generally referred to as 'The Lost Years'. But by 1592 we know that he was in London where he was singled out by a rival dramatist, Robert
Greene in his bitter deathbed pamphlet, *A Groats-worth of Witte*.

**WRITING AND ACTING**

Plague broke out in London in 1593, forcing the theatres to close. Shakespeare turned to writing poetry. In 1593 Shakespeare published an erotic poem, *Venus and Adonis*, dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton, a young courtier and favourite of Queen Elizabeth.

Shakespeare's earliest plays included *Henry VI Parts I, II & III*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Titus Andronicus*. The sonnets were also written about this time, though they were not published until 1609.

In 1594, Shakespeare became a founding member, actor, playwright and shareholder of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Richard Burbage was the company's leading actor. He played roles such as Richard III, Hamlet, Othello and Lear. Under James VI/I, the company was renamed The King's Men. They performed at court more often than any other company.

**Drama in Shakespeare's Stratford**

In Shakespeare's youth, Stratford was often visited by travelling troupes of professional actors. These players probably sparked his interest in the stage, and he may have entered the London theatre world though contacts made with them in Stratford.

We don't know when or why Shakespeare left Stratford for London, or what he was doing before becoming a professional actor and dramatist in the capital. There are various traditions and stories about the so-called 'lost years' between 1585 and 1592, a period for which there is virtually no evidence concerning his life.

**Wealth**

Whereas John Shakespeare had lost a fortune, his son managed to amass great wealth in his lifetime.

In 1597, he bought New Place, one of the largest properties in Stratford. In 1598, he is listed as a resident of Chapel Street ward, in which New Place was situated. In 1601, when his father died, he may also, as the eldest son, have inherited the two houses in Henley Street.

In 1602 Shakespeare paid £320 in cash to William Combe and his nephew John for roughly 107 acres of land in Old Stratford.

He also bought a cottage and more land in Chapel Lane. In 1605, for £440, Shakespeare bought a half-interest in a lease of many tithes which brought him an annual interest of £60. When he died in 1616, he was a man of substantial wealth.

**Last Years**

Shakespeare's elder daughter, Susanna, married a physician, John Hall in Stratford in 1607. Their only child, a daughter, Elizabeth, was born in 1608, the year in which Shakespeare's mother died. Judith Shakespeare, his younger daughter, married a vintner, Thomas Quiney in 1616. They had three sons: Shakespeare Quiney, who died in infancy; Richard (1618–139) and Thomas (1620–1639).
Sometime after 1611, Shakespeare retired to Stratford. On 25 March 1616, Shakespeare revised and signed his will. On 23 April, his presumed birthday, he died, aged 52. On 25 April, he was buried at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford.

Shakespeare's widow, Anne, died in 1623 and was buried beside him. Shakespeare's family line came to an end with the death of his grand-daughter Elizabeth in 1670.

In 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, John Heminge and Henry Condell (two actors from The King's Company) had Shakespeare's plays published by William Jaggard and his son, Isaac. This first folio contained 36 plays and sold for £1.

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In Shakespeare's time, a stage wasn't just one type of space; plays had to be versatile. The same play might be produced in an outdoor playhouse, an indoor theater, a royal palace—or, for a company on tour, the courtyard of an inn.

In any of these settings, men and boys played all the characters, male and female; acting in Renaissance England was an exclusively male profession. Audiences had their favorite performers, looked forward to hearing music with the productions, and relished the luxurious costumes of the leading characters. The stage itself was relatively bare. For the most part, playwrights used vivid words instead of scenery to picture the scene onstage.
Primary sources: Shakespeare Documented
Visit *Shakespeare Documented* to see primary-source materials about theaters and people in the theatrical profession connected with Shakespeare. This online resource of items from the Folger and other institutions brings together all known manuscript and print references to Shakespeare and his works in his lifetime and shortly thereafter.

On This Page: Playhouses and the Globe | Theaters and Palaces | Audience Experiences | Actors, Costumes, and Staging | Stage and Screen after Shakespeare

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**Playhouses and the Globe**

In 1576, when Shakespeare was still a 12-year-old in Stratford-upon-Avon, James Burbage built the Theatre just outside London. The Theatre was among the first playhouses in England since Roman times. Like the many other playhouses that followed, it was a multi-sided structure with a central, uncovered "yard" surrounded by three tiers of covered seating and a bare, raised stage at one end of the yard. Spectators could pay for seating at multiple price levels; those with the cheapest tickets simply stood for the length of the plays.

Shakespeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, was one of several to perform at the Theatre, appearing there by about 1594. A few years later, the Burbages lost their lease on the Theatre site and began construction of a new, larger playhouse, the Globe, just south of the Thames. To pay for it, they shared the lease with the five partners (called actor-sharers) in the Lord Chamberlain's company, including Shakespeare.

The Globe, which opened in 1599, became the playhouse where audiences first saw some of Shakespeare's best-known plays. In 1613, it burned to the ground when the roof caught fire during a performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. A new, second Globe was quickly built on the same site, opening in 1614.

*On Shakespeare Documented: Shakespeare's playhouses*

**Theaters and palaces**

Large open playhouses like the Globe are marvelous in the right weather, but indoor theaters can operate year-round, out of the sun, wind, and rain. They also offer a more intimate setting with the use of artificial light. Shakespeare's company planned for years to operate its own indoor theater, a goal that was finally achieved in 1609 when the Burbages took over London's Blackfriars theater.
Still more indoor productions often came during the period between Christmas and New Year, and at Shrovetide (the period before Lent) at one of the royal palaces, where Shakespeare's company and other leading companies gave command performances—a high honor that was also well-paid.

### Audience experiences

Playgoers in Shakespeare's day paid a penny to stand in the uncovered yard of a playhouse, or two pennies for a balcony seat. (It's hard to find exact comparisons to what a penny then is worth now, but a day's worth of food and drink for a grown man would have cost about fourpence.) Indoor theaters like the Blackfriars accommodated fewer people and cost more, with basic tickets starting at sixpence. Fashionable men about town could get a seat on the side of the stage for two shillings (24 pence).

Spectators liked to drink wine or ale and snack on a variety of foods as they watched the plays—modern-day excavations at the playhouses have turned up bottles, spoons, oyster shells, and the remnants of many fruits and nuts.

*Related podcast: Sights, Sounds, and Smells of Elizabethan Theater*

### Actors, costumes, and staging

While most women's roles were played by boys or young men in the all-male casts, comic female parts such as Juliet's Nurse might be reserved for a popular adult comic actor, or clown. In addition to their dramatic talents, actors in Shakespeare's time had to fence onstage with great skill, sing songs or play instruments included in the plays, and perform the vigorously athletic dances of their day.

Actors usually did not aim for historically accurate costumes, although an occasional toga may have appeared for a Roman play. Instead, they typically wore gorgeous modern dress, especially for the leading parts. Costumes, a major investment for an acting company, provided the essential "spectacle" of the plays and were often second-hand clothes once owned and worn by real-life nobles.
The bare stages of Shakespeare's day had little or no scenery except for objects required by the plot, like a throne, a grave, or a bed. Exits and entrances were in plain view of the audience, but they included some vertical options: actors could descend from the "heavens" above the stage or enter and exit from the "hell" below through a trapdoor. Characters described as talking from "above" might appear in galleries midway between the stage and the heavens.

Related podcast: Designing Shakespeare: Changes in costumes, scenery, and other staging choices

Stage and screen after Shakespeare

In 1642, the English playhouses and theaters were closed down (and often dismantled for building materials) as the English Civil War began. With the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, theater returned—as did Shakespeare's plays, now with both male and female performers. The first recorded performance of an actress occurred in December 1660, although we're not sure of her name; she appeared as Desdemona in Othello.

In the centuries that followed, Shakespeare's plays have been performed in England, North America, and around the world, in productions that mirror the state of theater in each place and time: from lavish scenes, to surrealism, to stark bare stages. They have been used as a medium for political commentary, and have been incorporated into theatrical traditions like Japanese Kabuki theater. Beginning in the late 1800s, Shakespeare's plays inspired the creation of a wealth of replica Elizabethan theaters, more or less faithful to what was known of the theatrical past. Dozens of open-air Shakespeare festivals have also grown up across the United States and other countries.
Shakespeare's works have also been frequently interpreted on film. Brooklyn's Vitagraph Company, for one, produced several silent, one-reel movies of the plays starting in 1908. Since then, literally hundreds of Shakespeare films—including works like Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996)—have appeared, opening a new, cinematic stage for Shakespeare's words.

*Related podcast: Shakespeare on Film*
Even if you’ve never seen a Shakespeare play, you’ll have used one of his words or phrases. Hephzibah Anderson explains his genius – and enduring influence.

By Hephzibah Anderson
21 October 2014

If you missed Shakespeare’s 450th birthday, you can be sure he’d have had a zinger of a putdown to sling your way. Or better yet, a whole string of them. “Thou art a boil, a plague sore, an embossed carbuncle in my corrupted blood” might just do it, borrowed from King Lear railing against his daughter, Goneril. Or perhaps he’d settle for more aloof damnation, along the lines of Orlando’s insult to Jaques in As You Like It: “I do desire we may be better strangers.”

That isn’t a wish likely to be granted to Shakespeare any time soon. Yes, his 450th birthday has been and gone already, but it’s worth noting that all over the world, people paused to acknowledge it in the first place. In fact, during his 52 years on earth, he enriched the English language in ways so
profound it’s almost impossible to fully gauge his impact. Without him, our vocabulary would be just too different. He gave us uniquely vivid ways in which to express hope and despair, sorrow and rage, love and lust. Even if you’ve never read one of his sonnets or seen a play – even if you’ve never so much as watched a movie adaptation – you’re likely to have quoted him unwittingly. It’s almost impossible to avoid.

Of course, fellow artists readily draw on him for paintings, operas and ballets. Shakespeare’s influence is evident in popular as well as high culture: singer-songwriter Nick Lowe’s 1970s earworm, Cruel to be Kind, took its title from lines Hamlet addressed to his mother. “I must be cruel only to be kind,” the Prince of Denmark tells her in a wriggling kind of apology for killing a courtier and meddling in her new relationship. Hamlet also yielded the title of Agatha Christie’s theatrical smash, The Mousetrap, and Alfred Hitchcock’s evocative spy thriller, North by Northwest. And then there’s David Foster Wallace’s iconic novel, Infinite Jest, Ruth Rendell’s Put on by Cunning, Philip K. Dick’s Time Out of Joint and Jasper Fforde’s Something Rotten. That one play alone has inspired other writers in numerous genres, at far-flung ends of the literary spectrum.

And what of Shakespeare's other plays? Well, when Mumford and Sons named their album Sigh No More, they were borrowing a phrase from Much Ado About Nothing. As for Iron Maiden’s song Where Eagles Dare, how many of their fans recognise it as a quote from Richard III?

**Famous phrases**

These catchy titles barely gesture to Shakespeare's influence on the minutiae of our lives. If you’ve ever been ‘in a pickle’, waited ‘with bated breath’, or gone on ‘a wild goose chase’, you’ve been quoting from The Tempest, The Merchant of Venice and Romeo and Juliet respectively.

Next time you refer to jealousy as "the green-eyed monster," know that you’re quoting Othello’s arch villain, Iago. (Shakespeare was almost self-quoting here, having first touched on green as the colour of envy in The Merchant of Venice, where Portia alludes to “green-eyed jealousy.”)

Allow yourself to “gossip” (A Midsummer Night’s Dream), and you’re quoting him. "The be-all and end-all" is uttered by Macbeth as he murderously contemplates King Duncan, and "fair play" falls from Miranda’s lips in The Tempest. And did I mention that he invented the knock-knock joke in the Scottish play?

Some phrases have become so well used that they’re now regarded as clichés – surely a compliment for an author so long gone. "A heart of gold"? You’ll find it in Henry V, while “the world’s mine oyster” crops up in The Merry Wives of Windsor.

**Life imitates art**
His impact endures not only in the way we express ourselves, but how we experience and process the world around us. Had Shakespeare not given us the words, would we truly feel “bedazzled” (The Taming of the Shrew)? Had he not taught us the word “gloomy” (Titus Andronicus), would it be a feeling we recognised in ourselves? And could we “grovel” effectively (Henry VI, Part II) or be properly “sanctimonious” (The Tempest) had he not shown us how?

Victorian word expert F Max Muller estimated that Shakespeare used 15,000 words in his plays, a portion of which he invented himself by merging existing words and anglicising vocabulary from foreign languages. By contrast, Milton used a mere 8,000 and the Old Testament is made up of 5,642. Meanwhile, an unschooled agricultural worker of the day would have said all that he had to say in fewer than 300 words.

Recently, two antiquarian booksellers in the US declared that they’d found a book they believe to be Shakespeare’s dictionary. The book, which was on eBay, was a copy of John Baret’s Alvearie, a popular late-16th-Century dictionary in four languages. It’s densely annotated throughout but the clincher, they believe, is the handwritten ‘word salad’ on the tome’s blank back page, a sheet filled with a mix of French and English words, some of which ended up in Shakespeare’s plays.

Scholars have argued back and forth over just how many of these words and phrases Shakespeare actually coined, and how many he merely popularised by bedding them down in a memorable plot. In the past few years, quantitative analysis and digital databases have allowed computers to simultaneously search thousands of texts, leading scholars to believe that we may have overestimated his contribution to the English language.

According to a 2011 paper by Ward EY Elliott and Robert J Valenza of America’s Claremont McKenna College, new words attributed to Shakespeare have probably been over-counted by a factor of at least two. The OED is coming to reflect this: in the 1950s, Shakespeare’s tally of first-use citations stood at 3,200. Today, it’s around 2,000.

In some ways, this makes Shakespeare’s flair and originality all the more impressive. His linguistic arsenal didn’t contain vastly more than those of his contemporaries, and yet his are the stories we remember. Not that 2,000 is bad going, especially when so many of those words saturate our everyday speech.

How did he manage it, you might wonder? It’s partly his turn of phrase. Would “fashionable” have caught on had not set it in such a wry sentence as this in Troilus and Cressida? “For time is like a fashionable host, that slightly shakes his parting guest by th' hand.” Then there’s the fact that these words are voiced by some unforgettable characters – men and women who, despite the extraordinary situations in which they tend to find themselves, are fully and profoundly human in both

If the mark of a great writer is that they’re still read, then perhaps the mark of a genius is that they’re still spoken, too.

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Who Wrote Shakespeare's Plays? Debate Goes On

July 3, 2008 · 12:01 AM ET
Heard on Morning Edition

RENEE MONTAGNE
Doubts persist that William Shakespeare wrote the works that bear his name.

Bettmann/Corbis
Read Mark Twain's pamphlet debunking the Bard.

Library of Congress

More in the Series
In the mid-1800s, Americans were so enthused about William Shakespeare that a rivalry between the two foremost Shakespearean actors led to a riot.

Well, there's something that makes modern-day scholars of Shakespeare want to riot: when anyone questions whether the man from Stratford-upon-Avon really wrote the works that bear his name.

It drives scholars mad. Still, a host of brilliant minds have done just that: Sigmund Freud, Charles Dickens and Orson Welles are among those who didn't believe that Shakespeare penned those famous plays.

Shakespeare skeptics need look no further than Holy Trinity Church in Stratford, England, where he was buried in 1616.

**A Shakespearean Epitaph?**

The epitaph carved on his gravestone reads:

"Good friend, for Jesus' sake, forebear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be the man who spares these stones,
and cursed be he, who moves my bones."

Those who doubt that the man buried there is the great playwright point to this rough doggerel. How can it be from the man who wrote:

"And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle.
Life's but a walking shadow..." (*Macbeth*)

The epitaph is a small piece of what doubters say is a mountain of biographical material suggesting Shakespeare wasn't a writer.
"We have been able to discover, over many generations, about 70 documents that are related to William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, but none of them are literary," says Daniel Wright, an English professor who directs the Shakespeare Authorship Research Center at Oregon's Concordia University.

"They all speak to the activity of a man who is principally a businessman; a man who is delinquent in paying his taxes; who was cited for hoarding grain during a famine," Wright adds. "We don't have anyone attesting to him as a playwright, as a poet. And he's the only presumed writer of his time for whom there is no contemporary evidence of a writing career. And many of us find that rather astonishing."

**Records Raise Questions**

There are playbills that show Shakespeare appearing as an actor in small parts and legal documents relating to his stake in the Globe Theater. He left a will distributing his precious possessions, including, famously, his second-best bed.

But there's no record that this Shakespeare owned any books, wrote any letters, and the half-dozen signatures attributed to him are on legal documents only.

"If there were a signature related to *Hamlet*, we wouldn't be having this debate," says Diana Price, who wrote the book that's become a bible for doubters, the meticulously researched *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*.

In it, she details all that Shakespeare would have had to know and be able to use effortlessly in metaphors and intricate puns: archery, astronomy, medicine, technical terms for falconry and royal tennis. The list is long.

To link any writer conclusively to the plays, Price argues, "we would certainly have to be able to support how he learned his languages, how he received his education, how he gained his exposure to the lifestyle of the rich and famous, how he had access to the court. And I don't mean as a servant in the court, but someone who actually was in there when the power-playing was going on. We cannot support any of that for Shakespeare."

**Mark Twain Wasn't Buying It**
Mainstream academics mostly deride efforts of independent scholars like Price. It's a tad bit harder to shrug off challenges put — with great wit — by the likes of Mark Twain.

The American humorist never could reconcile what was known about the man from Stratford with the writer who penned "such stuff as dreams are made on."

Twain even wrote a pamphlet in 1909 poking fun at the Bard, called *Is Shakespeare Dead?* The following is an excerpt:

"It is surmised by the biographers that the young Shakespeare got his vast knowledge of the law and his familiar and accurate acquaintance with the manners and customs and shop-talk of lawyers through being for a time the CLERK OF A STRATFORD COURT: just as a bright lad like me, reared in a village on the banks of the Mississippi, might become perfect in knowledge of the Behring Strait whale-fishery and the shop-talk of the veteran exercisers of that adventure-bristling trade through catching catfish with a 'trot-line' Sundays."

**For Bard Backer, Proof's In The Name**

Stephen Greenblatt, a professor at Harvard and author of the best-selling biography of the Bard, *Will in the World,* is one of America's most esteemed Shakespeare scholars.

"Like most scholars, I think it's reasonably clear that the man from Stratford wrote the plays," he says. "But it's certainly a subject that doesn't go away. He does seem like he did drop in from another planet. The level of achievement is remarkable."

Remarkable, says Greenblatt, but possible, even for a village lad if he were a genius. Greenblatt has little use for those who question the authorship of Shakespeare's works and compares doubters to Holocaust deniers and those who don't believe in evolution.

He says the most powerful evidence of authorship is the simplest: that the name William Shakespeare appeared on some of the plays published during his lifetime.

"It's nothing that gives you the kind of certainty that can never be called into question," Greenblatt says. "Anything can be called into question. But you'd have to have a very strong reason to believe that there was skullduggery or an alternative account.

"It's true ... that there are no manuscripts and no letters, but we're talking about something a very long time ago."
Excerpt: 'Is Shakespeare Dead?'

MARK TWAIN
Shakespeare pronounced Venus and Adonis "the first heir of his invention," apparently implying that it was his first effort at literary composition. He should not have said it. It has been an embarrassment to his historians these many, many years.
They have to make him write that graceful and polished and flawless and beautiful poem before he escaped from Stratford and his family- 1586 or '87- age, twenty-two, or along there; because within the next five years he wrote five great plays, and could not have found time to write another line.

It is sorely embarrassing. If he began to slaughter calves, and poach deer, and rollick around, and learn English, at the earliest likely moment- say at thirteen, when he was supposably wrenched from that school where he was supposably storing up Latin for future literary use- he had his youthful hands full, and much more than full. He must have had to put aside his Warwickshire dialect, which wouldn't be understood in London, and study English very hard. Very hard indeed; incredibly hard, almost, if the result of that labor was to be the smooth and rounded and flexible and letter-perfect English of the Venus and Adonis in the space of ten years; and at the same time learn great and fine and unsurpassable literary form.

However it is "conjectured" that he accomplished all this and more, much more: learned law and its intricacies; and the complex procedure of the law courts; and all about soldiering, and sailoring, and the manners and customs and ways of royal courts and aristocratic society; and likewise accumulated in his one head every kind of knowledge the learned then possessed, and every kind of humble knowledge possessed by the lowly and the ignorant; and added thereto a wider and more intimate knowledge of the world's great literatures, ancient and modern, than was possessed by any other man of his time- for he was going to make brilliant and easy and admiration-compelling use of these splendid treasures the moment he got to London. And according to the surmisers, that is what he did. Yes, although there was no one in Stratford able to teach him these things, and no library in the little village to dig them out of. His father could not read, and even the surmisers surmise that he did not keep a library.

It is surmised by the biographers that the young Shakespeare got his vast knowledge of the law and his familiar and accurate acquaintance with the manners and customs and shop-talk of lawyers through being for a time the CLERK OF A STRATFORD COURT: just as a bright lad like me, reared in a village on the banks of the Mississippi, might become perfect in knowledge of the Behring Strait whale-fishery and the shop-talk of
the veteran exercisers of that adventure—bristling trade through catching catfish with a "trot-line" Sundays. But the surmise is damaged by the fact that there is no evidence—and not even tradition—that the young Shakespeare was ever clerk of a law court.

It is further surmised that the young Shakespeare accumulated his law-treasures in the first years of his sojourn in London, through "amusing himself" by learning book-law in his garret and by picking up lawyer-talk and the rest of it through loitering about the law-courts and listening. But it is only surmise; there is no EVIDENCE that he ever did either of those things. They are merely a couple of chunks of plaster of paris.

There is a legend that he got his bread and butter by holding horses in front of the London theatres, mornings and afternoons. Maybe he did. If he did, it seriously shortened his law-study hours and his recreation-time in the courts. In those very days he was writing great plays, and needed all the time he could get. The horse-holding legend ought to be strangled; it tooformidably increases the historian's difficulty in accounting for the young Shakespeare's erudition—an erudition which he was acquiring, hunk by hunk and chunk by chunk every day in those strenuous times, and emptying each day's catch into next day's imperishable drama.

He had to acquire a knowledge of war at the same time; and a knowledge of soldier-people and sailor people and their ways and talk; also a knowledge of some foreign lands and their languages: for he was daily emptying fluent streams of these various knowledges, too, into his dramas. How did he acquire these rich assets?

In the usual way: by surmise. It is SURMISED that he traveled in Italy and Germany and around, and qualified himself to put their scenic and social aspects upon paper; that he perfected himself in French, Italian and Spanish on the road; that he went in Leicester's expedition to the Low Countries, as soldier or sutler or something, for several months or years—or whatever length of time a surmiser needs in his business—and thus became familiar with soldiership and soldier-ways and soldier-talk, and generalship and general-ways and general-talk, and seamanship and sailor-ways and sailor talk.

Maybe he did all these things, but I would like to know who held the horses in the meantime; and who studied the books in the garret; and who frolicked in the law-
courts for recreation. Also, who did the call-boysing and the play-acting.

For he became a call-boy; and as early as '93 he became a "vagabond" – the law's ungentle term for an unlisted actor; and in '94 a "regular" and properly and officially listed member of that (in those days) lightly-valued and not much respected profession.

Right soon thereafter he became a stockholder in two theatres, and manager of them. Thenceforward he was a busy and flourishing business man, and was raking in money with both hands for twenty years. Then in a noble frenzy of poetic inspiration he wrote his one poem- his only poem, his darling- and laid him down and died:

Good friend for Iesus sake forbeare to digg the dust encloased heare: Blest be ye man yt spares thes stones And curst be he yt moves my bones.

He was probably dead when he wrote it. Still, this is only conjecture. We have only circumstantial evidence. Internal evidence.

Shall I set down the rest of the Conjectures which constitute the giant Biography of William Shakespeare? It would strain the Unabridged Dictionary to hold them. He is Brontosaur: nine bones and six hundred barrels of plaster of paris.

Excerpted from Is Shakespeare Dead? by Mark Twain, 1909.

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Who Wrote Shakespeare’s Plays? Debate Goes On

July 3, 2008 · 12:01 AM ET
Heard on Morning Edition

RENEE MONTAGNE
Doubts persist that William Shakespeare wrote the works that bear his name.

*Bettmann/Corbis*
Read Mark Twain's pamphlet debunking the Bard.

*Library of Congress*

**More in the Series**
In the mid-1800s, Americans were so enthused about William Shakespeare that a rivalry between the two foremost Shakespearean actors led to a riot.

Well, there's something that makes modern-day scholars of Shakespeare want to riot: when anyone questions whether the man from Stratford-upon-Avon really wrote the works that bear his name.

It drives scholars mad. Still, a host of brilliant minds have done just that: Sigmund Freud, Charles Dickens and Orson Welles are among those who didn't believe that Shakespeare penned those famous plays.

Shakespeare skeptics need look no further than Holy Trinity Church in Stratford, England, where he was buried in 1616.

**A Shakespearean Epitaph?**

The epitaph carved on his gravestone reads:

"Good friend, for Jesus' sake, forebear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be the man who spares these stones,
and cursed be he, who moves my bones."

Those who doubt that the man buried there is the great playwright point to this rough doggerel. How can it be from the man who wrote:

"And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle.
Life's but a walking shadow..." *(Macbeth)*

The epitaph is a small piece of what doubters say is a mountain of biographical material suggesting Shakespeare wasn't a writer.
"We have been able to discover, over many generations, about 70 documents that are related to William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, but none of them are literary," says Daniel Wright, an English professor who directs the Shakespeare Authorship Research Center at Oregon's Concordia University.

"They all speak to the activity of a man who is principally a businessman; a man who is delinquent in paying his taxes; who was cited for hoarding grain during a famine," Wright adds. "We don't have anyone attesting to him as a playwright, as a poet. And he's the only presumed writer of his time for whom there is no contemporary evidence of a writing career. And many of us find that rather astonishing."

**Records Raise Questions**

There are playbills that show Shakespeare appearing as an actor in small parts and legal documents relating to his stake in the Globe Theater. He left a will distributing his precious possessions, including, famously, his second-best bed.

But there's no record that this Shakespeare owned any books, wrote any letters, and the half-dozen signatures attributed to him are on legal documents only.

"If there were a signature related to *Hamlet*, we wouldn't be having this debate," says Diana Price, who wrote the book that's become a bible for doubters, the meticulously researched *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*.

In it, she details all that Shakespeare would have had to know and be able to use effortlessly in metaphors and intricate puns: archery, astronomy, medicine, technical terms for falconry and royal tennis. The list is long.

To link any writer conclusively to the plays, Price argues, "we would certainly have to be able to support how he learned his languages, how he received his education, how he gained his exposure to the lifestyle of the rich and famous, how he had access to the court. And I don't mean as a servant in the court, but someone who actually was in there when the power-playing was going on. We cannot support any of that for Shakespeare."

**Mark Twain Wasn't Buying It**
Mainstream academics mostly deride efforts of independent scholars like Price. It's a tad bit harder to shrug off challenges put — with great wit — by the likes of Mark Twain.

The American humorist never could reconcile what was known about the man from Stratford with the writer who penned "such stuff as dreams are made on."

Twain even wrote a pamphlet in 1909 poking fun at the Bard, called *Is Shakespeare Dead?* The following is an excerpt:

"It is surmised by the biographers that the young Shakespeare got his vast knowledge of the law and his familiar and accurate acquaintance with the manners and customs and shop-talk of lawyers through being for a time the CLERK OF A STRATFORD COURT: just as a bright lad like me, reared in a village on the banks of the Mississippi, might become perfect in knowledge of the Behring Strait whale-fishery and the shop-talk of the veteran exercisers of that adventure-bristling trade through catching catfish with a 'trot-line' Sundays."

**For Bard Backer, Proof's In The Name**

Stephen Greenblatt, a professor at Harvard and author of the best-selling biography of the Bard, *Will in the World*, is one of America's most esteemed Shakespeare scholars.

"Like most scholars, I think it's reasonably clear that the man from Stratford wrote the plays," he says. "But it's certainly a subject that doesn't go away. He does seem like he did drop in from another planet. The level of achievement is remarkable."

Remarkable, says Greenblatt, but possible, even for a village lad if he were a genius. Greenblatt has little use for those who question the authorship of Shakespeare's works and compares doubters to Holocaust deniers and those who don't believe in evolution.

He says the most powerful evidence of authorship is the simplest: that the name William Shakespeare appeared on some of the plays published during his lifetime.

"It's nothing that gives you the kind of certainty that can never be called into question," Greenblatt says. "Anything can be called into question. But you'd have to have a very strong reason to believe that there was skullduggery or an alternative account.

"It's true ... that there are no manuscripts and no letters, but we're talking about something a very long time ago."
Excerpt: 'Is Shakespeare Dead?'

MARK TWAIN
Shakespeare pronounced Venus and Adonis "the first heir of his invention," apparently implying that it was his first effort at literary composition. He should not have said it. It has been an embarrassment to his historians these many, many years.
They have to make him write that graceful and polished and flawless and beautiful poem before he escaped from Stratford and his family- 1586 or '87- age, twenty-two, or along there; because within the next five years he wrote five great plays, and could not have found time to write another line.

It is sorely embarrassing. If he began to slaughter calves, and poach deer, and rollick around, and learn English, at the earliest likely moment- say at thirteen, when he was supposably wrenched from that school where he was supposably storing up Latin for future literary use- he had his youthful hands full, and much more than full. He must have had to put aside his Warwickshire dialect, which wouldn't be understood in London, and study English very hard. Very hard indeed; incredibly hard, almost, if the result of that labor was to be the smooth and rounded and flexible and letter- perfect English of the Venus and Adonis in the space of ten years; and at the same time learn great and fine and unsurpassable literary form.

However it is "conjectured" that he accomplished all this and more, much more: learned law and its intricacies; and the complex procedure of the law courts; and all about soldiering, and sailoring, and the manners and customs and ways of royal courts and aristocratic society; and likewise accumulated in his one head every kind of knowledge the learned then possessed, and every kind of humble knowledge possessed by the lowly and the ignorant; and added thereto a wider and more intimate knowledge of the world’s great literatures, ancient and modern, than was possessed by any other man of his time- for he was going to make brilliant and easy and admiration-compelling use of these splendid treasures the moment he got to London. And according to the surmisers, that is what he did. Yes, although there was no one in Stratford able to teach him these things, and no library in the little village to dig them out of. His father could not read, and even the surmisers surmise that he did not keep a library.

It is surmised by the biographers that the young Shakespeare got his vast knowledge of the law and his familiar and accurate acquaintance with the manners and customs and shop-talk of lawyers through being for a time the CLERK OF A STRATFORD COURT: just as a bright lad like me, reared in a village on the banks of the Mississippi, might become perfect in knowledge of the Behring Strait whale-fishery and the shop-talk of
the veteran exercisers of that adventure—bristling trade through catching catfish with a "trot-line" Sundays. But the surmise is damaged by the fact that there is no evidence—and not even tradition—that the young Shakespeare was ever clerk of a law court.

It is further surmised that the young Shakespeare accumulated his law-treasures in the first years of his sojourn in London, through "amusing himself" by learning book-law in his garret and by picking up lawyer-talk and the rest of it through loitering about the law-courts and listening. But it is only surmise; there is no EVIDENCE that he ever did either of those things. They are merely a couple of chunks of plaster of paris.

There is a legend that he got his bread and butter by holding horses in front of the London theatres, mornings and afternoons. Maybe he did. If he did, it seriously shortened his law-study hours and his recreation-time in the courts. In those very days he was writing great plays, and needed all the time he could get. The horse-holding legend ought to be strangled; it too formidably increases the historian's difficulty in accounting for the young Shakespeare's erudition—an erudition which he was acquiring, hunk by hunk and chunk by chunk every day in those strenuous times, and emptying each day's catch into next day's imperishable drama.

He had to acquire a knowledge of war at the same time; and a knowledge of soldier-people and sailor people and their ways and talk; also a knowledge of some foreign lands and their languages: for he was daily emptying fluent streams of these various knowledges, too, into his dramas. How did he acquire these rich assets?

In the usual way: by surmise. It is SURMISED that he traveled in Italy and Germany and around, and qualified himself to put their scenic and social aspects upon paper; that he perfected himself in French, Italian and Spanish on the road; that he went in Leicester's expedition to the Low Countries, as soldier or sutler or something, for several months or years—or whatever length of time a surmiser needs in his business—and thus became familiar with soldiership and soldier-ways and soldier-talk, and generalship and general-ways and general-talk, and seamanship and sailor-ways and sailor talk.

Maybe he did all these things, but I would like to know who held the horses in the meantime; and who studied the books in the garret; and who frolicked in the law-
courts for recreation. Also, who did the call-boysing and the play-acting.

For he became a call-boy; and as early as '93 he became a "vagabond" – the law's ungentle term for an unlisted actor; and in '94 a "regular" and properly and officially listed member of that (in those days) lightly-valued and not much respected profession.

Right soon thereafter he became a stockholder in two theatres, and manager of them. Thenceforward he was a busy and flourishing business man, and was raking in money with both hands for twenty years. Then in a noble frenzy of poetic inspiration he wrote his one poem- his only poem, his darling- and laid him down and died:

Good friend for Iesus sake forbear to digg the dust encloased heare: Blest be ye man yt spares thes stones And curst be he yt moves my bones.

He was probably dead when he wrote it. Still, this is only conjecture. We have only circumstantial evidence. Internal evidence.

Shall I set down the rest of the Conjectures which constitute the giant Biography of William Shakespeare? It would strain the Unabridged Dictionary to hold them. He is Brontosaur: nine bones and six hundred barrels of plaster of paris.

**Excerpted from *Is Shakespeare Dead?* by Mark Twain, 1909.**

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"The very same intellectual flabbiness that makes some people trust Answers in Genesis makes others believe that the Earl of Oxford wrote Shakespeare’s plays." - Professor Alan Jacobs

Later this month, the film Anonymous will be released in theaters. I’ve heard a little bit of Oscar buzz around it, but I’m happy to trust the judgement of my colleague, Mark Hughes, who doesn’t put it anywhere near a contender for Best Picture. Which is a good thing, because at its heart Anonymous has one of the most annoying conspiracy theories in history: the idea that William Shakespeare’s plays were not written by William Shakespeare, but rather by Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford. A number of otherwise very intelligent people, from Orson Welles to Derek Jacobi to Sigmund Freud, have held this view. Other intelligent persons, such as Mark Twain, have suggested alternative candidates - over 70 have been suggested - and still others don’t have candidates, but are willing to believe anything except the simple fact that there is a copious amount of evidence that a commoner, the son of a merchant who was educated at a free school, was one of the most brilliant writers in the English language.
No, instead it's considered self-evident by the "anti-Stratfordians" that the plays must have been published by a nobleman pseudonymously. Why they would do so is general attributed to the so-called "stigma of print" - the idea that aristocrats would not seek credit for their works. This despite the fact that, generally speaking, there's very little evidence that such a "stigma" existed in England at the time.

But since the release of *Anonymous* will probably result in a media flood of articles questioning whether Shakespeare wrote the plays that bear his name, consider this a vaccine - five excellent reasons why we can rest assured that Shakespeare was written by Shakespeare.

**1. Shakespeare's name is on the plays and poems attributed to him.**

This seems like a trivial point, but in fact it makes a big difference. As Tom Reedy and David Kathman point out, a large number of plays from the period in which Shakespeare wrote typically did not include the authors' name at all. Generally speaking it had the publisher's name and the name of the acting companies that performed the plays. Several famous playwrights, including Christopher Marlowe, never had their names published on a play while they were still living. That so many plays were published under Shakespeare's name was a tribute to his fame - he was the rockstar of his time, both as a playwright and an actor. Publishers first started using his name to sell plays in 1598 - using his name, I might add, spelled two different ways. The different spellings make sense in a time where printing techniques could affect spelling, so as a result, spelling conventions were still in flux. It makes a bit less sense if your theory is that a nobleman is trying to establish a dual identity - wouldn't he take better care to ensure the name was spelled right?

Moreover, it simply doesn't make sense for a nobleman to be publishing pseudonymously to avoid the "stigma of print" when the practice of the time was for an author's name to not be mentioned at all. As James Shapiro mentions in his book *Contested Will*, "For a playwright anxious about being identified on the title page of a play... the simplest and obvious course of action was to do nothing: allow the play, like
2. Several of Shakespeare's plays were collaborations

One of the more interesting recent breakthroughs in Shakespearean scholarship is the revelation that several of Shakespeare's plays were, in fact, co-authored. It's fairly well known that about half of Shakespeare's last ten plays were collaborations. For example, *Two Noble Kinsmen* was a collaboration with John Fletcher. Moreover, more recent scholarship has demonstrated that several of Shakespeare's early works, such as *Henry VI, Part I* and *Titus Andronicus* were also collaborations. This poses no difficulty for the concept of William Shakespeare, actor and playwright, because collaborations among playwrights weren't uncommon in London at the time. However, it does pose difficulties for the concept of "William Shakespeare, pseudonym of famous nobleman trying to avoid the stigma of print." It's doubtful that a nobleman in Elizabethan England would collaborate with common playwrights, and there's certainly no evidence to suggest that any ever did.

3. Shakespeare was well known as a writer

Shakespeare first gained notice of the writing world in 1592, in a pamphlet by Robert Greene that refers to him as "an upstart crow" - the work of a veteran writer wary of new blood. In 1594 and 1595, there are records of favorable reviews to Shakespeare's *Lucrece*, and as noted above, by 1598 he was already famous enough to be worth the time of publishers to attach his names to works they wanted to sell. That same year of 1598 sees praise of Shakespeare by Richard Barnfield and Francis Meres. The latter is worth mentioning because he wrote an essay entitled "Comparative Discourse of our English Poets" - an account of eighty English writers (that also makes mention of Edward de Vere). By 1605, Shakespeare was mentioned by William Camden, one of the most well-known historians of the time, as one of the best contemporary writers.

And of course, the best testimony of all comes from Ben Jonson. Jonson was a rival playwright of Shakespeare's, but also a close friend. Shakespeare is known to have acted several of Jonson's plays. Additionally, long after Shakespeare's death, Jonson made
4. Shakespeare wrote plays with specific actors and theaters in mind

Shakespeare wasn't simply a playwright. He was also an actor, and a shareholder in different theater companies. As a result, when he wrote, he wrote with his stage and his players in mind, because missteps would cost him money. For example, actors frequently had to play more than one role, so care had to be taken that characters played by the same actor weren't on stage at the same time and there was time to change costumes between appearances. Indeed, there are several instances in original Shakespeare documents in which it's not only clear that roles were intended for specific actors by their descriptions, but also because he inadvertently used the actor's name rather than the character's!

Additionally, after 1610, Shakespeare's company had moved theaters from the outdoor Globe to the indoor theater known as Blackfriars. This change also came with a change of players and restrictions on the types of scenes that could be performed. For example at Blackfriars, the stage was small and cramped, which led to the disappearance of fight scenes from the plays. However, the company gained talented musicians, leading to more music within the plays themselves.

These are important considerations to take into account. When you're writing for specific actors and specific stages, that's going to imply a certain intimacy. When you work with people over and over again, as Shakespeare did, you know their strengths and weaknesses. When you yourself are acting on a particular stage, as Shakespeare did, you know how best to write scenes that actors can perform well on stage. That combination of a stable acting company and Shakespeare's own acting experience is the sturdy foundation that his plays are built on. Would a nobleman, writing miles away from the stage, who rarely saw the plays performed, confuse characters and actors? Keep the stage settings so firmly in mind? Perhaps. But the simpler explanation is that the writer knew his players and knew his stage, and so wrote accordingly.

5. A conspiracy doesn't make sense
fooled people who knew him (and he was well known about London), and somehow managed to keep on fooling people for decades thereafter. He even somehow arranged to be writing as Shakespeare several years prior to his death, so cunning was he.

Yes, that's the most believable one.

The problem that all of the alternatives to Shakespeare have in common is a question of motive and means. Why publish pseudonymously instead of anonymously? Why collaborate in conspiracy with a known actor? Why write for particular actors and stages? Why collaborate with other playwrights? And then, how do you keep them from talking? Then as now, actors and playwrights weren't known for their sobriety or disinclination to gossip. And yet there's no contemporary inkling among the writers and players of Shakespeare's day that anyone but William Shakespeare acted and wrote plays. The entire notion of a conspiracy simply falls apart under close examination, especially when the "stigma of print" problem could be solved in one fell swoop by anonymous publication - which was, let me repeat, the common practice of the time for playwrights.

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For more about Shakespeare and the authorship controversy, I highly recommend James Shapiro's *Contested Will*, which I read in one sitting yesterday, and explores the entire controversy and explains the simple reasons why it's clear that William Shakespeare wrote his books. If you just want the case for Shakespeare, an excerpt from the book laying that out is available as a separate e-book here. Shakespeareauthorship.com is another excellent resource.

And in case you're wondering why this is an important matter, well, there are several reasons. First, as a person who makes a living writing, I feel obligated to defend the credit due my fellows, alive or deceased. Additionally, it also goes to the simple promotion of good thinking. The anti-Stratfordian cases are, for the most part, no different from any other fringe conspiracy theory. They base their case on nooks and crannies while ignoring the main evidence. Half-truths are bolstered. Contrary facts
Overlooked. Anachronistic narratives are weaved. There are often some vestiges of plausibility to them - for example, the case for Edward de Vere relies heavily on parts of Shakespeare's plays that appear to mimic de Vere's life. But that's the worst kind of cherry picking. Frankly, I'm sure you can draw vague parallels to just about anybody's life in Shakespeare's plays, if you look hard enough and ignore anything to the contrary.

The bottom line is that Shakespeare was well known in his time, as both a writer and an actor. He appeared at Court, his company was a favorite of King James, he drew praise and envy from his contemporary writers, and his work lives on to this day. Suggestions to the contrary involve overlooking too many facts and wild speculating with insufficient evidence. There's simply no good reason to suggest that anyone but Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare.

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Alex Knapp
I'm an Associate Editor covering science and cutting edge tech.
What’s in a Name? Part One: the Athenians

The names used for the Athenian aristocracy in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* carry with them important connotative meanings...

**Theseus**

Mythic Duke/King of Athens; according to myth, the son of Aethra and a mixture of both Aegeus and Poseidon (don’t ask). After many adventures, he led an expedition with Hercules to the land of the Amazons where he captured their queen ...

**Hippolyta**

Mythic Queen of the Amazons; according to myth, the daughter of Ares (the god of war)–who had given her a girdle, the retrieval of which was one of Hercules’ labors. When Theseus came to the land of the Amazons, she bore gifts to the ship as a sign of peace. Theseus kept her from leaving, launching the war with the Amazons. Once back in Athens, she bore him a son, Hippolytus.

**Egeus**
A Greek name, meaning “protection, shield” … fitting for the overprotective (ridiculously so) father of Hermia.

**Lysander**
An actual historical figure, Lysander was a Spartan commander in the fifth century BC. His Greek name means “liberator” … interesting that Lysander liberates Hermia from her father’s rule.

**Hermia**
A Greek name, meaning “travel” … which fits because of her flight into the woods (it is also the feminine version of Hermes, the Greek god of travelers and Zeus’ messenger)

**Helena**
A Greek name, meaning “wicker, reed, shoot, torch, basket” … the name is interesting on two levels: torch–it is Helena who brings the Hermia and Lysander’s “flight plan” to Demetrius; reed–tall and thin, perfect for the “Maypole” of Helena

**Demetrius**
A Greek name, meaning a follower of Demeter, the goddess of the harvest (also the sanctity of marriage… which makes this the only **IRONIC** name in the batch… as he’s the only one whose love at the beginning of the play is different than at the end).

**Philostrate**
A reference to Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*’ “The Knight’s Tale”: Philostrate is the name that Theseus’ nephew Arcite takes on when he becomes the Duke’s attendant… perfect for Theseus’ Master of the Revels
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, COMEDY

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Aspects of Midsummer

TRANSFORMATIONS:

*Things base and vile, holding no quantity,*
*Love can transpose to form and dignity.*
*Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind.*

*Midsummer,* 1.i

“Love transforms ordinary people into rare and perfect beings. When we fall in love, we suspend reason and overlook the flaws of our beloved.”

Laurie Rozakis,
*The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Shakespeare*

Transformations, whether induced by magic or inspired by love, abound in *Midsummer.* There are the obvious transformations, such as Puck’s prank on Bottom and the effects of the love charms cast on Lysander, Demetrius, and Titania, but there are also subtler and more profound changes that the characters experience during their night in the forest.

Helena enters the woods lonely, dejected, and self-pitying, then finds herself suddenly the object of two men’s affection. Through this experience, she becomes aware of how unattractive such an excessive (and obsessive) affection can be—one of the factors that has made her undesirable to Demetrius. In confronting Demetrius, Lysander, and Hermia, she seems to find a personal strength and inner beauty that she seemed unaware of before entering the woods.

Lysander and Hermia flee Athens in hopes of finding a “happy-ever-after” life somewhere else. Their bright-eyed naïveté makes them ill-prepared for the challenges they must face as they begin their life together, even a challenge as seemingly simple as a walk in the woods. Their experience in the forest gives them a taste of worldly pain and tests the strength of their love. In the end, they awake as a more mature couple, one ready to face the real world together as adults.

Several other characters experience similar transformations. Demetrius, a selfish, “disdainful youth” at the beginning of the play, awakes from the “dream” with a voice of quiet maturity and responsibility. Theseus, who in Athens has insisted on the letter of the law, has a change of heart in the woods and allows love to take its course. Even the self-absorbed actor, Bottom, seems quieter and more awe-struck when he awakes, more aware of the world around him.

Shakespeare’s use of transformations in *Midsummer* guides the audience not only through a series of playful hijinks, but also down a road of personal enlightenment for the characters and, through them, for us.

BEWARE THE MIDSUMMER MADNESS

Saying that someone is suffering from “midsummer madness” was a proverbial way of saying that they are sick with love.

Isaac Asimov notes that “there is a folk belief that extreme heat is a cause of madness (hence the phrase ‘midsummer madness’) and this is not entirely a fable. The higher the sun and the longer it beats down, the more likely one is to get sunstroke, and mild attacks of sunstroke could be conducive to all sorts of hallucinatory experiences. Midsummer then is the time when people are most apt to imagine fantastic experiences.”
Shakespeare and love

Overview

Love is a most warming, happy, inspirational human feeling. It surrounds us throughout our lives and takes many shapes and forms. You will find it in the softness of your mother’s hands, the passions of youth or mature understanding with age. Since the story of mankind began, it has inspired some of the most beautiful images in poetry or painting.

Love is something we all share no matter where we live and it disregards social status or age. Shakespeare has captured the spirit of it, its highs and lows, and the beauty of falling in love in some of the most poetical lines ever written. He wrote 38 plays and the word love is mentioned in each one of them. In some, it is very frequent:

- The Two gentleman of Verona - 162 times
- Romeo and Juliet - 120
- As you like it - 104
- A Midsummer Night’s Dream - 103
- Much Ado About Nothing - 89

(Richard Gill, Mastering Shakespeare, 1998)
Shakespeare and love

Romeo and Juliet

One cannot talk about love without immediately recalling the story of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, a story unsurpassed in world literature as a celebration of young love - innocent and pure, love at first sight, strong and passionate. Although Shakespeare rarely invents the plots of his plays, he has created here an exceptionally powerful image of young love.

Love is a smoke rais'd with the fume of sighs;
Being purg'd, a fire sparkling in lover's eyes;
Being vex'd, a sea raging with lover's tears;
What is it else? A madness most discreet,
A choking gall and a preserving sweet.

Romeo's love is pure emotion, thoughtless and driven by the spirit of feud and revenge. Juliet is the younger one, more practical and determined that they should be joined in marriage;

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have,for both are infinite.

The beauty of Shakespeare's language and understanding of the young lovers emotions is what makes the play timeless. However, the destiny of Romeo and Juliet's love is doomed due to a conflict between their families - Montague's and Capulets. The lover's sacrifice brings the reconciliation of the two families and the healing of the social wound. However, the question lingers as to whether pure love is possible in society bound by norms and rules of behaviour that suppress true feelings. It is not surprising that Shakespeare sees love as only possible in a dream (A midsummer night's dream).
Shakespeare and love
A Midsummer Night's Dream

Love in Shakespeare is not always tragic, unrequited or hurtful. In three of his early romantic comedies (A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night and Much Ado About Nothing) love is a source of pleasantry and amusement, sporting and playfulness. Familiar comic features are present in all three plays – mistaken identity (TN), match-making (MAAN) and intervening magic (AMND). Everything falls into its right place and there is no serious damage done to anybody.

There isn’t a more delicate or imaginative portrait of love than in A Midsummer Night’s Dream. In this play Shakespeare draws on many fairy tales and nursery legends he had heard as a young boy, as well as the established tradition of midsummer celebrations. There was a notion in his time that love is introduced and taken away by magic, hence the play of fairies at midnight and the magical setting of the play:

I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine
With sweet musk-rose, and with eglantine;
There sleeps Titania some time of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;

A Midsummer Night’s Dream was probably written to celebrate a wedding. The play starts with the announcement of a wedding and ends with a marriage ceremony for three couples – Theseus and Hippolyta, Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius. What happens in between is much the making of Puck, fairy king Oberon’s servant who is using the juice of a herb ‘love-in-idleness’ to spin everybody into action, to confuse lovers and create fun in the enchanted forest where they all find themselves. Love appears to be a dream, kind of madness, introduced by the summer heat, a feeling governed not by reason but by fairy interventions:

The course of true love never did run smooth.

However irrational love is recognised by the characters as a transformational force. Because of its blindness and lack of judgement, love helps to bring out the best in each one of them as Helena admits:

Love can transpose to form and dignity.
Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind.

The forest is a place of freedom and at night the lovers are free to be themselves. But Shakespeare reminds us that this is a bit of a dream and true love, however beautiful, is not always possible.
Reading Shakespeare's Plays

Language
Before you start to read Shakespeare's plays, you will want to take a look at some of the language uses that might stand in your way of understanding the script. In his book, *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language*, Randal Robinson breaks the language barriers into three main categories: Shakespeare's Unusual Arrangements of Words, Shakespeare's Troublesome Omissions & Words Not Quite Our Own. This guide will briefly cover each of these areas, but you will also want to ask your teacher to get a copy of this great resource by following the link above.

Unusual Word Arrangements
Many of my students have asked me if people really spoke the way they do in Shakespeare's plays. The answer is no. Shakespeare wrote the way he did for poetic and dramatic purposes. There are many reasons why he did this—to create a specific poetic rhythm, to emphasize a certain word, to give a character a specific speech pattern, etc. Let's take a look at a great example from Robinson's *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language*.

I ate the sandwich.
I the sandwich ate.
Ate the sandwich I.
Ate I the sandwich.
The sandwich I ate.
The sandwich ate I.

Robinson shows us that these four words can create six unique sentences which carry the same meaning. When you are reading Shakespeare's plays, look for this type of unusual word arrangement. Locate the subject, verb, and the object of the sentence. Notice that the object of the sentence is often placed at the beginning (the sandwich) in front of the verb (ate) and subject (I). Rearrange the words in the order that makes the most sense to you (I ate the sandwich). This will be one of your first steps in making sense of Shakespeare's language.

Shakespeare Asks . . .

What was the form of English I used when writing my plays?

- Old English
- Middle English
- Early Modern
- English
- Modern English

Dost thou dare match wits with Shakespeare?

Poetry
We speak in prose (language without metrical structure). Shakespeare wrote both prose and verse (poetry). Much of the language discussion we will have in this guide revolves around Shakespeare's poetry. So, it is important that you understand the following terms:

Blank Verse: unrhymed iambic pentameter.

Iambic Pentameter: five beats of alternating unstressed and stressed syllables; ten syllables per line.

'So fair / and foul / a day / I have / not seen'

'The course / of true / love ne'er did / run smooth'
This story takes place in Athens, Greece - where everything is going wrong. The play starts in the court room of Duke Theseus. A man named Egeus is having trouble with his daughter so he brings her to the duke for help. Egeus’s daughter, Hermia doesn’t want to marry Demetrius - the man her father has promised to her. Instead, Hermia wants to marry the Poet Lysander. Duke Theseus reminds Hermia that the law allows fathers to make their daughters do anything. He tells her that her only other choice is to become a nun and never marry anyone.

Because the duke gives them little choice, Lysander and Hermia decide to run away form Athens. They run into the woods to make plans. While they are in the woods, they run into Helena. Helena is Hermia’s best friend. She is sad because she loves Demetrius. Hermia wishes Demetrius would love Helena back - then Hermia could marry Lysander and their problem would be solved!

The fairies that live in the woods are also having problems. Oberon, the king of fairies, is angry at his queen, Titania. She is taking care of a little human boy and Oberon is jealous. He wants to take the boy to be his servant. Titania won’t let him so Oberon decides to play a trick on her. He asks his helper, Puck, to find a magical flower. The flower’s juices are supposed to make someone fall in love with the first thing they see. Oberon wants Puck to use the flower on Titania.

As night begins to fall, the lovers from Athens are all lost in the woods. Lysander and Hermia are still trying to run away. Demetrius chases them while Helena follows, begging him to love her back. Demetrius is mean to Helena and swears he will never love her. Oberon sees this and feels sorry for Helena. He decides to help her by using the magic flower on Demetrius too.

In another part of the woods, a group of workers, or mechanicals, are practicing a play to perform for Duke Theseus on his wedding day. They are very funny and silly characters. Nick Bottom is the loudest and funniest of them all. He is also very bossy and wants to play all the play’s parts. Puck sees Nick Bottom and thinks it would be funny to make Queen Titania fall in love with him. While Titania is sleeping, Puck drops the magic juices into her eyes. Then Puck make the joke even funnier by turning Nick Bottom’s head into a donkey head. All of the mechanicals are scared when they see Nick Bottom with a donkey head. They run away screaming and wake up Titania. She instantly falls in love with Nick Bottom.

On his way back to King Oberon, Puck finds Lysander and Hermia sleeping. Puck thinks that Lysander is the man who needs the love drops. He is wrong! Puck accidentally makes Lysander fall in love with Helena. Helena is very confused, and Hermia is very mad. She thinks her best friend has stolen her boyfriend. Puck tries to fix things by putting the drops into Demetrius’s eyes. Now Demetrius loves Helena too! Helena is angry and thinks the men are teasing her. Hermia tries to fight Helena. Oberon is mad at Puck for making so many mistakes. He makes Puck stay up all night and fix the mess.

When the lovers wake up in the morning, Lysander loves Hermia and Demetrius loves Helena. Everyone is happy and they go back to Athens to tell Egeus and Duke Theseus. Everything is better in the fairy kingdom too. Oberon reverses the spell on Titania and Nick Bottom. Oberon and Titania stop fighting and Puck apologizes for all of his mistakes.
Contents

Front Matter
  From the Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library
  Textual Introduction
  Synopsis
  Characters in the Play

ACT 1
  Scene 1
  Scene 2

ACT 2
  Scene 1
  Scene 2

ACT 3
  Scene 1
  Scene 2

ACT 4
  Scene 1
  Scene 2

ACT 5
  Scene 1
It is hard to imagine a world without Shakespeare. Since their composition four hundred years ago, Shakespeare’s plays and poems have traveled the globe, inviting those who see and read his works to make them their own.

Readers of the New Folger Editions are part of this ongoing process of “taking up Shakespeare,” finding our own thoughts and feelings in language that strikes us as old or unusual and, for that very reason, new. We still struggle to keep up with a writer who could think a mile a minute, whose words paint pictures that shift like clouds. These expertly edited texts are presented to the public as a resource for study, artistic adaptation, and enjoyment. By making the classic texts of the New Folger Editions available in electronic form as Folger Digital Texts, we place a trusted resource in the hands of anyone who wants them.

The New Folger Editions of Shakespeare’s plays, which are the basis for the texts realized here in digital form, are special because of their origin. The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, is the single greatest documentary source of Shakespeare’s works. An unparalleled collection of early modern books, manuscripts, and artwork connected to Shakespeare, the Folger’s holdings have been consulted extensively in the preparation of these texts. The Editions also reflect the expertise gained through the regular performance of Shakespeare’s works in the Folger’s Elizabethan Theater.

I want to express my deep thanks to editors Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine for creating these indispensable editions of Shakespeare’s works, which incorporate the best of textual scholarship with a richness of commentary that is both inspired and engaging. Readers who want to know more about Shakespeare and his plays can follow the paths these distinguished scholars have tread by visiting the Folger either in-person or online, where a range of physical and digital resources exists to supplement the material in these texts. I commend to you these words, and hope that they inspire.

Michael Witmore
Director, Folger Shakespeare Library
Until now, with the release of the Folger Digital Texts, readers in search of a free online text of Shakespeare’s plays had to be content primarily with using the Moby™ Text, which reproduces a late-nineteenth century version of the plays. What is the difference? Many ordinary readers assume that there is a single text for the plays: what Shakespeare wrote. But Shakespeare’s plays were not published the way modern novels or plays are published today: as a single, authoritative text. In some cases, the plays have come down to us in multiple published versions, represented by various Quartos (Qq) and by the great collection put together by his colleagues in 1623, called the First Folio (F). There are, for example, three very different versions of Hamlet, two of King Lear, Henry V, Romeo and Juliet, and others. Editors choose which version to use as their base text, and then amend that text with words, lines or speech prefixes from the other versions that, in their judgment, make for a better or more accurate text.

Other editorial decisions involve choices about whether an unfamiliar word could be understood in light of other writings of the period or whether it should be changed; decisions about words that made it into Shakespeare’s text by accident through four hundred years of printings and misprinting; and even decisions based on cultural preference and taste. When the Moby™ Text was created, for example, it was deemed “improper” and “indecent” for Miranda to chastise Caliban for having attempted to rape her. (See The Tempest, 1.2: “Abhorred slave,/Which any print of goodness wilt not take,/Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee…”). All Shakespeare editors at the time took the speech away from her and gave it to her father, Prospero.

The editors of the Moby™ Shakespeare produced their text long before scholars fully understood the proper grounds on which to make the thousands of decisions that Shakespeare editors face. The Folger Library Shakespeare Editions, on which the Folger Digital Texts depend, make this editorial process as nearly transparent as is possible, in contrast to older texts, like the Moby™, which hide editorial interventions. The reader of the Folger Shakespeare knows where the text has been altered because editorial interventions are signaled by square brackets (for example, from Othello: “[If she in chains of magic were not bound,]”), half-square brackets (for example, from Henry V: “[With sword]”), and plain text in italics.
example, from *Henry V*: “With blood and sword and fire to win your right,”), or angle brackets (for example, from *Hamlet*: “O farewell, honest (soldier.) Who hath relieved you?”). At any point in the text, you can hover your cursor over a bracket for more information.

Because the Folger Digital Texts are edited in accord with twenty-first century knowledge about Shakespeare’s texts, the Folger here provides them to readers, scholars, teachers, actors, directors, and students, free of charge, confident of their quality as texts of the plays and pleased to be able to make this contribution to the study and enjoyment of Shakespeare.
In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, residents of Athens mix with fairies from a local forest, with comic results. In the city, Theseus, Duke of Athens, is to marry Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons. Bottom the weaver and his friends rehearse in the woods a play they hope to stage for the wedding celebrations.

Four young Athenians are in a romantic tangle. Lysander and Demetrius love Hermia; she loves Lysander and her friend Helena loves Demetrius. Hermia’s father, Egeus, commands Hermia to marry Demetrius, and Theseus supports the father’s right. All four young Athenians end up in the woods, where Robin Goodfellow, who serves the fairy king Oberon, puts flower juice on the eyes of Lysander, and then Demetrius, unintentionally causing both to love Helena. Oberon, who is quarreling with his wife, Titania, uses the flower juice on her eyes. She falls in love with Bottom, who now, thanks to Robin Goodfellow, wears an ass’s head.

As the lovers sleep, Robin Goodfellow restores Lysander’s love for Hermia, so that now each young woman is matched with the man she loves. Oberon disenchants Titania and removes Bottom’s ass’s head. The two young couples join the royal couple in getting married, and Bottom rejoins his friends to perform the play.
Characters in the Play

HERMIA
LYSANDER
HELENA
DEMETRIUS \(\{\) four lovers \(\}\

THESEUS, duke of Athens
HIPPOLYTA, queen of the Amazons
EGEUS, father to Hermia
PHILOSTRATE, master of the revels to Theseus

NICK BOTTOM, weaver
PETER QUINCE, carpenter
FRANCIS FLUTE, bellows-mender
TOM SNOUT, tinker
SNUG, joiner

ROBIN STARVELING, tailor

OBERON, king of the Fairies
TITANIA, queen of the Fairies
ROBIN GOODFELLOW, a “puck,” or hobgoblin, in Oberon’s service
A FAIRY, in the service of Titania
PEASEBLOSSOM \(\{\) fairies attending upon Titania \(\}\

COBWEB
MOTE
MUSTARDSEED

Lords and Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta
Other Fairies in the trains of Titania and Oberon
Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, and Philostrate, with others.

THESEUS

Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace. Four happy days bring in
Another moon. But, O, methinks how slow
This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires
Like to a stepdame or a dowager
Long withering out a young man’s revenue.

HIPPOLYTA

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.

THESEUS

Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments.
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth.
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our pomp.

Philostrate exits.

Hippolyta, 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.
Enter Egeus and his daughter Hermia, and Lysander and Demetrius.

EGEUS

Happy be Theseus, our renownèd duke!

THESEUS

Thanks, good Egeus. What’s the news with thee?

EGEUS

Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.—
Stand forth, Demetrius.—My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.—
Stand forth, Lysander.—And, my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child.—
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes
And interchanged love tokens with my child.
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
With feigning voice verses of feigning love
And stol’n the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats—messengers
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth.
With cunning hast thou filched my daughter’s heart,
Turned her obedience (which is due to me)
To stubborn harshness.—And, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your Grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens:
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.

THESEUS

What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid.
To you, your father should be as a god,
One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax
By him imprinted, and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

To whom you are but as a form in wax
By him imprinted, and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

So is Lysander.

In himself he is,

But in this kind, wanting your father’s voice,
The other must be held the worthier.

I would my father looked but with my eyes.

Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

I do entreat your Grace to pardon me.

I know not by what power I am made bold,
Nor how it may concern my modesty
In such a presence here to plead my thoughts;
But I beseech your Grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

Either to die the death or to abjure
Forever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires,
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
Whether (if you yield not to your father’s choice)
You can endure the livery of a nun,
For aye to be in shady cloister mewed,
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
Thrice-blessèd they that master so their blood
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage,
But earthlier happy is the rose distilled
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.
HERMIA

So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
Unto his Lordship whose unwishèd yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

THESEUS

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.

DEMETRIUS

Relent, sweet Hermia, and, Lysander, yield
Thy crazèd title to my certain right.

LYSANDER

You have her father’s love, Demetrius.
Let me have Hermia’s. Do you marry him.

EGEUS

Scornful Lysander, true, he hath my love;
And what is mine my love shall render him.
And she is mine, and all my right of her
I do estate unto Demetrius.

LYSANDER, [to Theseus]

I am, my lord, as well derived as he,
As well possessed. My love is more than his;
My fortunes every way as fairly ranked
(If not with vantage) as Demetrius’;
And (which is more than all these boasts can be)
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia.
Why should not I then prosecute my right?
Demetrius, I’ll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar’s daughter, Helena,
And won her soul; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

**THESEUS**

I must confess that I have heard so much,
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof;
But, being overfull of self-affairs,
My mind did lose it.—But, Demetrius, come,
And come, Egeus; you shall go with me.
I have some private schooling for you both.—
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father’s will,
Or else the law of Athens yields you up
(Which by no means we may extenuate)
To death or to a vow of single life.—
Come, my Hippolyta. What cheer, my love?—
Demetrius and Egeus, go along.
I must employ you in some business
Against our nuptial and confer with you
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

**EGEUS**

With duty and desire we follow you.

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All but Hermia and Lysander exit.
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HERMIA

O spite! Too old to be engaged to young.

LYSANDER

Or else it stood upon the choice of friends—

HERMIA

O hell, to choose love by another’s eyes!

LYSANDER

Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and Earth,
And, ere a man hath power to say “Behold!”
The jaws of darkness do devour it up.
So quick bright things come to confusion.

HERMIA

If then true lovers have been ever crossed,
It stands as an edict in destiny.
Then let us teach our trial patience
Because it is a customary cross,
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
Wishes and tears, poor fancy’s followers.

LYSANDER

A good persuasion. Therefore, hear me, Hermia:
I have a widow aunt, a dowager
Of great revenue, and she hath no child.
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues,
And she respects me as her only son.
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me, then
Steal forth thy father’s house tomorrow night,
And in the wood a league without the town
(Where I did meet thee once with Helena
To do observance to a morn of May),
There will I stay for thee.
HERMIA

My good Lysander,

I swear to thee by Cupid’s strongest bow,

By his best arrow with the golden head,

By the simplicity of Venus’ doves,

By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,

And by that fire which burned the Carthage queen

When the false Trojan under sail was seen,

By all the vows that ever men have broke

(In number more than ever women spoke),

In that same place thou hast appointed me,

Tomorrow truly will I meet with thee.

LYSANDER

Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

Enter Helena.

HERMIA

Godspeed, fair Helena. Whither away?

HELENA

Call you me “fair”? That “fair” again unsay.

Demetrius loves your fair. O happy fair!

Your eyes are lodestars and your tongue’s sweet air

More tunable than lark to shepherd’s ear

When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.

Sickness is catching. O, were favor so!

Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go.

My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye;

My tongue should catch your tongue’s sweet melody.

Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,

The rest I’d give to be to you translated.

O, teach me how you look and with what art

You sway the motion of Demetrius’ heart!

HERMIA

I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

HELENA

O, that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!
HERMIA
I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

HELENA
O, that my prayers could such affection move!

HERMIA
The more I hate, the more he follows me.

HELENA
The more I love, the more he hateth me.

HERMIA
His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

HELENA
None but your beauty. Would that fault were mine!

HERMIA
Take comfort: he no more shall see my face.
Lysander and myself will fly this place.
Before the time I did Lysander see
Seemed Athens as a paradise to me.

O, then, what graces in my love do dwell
That he hath turned a heaven unto a hell!

LYSANDER
Helen, to you our minds we will unfold.
Tomorrow night when Phoebe doth behold
Her silver visage in the wat’ry glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass
(A time that lovers’ flights doth still conceal),
Through Athens’ gates have we devised to steal.

HERMIA
And in the wood where often you and I
Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel [sweet,]
There my Lysander and myself shall meet
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes
To seek new friends and [stranger companies.]
Farewell, sweet playfellow. Pray thou for us,
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius.—
A Midsummer Night’s Dream

ACT 1. SC. 1

LYSANDER

I will, my Hermia. 

Hermia exits.

LYSANDER

Hermia exits.

HELENA

She exits.

Keep word, Lysander. We must starve our sight
From lovers’ food till morrow deep midnight.

Lysander exits.

Helena, adieu.

As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!

HELENA

How happy some o’er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.

But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so.

He will not know what all but he do know.

And, as he errs, doting on Hermia’s eyes,

So I, admiring of his qualities.

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,

Love can transpose to form and dignity.

Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind;

And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.

Nor hath Love’s mind of any judgment taste.

Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste.

And therefore is Love said to be a child
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.

As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,

So the boy Love is perjured everywhere.

For, ere Demetrius looked on Hermia’s eyne,

He hailed down oaths that he was only mine;

And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,

So he dissolved, and show’rs of oaths did melt.

I will go tell him of fair Hermia’s flight.

Then to the wood will he tomorrow night

Pursue her. And, for this intelligence

If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.

But herein mean I to enrich my pain,

To have his sight thither and back again.

She exits.
Enter Quince the carpenter, and Snug the joiner, and Bottom the weaver, and Flute the bellows-mender, and Snout the tinker, and Starveling the tailor.

QUINCE Is all our company here?
BOTTOM You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.
QUINCE Here is the scroll of every man’s name which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the Duke and the Duchess on his wedding day at night.
BOTTOM First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.
QUINCE Marry, our play is “The most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe.”
BOTTOM A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.
QUINCE Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.
BOTTOM Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.
QUINCE You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.
BOTTOM What is Pyramus—a lover or a tyrant?
QUINCE A lover that kills himself most gallant for love.
BOTTOM That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes. I will move storms; I will condole in some measure. To the rest.—Yet my chief humor is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split:

The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates.
And Phibbus' car
Shall shine from far
And make and mar
The foolish Fates.

This was lofty. Now name the rest of the players.
This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein. A lover is more condoling.

QUINCE    Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.
FLUTE     Here, Peter Quince.
QUINCE    Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.
FLUTE     What is Thisbe—a wand’ring knight?
QUINCE    It is the lady that Pyramus must love.
FLUTE     Nay, faith, let not me play a woman. I have a beard coming.
QUINCE    That's all one. You shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.
BOTTOM   An I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe too.
         I’ll speak in a monstrous little voice: “Thisne, Thisne!”—“Ah Pyramus, my lover dear! Thy Thisbe dear and lady dear!”
QUINCE    No, no, you must play Pyramus—and, Flute, you Thisbe.
BOTTOM   Well, proceed.
QUINCE    Robin Starveling, the tailor.
STARVELING  Here, Peter Quince.
QUINCE    Robin Starveling, you must play Thisbe’s mother.—Tom Snout, the tinker.
SNOUT    Here, Peter Quince.
QUINCE    You, Pyramus’ father.—Myself, Thisbe’s father.—Snug the joiner, you the lion’s part.—And I hope here is a play fitted.
SNUG     Have you the lion’s part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.
QUINCE    You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.
BOTTOM  Let me play the lion too. I will roar that I will
do any man’s heart good to hear me. I will roar that
I will make the Duke say “Let him roar again. Let
him roar again!”

QUINCE  An you should do it too terribly, you would
fright the Duchess and the ladies that they would
shriek, and that were enough to hang us all.

ALL    That would hang us, every mother’s son.

BOTTOM  I grant you, friends, if you should fright the
ladies out of their wits, they would have no more
discretion but to hang us. But I will aggravate my
voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking
dove. I will roar you an ’twere any nightingale.

QUINCE  You can play no part but Pyramus, for Pyramus
is a sweet-faced man, a proper man as one
shall see in a summer’s day, a most lovely gentlemanlike
man. Therefore you must needs play
Pyramus.

BOTTOM  Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I
best to play it in?

QUINCE  Why, what you will.

BOTTOM  I will discharge it in either your straw-color
beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain
beard, or your French-crown-color beard,
your perfit yellow.

QUINCE  Some of your French crowns have no hair at
all, and then you will play barefaced. But, masters,
here are your parts, ['giving out the parts,'] and I am
to entreat you, request you, and desire you to con
them by tomorrow night and meet me in the palace
wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight. There
will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall
be dogged with company and our devices known. In
the meantime I will draw a bill of properties such as
our play wants. I pray you fail me not.

BOTTOM  We will meet, and there we may rehearse
most obscenely and courageously. Take pains. Be
perfect. Adieu.

At the Duke’s Oak we meet.

Enough. Hold or cut bowstrings.

They exit.
[Scene 1]

Enter a Fairy at one door and Robin Goodfellow at another.

ROBIN

How now, spirit? Whither wander you?

FAIRY

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire;
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon’s sphere.
And I serve the Fairy Queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favors;
In those freckles live their savors.

I must go seek some dewdrops here
And hang a pearl in every cowslip’s ear.

Farewell, thou lob of spirits. I’ll be gone.

Our queen and all her elves come here anon.

ROBIN

The King doth keep his revels here tonight.
Take heed the Queen come not within his sight,
For Oberon is passing fell and wrath
Because that she, as her attendant, hath
A lovely boy stolen from an Indian king;
She never had so sweet a changeling.
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild.
But she perforce withholds the lovèd boy,
Crows him with flowers and makes him all her joy.
And now they never meet in grove or green,
By fountain clear or spangled starlight sheen,
But they do square, that all their elves for fear
Creep into acorn cups and hide them there.

FAIRY

Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he
That frights the maidens of the villagery,
Skim milk, and sometimes labor in the quern
And bootless make the breathless huswife churn,
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,
Mislead night wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that “Hobgoblin” call you and “sweet Puck,”
You do their work, and they shall have good luck.
Are not you he?

ROBIN

Thou speakest aright.
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal.
And sometime lurk I in a gossip’s bowl
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
A Midsummer Night’s Dream

ACT 2. SC. 1

FAIRY
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she
And “Tailor!” cries and falls into a cough,
And then the whole choir hold their hips and loffe
And waxen in their mirth and neeze and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.
But room, fairy. Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY
And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!

Enter Oberon the King of Fairies at one door, with his train, and Titania the Queen at another, with hers.

OBERON
Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA
What, jealous Oberon? Fairies, skip hence.
I have forsworn his bed and company.

OBERON
Tarry, rash wanton. Am not I thy lord?

TITANIA
Then I must be thy lady. But I know
When thou hast stolen away from Fairyland
And in the shape of Corin sat all day
Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
To amorous Phillida. 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?

OBERON
How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst not thou lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigouna, whom he ravished,
And make him with fair "Aegles" break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiopa?

TITANIA

These are the forgeries of jealousy;
And never, since the middle summer’s spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By pavèd fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beachèd margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge have sucked up from the sea
Contagious fogs, which, falling in the land,
Hath every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents.
The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,
The plowman lost his sweat, and 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.
The nine-men’s-morris is filled up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,
For lack of tread, are undistinguishable.
The human mortals want their winter here.
No night is now with hymn or carol blessed.
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems’ [thin] and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world.
By their increase now knows not which is which.
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.

OBERON
Do you amend it, then. It lies in you.
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy
To be my henchman.

TITANIA
Set your heart at rest:
The Fairyland buys not the child of me.
His mother was a vot’ress of my order,
And in the spicèd 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.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die,
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON
How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA
Perchance till after Theseus’ wedding day.
If you will patiently dance in our round
And see our moonlight revels, go with us.
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

OBERON
Give me that boy and I will go with thee.
TITANIA
Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away.
We shall chide downright if I longer stay.

"Titania and her fairies" exit.

OBERON
Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.—
My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememb’rest
Since once I sat upon a promontory
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin’s back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea-maid’s music.

ROBIN
I remember.

OBERON
That very time I saw (but thou couldst not),
Flying between the cold moon and the Earth,
Cupid all armed. A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal thronèd by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
But I might see young Cupid’s fiery shaft
Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat’ry moon,
And the imperial vot’ress passed on
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell.
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before, milk-white, now purple with love’s wound,
And maidens call it “love-in-idleness.”
Fetch me that flower; the herb I showed thee once.
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.
ROBIN
  I’ll put a girdle round about the Earth
  In forty minutes.  \[He exits.\]

OBERON
Having once this juice,
  I’ll watch Titania when she is asleep
  And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing then she, waking, looks upon
  (Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
  On meddling monkey, or on busy ape)
  She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
And ere I take this charm from off her sight
  (As I can take it with another herb),
  I’ll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible,
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter Demetrius, Helena following him.

DEMETRIUS
  I love thee not; therefore pursue me not.
  Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I’ll stay; the other stayeth me.
Thou told’st me they were stol’n unto this wood,
  And here am I, and wood within this wood
  Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

HELENA
  You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant!
  But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
  Is true as steel. Leave you your power to draw,
  And I shall have no power to follow you.

DEMETRIUS
  Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair?
  Or rather do I not in plainest truth
  Tell you I do not, \[nor\] I cannot love you?

HELENA
  And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel, and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me I will fawn on you.
Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave
(Unworthy as I am) to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love
(And yet a place of high respect with me)
Than to be usèd as you use your dog?

DEMETRIUS

Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit,
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

HELENA

And I am sick when I look not on you.

DEMETRIUS

You do impeach your modesty too much
To leave the city and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not,
To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill counsel of a desert place
With the rich worth of your virginity.

HELENA

Your virtue is my privilege. For that
It is not night when I do see your face,
Therefore I think I am not in the night.
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
For you, in my respect, are all the world.
Then, how can it be said I am alone
When all the world is here to look on me?

DEMETRIUS

I’ll run from thee and hide me in the brakes
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

HELENA

The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will. The story shall be changed:
Apollo flies and Daphne holds the chase;
The dove pursues the griffin; the mild hind
Demetrius exits.
Helena exits.

Oberon
Robin gives him the flower.
Makes speed to catch the tiger. Bootless speed
When cowardice pursues and valor flies!

Demetrius
I will not stay thy questions. Let me go,
Or if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

Helena
Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex.
We cannot fight for love as men may do.
We should be wooed and were not made to woo.

Demetrius exits.

Helena
I’ll follow thee and make a heaven of hell
To die upon the hand I love so well.

Helena exits.

Oberon
Fare thee well, nymph. Ere he do leave this grove,
Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love.

Enter Robin.

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

Robin
Ay, there it is.

Oberon
I pray thee give it me.

Robin gives him the flower.

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet muskroses, and with eglantine.
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight.
And there the snake throws her enameled skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in.
And with the juice of this I’ll streak her eyes
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove.
He gives Robin part of the flower.

A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth. Anoint his eyes,
But do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care, that he may prove
More fond on her than she upon her love.
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

ROBIN
Fear not, my lord. Your servant shall do so.

They exit.

Scene 2
Enter Titania, Queen of Fairies, with her train.

TITANIA
Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;
Then, for the third part of a minute, hence—
Some to kill cankers in the muskrose buds,
Some war with reremice for their leathern wings
To make my small elves coats, and some keep back
The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep.
Then to your offices and let me rest.  

Fairies sing.

FIRST FAIRY
You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen.
Newts and blindworms, do no wrong,
Come not near our Fairy Queen.

CHORUS
Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby.
FIRST FAIRY

Weaving spiders, come not here.
Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence.
Beetles black, approach not near.
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

CHORUS

Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby.
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby.
Never harm
Nor spell nor charm
Come our lovely lady nigh.
So good night, with lullaby.

SECOND FAIRY

Hence, away! Now all is well.
One aloof stand sentinel.

Enter Oberon, who anoints Titania’s eyelids with the nectar.

OBERON

What thou seest when thou dost wake
Do it for thy true love take.
Love and languish for his sake.
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wak’st, it is thy dear.
Wake when some vile thing is near.  

Enter Lysander and Hermia.
LYSANDER

Fair love, you faint with wand’ring in the wood.
And, to speak troth, I have forgot our way.
We’ll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

HERMIA

Be it so, Lysander. Find you out a bed,
For I upon this bank will rest my head.

LYSANDER

One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;
One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.

HERMIA

Nay, good Lysander. For my sake, my dear,
Lie further off yet. Do not lie so near.

LYSANDER

O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!
Love takes the meaning in love’s conference.
I mean that my heart unto yours is knit,
So that but one heart we can make of it;
Two bosoms interchainèd with an oath—
So then two bosoms and a single troth.
Then by your side no bed-room me deny,
For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

HERMIA

Lysander riddles very prettily.
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride
If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.
But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy,
Lie further off in human modesty.
Such separation, as may well be said,
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid.
So far be distant; and good night, sweet friend.
Thy love ne’er alter till thy sweet life end!

LYSANDER

“Amen, amen” to that fair prayer, say I,
And then end life when I end loyalty!
Here is my bed. Sleep give thee all his rest!
HERMIA  
With half that wish the wisher’s eyes be pressed!  

They sleep.

Enter Robin.

ROBIN  
Through the forest have I gone,  
But Athenian found I none  
On whose eyes I might approve  
This flower’s force in stirring love.

He sees Lysander.

Night and silence! Who is here?  
Weeds of Athens he doth wear.  
This is he my master said  
Despisèd the Athenian maid.  
And here the maiden, sleeping sound  
On the dank and dirty ground.  
Pretty soul, she durst not lie  
Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.—  
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw  
All the power this charm doth owe.

He anoints Lysander’s eyelids with the nectar.

When thou wak’st, let love forbid  
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid.  
So, awake when I am gone,  
For I must now to Oberon.  
He exits.

Enter Demetrius and Helena, running.

HELENA  
Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

DEMETRIUS  
I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

HELENA  
O, wilt thou darkling leave me? Do not so.
Demetrius

Stay, on thy peril. I alone will go.  \[\text{Demetrius exits.}\]

Helena

O, I am out of breath in this fond chase.
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.
Happy is Hermia, wheresoe’er she lies,
For she hath blessèd and attractive eyes.
How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears.
If so, my eyes are oftener washed than hers.

No, no, I am as ugly as a bear,
For beasts that meet me run away for fear.
Therefore no marvel though Demetrius
Do as a monster fly my presence thus.
What wicked and dissembling glass of mine
Made me compare with Hermia’s sphery eyne?
But who is here? Lysander, on the ground!
Dead or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.—
Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

Lysander, [\text{waking up}]

And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.
Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

Helena

Do not say so. Lysander, say not so.
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?
Yet Hermia still loves you. Then be content.

Lysander

Content with Hermia? No, I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia, but Helena I love.
Who will not change a raven for a dove?
The will of man is by his reason swayed,
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe until their season;
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason.
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will
And leads me to your eyes, where I o’erlook
Love’s stories written in love’s richest book.

HELENA

Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
Is ’t not enough, is ’t not enough, young man,
That I did never, no, nor never can
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius’ eye,
But you must flout my insufficiency?
Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,
In such disdainful manner me to woo.
But fare you well. Perforce I must confess
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
O, that a lady of one man refused
Should of another therefore be abused!

LYSANDER

She sees not Hermia.—Hermia, sleep thou there,
And never mayst thou come Lysander near.
For, as a surfeit of the sweetest things
The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,
Or as the heresies that men do leave
Are hated most of those they did deceive,
So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,
Of all be hated, but the most of me!
And, all my powers, address your love and might
To honor Helen and to be her knight.

HERMIA, waking up

Help me, Lysander, help me! Do thy best
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast.
Ay me, for pity! What a dream was here!
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.

She exits.

He exits.
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.
Lysander! What, removed? Lysander, lord!
What, out of hearing? Gone? No sound, no word?
Alack, where are you? Speak, an if you hear.

Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.—
No? Then I well perceive you are not nigh.
Either death or you I’ll find immediately.

*She exits.*
Scene 1

With Titania still asleep onstage, enter the Clowns, Bottom, Quince, Snout, Starveling, Snug, and Flute.

BOTTOM Are we all met?
QUINCE Pat, pat. And here's a marvels convenient place for our rehearsal. This green 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.

BOTTOM Peter Quince?
QUINCE What sayest thou, bully Bottom?
BOTTOM There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?

SNOUT By 'r lakin, a parlous fear.
STARVELING I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

BOTTOM Not a whit! I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say we will do no harm with our swords and that Pyramus is not killed indeed. And, for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver. This will put them out of fear.

69
QUINCE   Well, we will have such a prologue, and it shall be written in eight and six.

BOTTOM  No, make it two more. Let it be written in eight and eight.

SNOUT    Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

STARVELING I fear it, I promise you.

BOTTOM   Masters, you ought to consider with yourself, to bring in (God shield us!) a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing. For there is not a more fearful wildfowl than your lion living, and we ought to look to ’t.

SNOUT    Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

BOTTOM   Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion’s neck, and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect: “Ladies,” or “Fair ladies, I would wish you,” or “I would request you,” or “I would entreat you not to fear, not to tremble! My life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life. No, I am no such thing. I am a man as other men are.” And there indeed let him name his name and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

QUINCE   Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things: that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber, for you know Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.

SNOUT    Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

BOTTOM   A calendar, a calendar! Look in the almanac. Find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

                                  [Quince takes out a book.]

QUINCE   Yes, it doth shine that night.

BOTTOM   Why, then, may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the casement.
QUINCE    Ay, or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern and say he comes to disfigure or to present the person of Moonshine. Then there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber, for Pyramus and Thisbe, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

SNOUT    You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

BOTTOM   Some man or other must present Wall. And let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some roughcast about him to signify wall, or let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisbe whisper.

QUINCE    If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother’s son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin. When you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake, and so everyone according to his cue.

Enter Robin «invisible to those onstage.»

ROBIN, «aside»

What hempen homespuns have we swagg’ring here So near the cradle of the Fairy Queen? What, a play toward? I’ll be an auditor— An actor too perhaps, if I see cause.

QUINCE    Speak, Pyramus.—Thisbe, stand forth.

BOTTOM, as Pyramus

Thisbe, the flowers of odious savors sweet—

QUINCE    Odors, «odors!»

BOTTOM, as Pyramus

...odors savors sweet. So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.— But hark, a voice! Stay thou but here awhile, And by and by I will to thee appear. He exits.

«ROBIN, aside»

A stranger Pyramus than e’er played here. «He exits.»
FLUTE   Must I speak now?
QUINCE Ay, marry, must you, for you must understand
he goes but to see a noise that he heard and is to
come again.
FLUTE, as Thisbe

   Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,
   Of color like the red rose on triumphant brier;
   Most brisky juvenal and eke most lovely Jew,
   As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.
   I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

QUINCE  “Ninus’ tomb,” man! Why, you must not
speak that yet. That you answer to Pyramus. You
speak all your part at once, cues and all.—Pyramus,
enter. Your cue is past. It is “never tire.”

FLUTE   O!

   As Thisbe.
   As true as truest horse, that yet would never
tire.

[Enter Robin, and Bottom as Pyramus with the
ass-head.]

BOTTOM, as Pyramus

   If I were fair, fair Thisbe, I were only thine.

QUINCE  O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted. Pray,
masters, fly, masters! Help!

   [Quince, Flute, Snout, Snug, and Starveling exit.]

ROBIN

   I'll follow you. I'll lead you about a round,
   Through bog, through bush, through brake,
   through brier.
   Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
   A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire,
   And neigh and bark and grunt and roar and burn,
   Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.
   He exits.

BOTTOM   Why do they run away? This is a knavery of
         them to make me afeard.
Enter Snout.

SNOUT O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?

BOTTOM What do you see? You see an ass-head of your own, do you?  

[Snout exits.]

Enter Quince.

QUINCE Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated!  

He exits.

BOTTOM I see their knavery. 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. I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.

[He sings.] 

The ouzel cock, so black of hue,  
With orange-tawny bill,  
The throstle with his note so true,  
The wren with little quill—  

Titania, waking up  

What angel wakes me from my flow’ry bed?

BOTTOM sings  

The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,  
The plainsong cuckoo gray,  
Whose note full many a man doth mark  
And dares not answer “nay”—  

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? Who would give a bird the lie though he cry “cuckoo” never so?

Titania  

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.  

Mine ear is much enamored of thy note,  
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape,  
And thy fair virtue’s force perforce doth move me  
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

BOTTOM Methinks, mistress, you should have little
TITANIA

reason for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays. The more the pity that some honest neighbors will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

TITANIA

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

BOTTOM Not so neither; but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

TITANIA

Out of this wood do not desire to go.
Thou shalt remain here whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate.
The summer still doth tend upon my state,
And I do love thee. Therefore go with me.
I’ll give thee fairies to attend on thee,
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep
And sing while thou on pressèd flowers dost sleep.
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.—
Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed!

Enter four Fairies: [Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed.]

[PEASEBLOSSOM] Ready.
[CObWEB] And I.
[MOTE] And I.
[MUSTARDSEED] And I.
[ALL] Where shall we go?

TITANIA

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glowworms’ eyes
To have my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

PEASEBLOSSOM Hail, mortal!
COBWEB Hail!
MOTE Hail!
MUSTARDSEED Hail!

BOTTOM I cry your Worships mercy, heartily.—I beseech your Worship’s name.
COBWEB Cobweb.
BOTTOM I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you.—Your name, honest gentleman?—Your name, honest gentleman?

PEASEBLOSSOM Peaseblossom.
BOTTOM I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too.—Your name, I beseech you, sir?

MUSTARDSEED Mustardseed.
BOTTOM Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well. That same cowardly, giantlike ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house. I promise you, your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

TITANIA
Come, wait upon him. Lead him to my bower.
The moon, methinks, looks with a wat’ry eye,
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforcéd chastity.
Tie up my lover’s tongue. Bring him silently.

They exit.
Enter Oberon, King of Fairies.

OBERON

I wonder if Titania be awaked;  
Then what it was that next came in her eye,  
Which she must dote on in extremity.

Enter Robin Goodfellow.

ROBIN

Here comes my messenger. How now, mad spirit?  
What night-rule now about this haunted grove?  

My mistress with a monster is in love.  
Near to her close and consecrated bower,  
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,  
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,  
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,  
Were met together to rehearse a play  
Intended for great Theseus’ nuptial day.  
The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,  
Who Pyramus presented in their sport,  
Forsook his scene and entered in a brake.  
When I did him at this advantage take,  
An ass’s noll I fixèd on his head.  
Anon his Thisbe must be answerèd,  
And forth my ‘mimic’ comes. When they him spy,  
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,  
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,  
Rising and cawing at the gun’s report,  
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,  
So at his sight away his fellows fly,  
And, at our stamp, here o’er and o’er one falls.  
He “Murder” cries and help from Athens calls.  
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,  
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch,
Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch.
I led them on in this distracted fear
And left sweet Pyramus translated there.
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

OBERON
This falls out better than I could devise.
But hast thou yet latched the Athenian’s eyes
With the love juice, as I did bid thee do?

ROBIN
I took him sleeping—that is finished, too—
And the Athenian woman by his side,
That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed.

Enter Demetrius and Hermia.

OBERON
Stand close. This is the same Athenian.

ROBIN
This is the woman, but not this the man.

[They step aside.]

DEMETRIUS
O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe!

HERMIA
Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o’er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep
And kill me too.
The sun was not so true unto the day
As he to me. Would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I’ll believe as soon
This whole Earth may be bored, and that the moon
May through the center creep and so displease
Her brother’s noontide with th’ Antipodes. 
It cannot be but thou hast murdered him. 
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

**DEMETRIUS**

So should the murdered look, and so should I, 
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty.
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear, 
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

**HERMIA**

What’s this to my Lysander? Where is he? 
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

**DEMETRIUS**

I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

**HERMIA**

Out, dog! Out, cur! Thou driv’st me past the bounds 
Of maiden’s patience. Hast thou slain him, then? 
Henceforth be never numbered among men.

O, once tell true! Tell true, even for my sake! 
Durst thou have looked upon him, being awake? 
And hast thou killed him sleeping? O brave touch! 
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much? 
An adder did it, for with doubler tongue 
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

**DEMETRIUS**

You spend your passion on a misprised mood. 
I am not guilty of Lysander’s blood, 
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

**HERMIA**

I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

**DEMETRIUS**

An if I could, what should I get therefor?

**HERMIA**

A privilege never to see me more. 
And from thy hated presence part I so. 
See me no more, whether he be dead or no.

*She exits.*
DEMETRIUS

There is no following her in this fierce vein.
Here, therefore, for a while I will remain.
So sorrow’s heavity doth heavier grow
For debt that bankrot sleep doth sorrow owe,
Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
If for his tender here I make some stay.

‘He lies down and falls asleep.’

OBERON, ‘to Robin’

What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken quite
And laid the love juice on some true-love’s sight.
Of thy misprision must perforce ensue
Some true-love turned, and not a false turned true.

ROBIN

Then fate o’errules, that, one man holding troth,
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

OBERON

About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find.
All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer
With sighs of love that costs the fresh blood dear.
By some illusion see thou bring her here.
I’ll charm his eyes against she do appear.

ROBIN

I go, I go, look how I go,
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar’s bow.

OBERON, ‘applying the nectar to Demetrius’ eyes’

Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid’s archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.—
When thou wak’st, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Enter ‘Robin.’
ROBIN

Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand,
And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee.

Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

OBERON

Stand aside. The noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

ROBIN

Then will two at once woo one.
That must needs be sport alone.
And those things do best please me
That befall prepost'rously.

[They step aside.]

Enter Lysander and Helena.

LYSANDER

Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?

Scorn and derision never come in tears.

Look when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,

In their nativity all truth appears.

How can these things in me seem scorn to you,

Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?

HELENA

You do advance your cunning more and more.

When truth kills truth, O devilish holy fray!

These vows are Hermia's. Will you give her o'er?

Weigh oath with oath and you will nothing weigh.

Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,

Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

LYSANDER

I had no judgment when to her I swore.

HELENA

Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.
LYSANDER
Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

DEMETERIUS, waking up
O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
That pure congealèd white, high Taurus’ snow,
Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold’st up thy hand. O, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

HELENA
O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment.
If you were civil and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so,
To vow and swear and superpraise my parts,
When, I am sure, you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals and love Hermia,
And now both rivals to mock Helena.
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
To conjure tears up in a poor maid’s eyes
With your derision! None of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin and extort
A poor soul’s patience, all to make you sport.

LYSANDER
You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so,
For you love Hermia; this you know I know.
And here with all goodwill, with all my heart,
In Hermia’s love I yield you up my part.
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love and will do till my death.
HELENA

Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep thy Hermia. I will none.
If e’er I loved her, all that love is gone.
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourned,
And now to Helen is it home returned,
There to remain.

LYSANDER

Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS

Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest to thy peril thou aby it dear.
Look where thy love comes. Yonder is thy dear.

Enter Hermia.

HERMIA, [to Lysander]

Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompense.
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

LYSANDER

Why should he stay whom love doth press to go?

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER

Lysander’s love, that would not let him bide,
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.
Why seek’st thou me? Could not this make thee
know
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

HERMIA

You speak not as you think. It cannot be.
HELENA

Lo, she is one of this confederacy!
Now I perceive they have conjoined all three
To fashion this false sport in spite of me.—
Injurious Hermia, most ungrateful maid,
Have you conspired, have you with these contrived,
To bait me with this foul derision?
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?
All schooldays’ friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one 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. So we grew together
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition,
Two lovely berries molded on one stem;
So with two seeming bodies but one heart,
Two of the first, [like] coats in heraldry,
Due but to one, and crownèd with one crest.
And will you rent our ancient love asunder,
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly; ’tis not maidenly.
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury.

HERMIA

I am amazèd at your words.
I scorn you not. It seems that you scorn me.

HELENA

Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me and praise my eyes and face,
And made your other love, Demetrius,
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,
To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,
Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this
To her he hates? And wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love (so rich within his soul)
And tender me, forsooth, affection,
But by your setting on, by your consent?
What though I be not so in grace as you,
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
But miserable most, to love unloved?
This you should pity rather than despise.

I understand not what you mean by this.

Ay, do. Persever, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,
Wink each at other, hold the sweet jest up.
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But fare you well. ’Tis partly my own fault,
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

Stay, gentle Helena. Hear my excuse,
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena.

O excellent!

Sweet, do not scorn her so.

If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

Thou canst compel no more than she entreat.
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak
Helen, I love thee. By my life, I do.
I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

DEMETRIUS
I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER
If thou say so, withdraw and prove it too.

DEMETRIUS
Quick, come.

HERMIA Lysander, whereto tends all this?

LYSANDER
Away, you Ethiop!

DEMETRIUS, to Hermia

No, no. He’ll
Seem to break loose. To Lysander. Take on as you
would follow,
But yet come not. You are a tame man, go!

LYSANDER, to Hermia

Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

HERMIA
Why are you grown so rude? What change is this,
Sweet love?

LYSANDER Thy love? Out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathèd med’cine! O, hated potion, hence!

HERMIA
Do you not jest?

HELENA Yes, sooth, and so do you.

LYSANDER Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

DEMETRIUS
I would I had your bond. For I perceive
A weak bond holds you. I’ll not trust your word.

LYSANDER
What? Should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I’ll not harm her so.
LYSANDER

Ay, by my life,
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt.
Be certain, nothing truer, ’tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

O me! [To Helena.] You juggler, you cankerblossom,
You thief of love! What, have you come by night
And stol’n my love’s heart from him?

Fine, ’tis faith.

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie, you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

“Puppet”? Why so? Ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urged her height,
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak!
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.
HELENA
I pray you, though you mock me, ‘gentlemen,’
Let her not hurt me. I was never curst;
I have no gift at all in shrewishness.
I am a right maid for my cowardice.
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

HERMIA
“Lower”? Hark, again!

HELENA
Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wronged you—
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.
He followed you; for love, I followed him.
But he hath chid me hence and threatened me
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too.
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back
And follow you no further. Let me go.
You see how simple and how fond I am.

HERMIA
Why, get you gone. Who is ’t that hinders you?

HELENA
A foolish heart that I leave here behind.

HERMIA
What, with Lysander?

HELENA
With Demetrius.

LYSANDER
Be not afraid. She shall not harm thee, Helena.

DEMETRIUS
No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

HELENA
O, when she is angry, she is keen and shrewd.
She was a vixen when she went to school,
And though she be but little, she is fierce.
HERMIA

"Little" again? Nothing but "low" and "little"?
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her.

LYSANDER

Get you gone, you dwarf,
You minimus of hind’ring knotgrass made,
You bead, you acorn—

DEMETRIUS

You are too officious
In her behalf that scorns your services.
Let her alone. Speak not of Helena.
Take not her part. For if thou dost intend
Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt aby it.

LYSANDER

Now she holds me not.

DEMETRIUS

"Follow"? Nay, I’ll go with thee, cheek by jowl.

[Demetrius and Lysander exit.]

HERMIA

You, mistress, all this coil is long of you.

[Helena retreats.]

Nay, go not back.

HELENA

I will not trust you, I,
Nor longer stay in your curst company.
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray.
My legs are longer though, to run away.

[She exits.]

HERMIA

I am amazed and know not what to say.

[She exits.]

OBERON, [to Robin]

This is thy negligence. Still thou mistak’st,
Or else committ’st thy knaveries willfully.

ROBIN

Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
By the Athenian garments he had on?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise
That I have ’nointed an Athenian’s eyes;
And so far am I glad it so did sort,
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

OBERON

Thou seest these lovers seek a place to fight.
Hie, therefore, Robin, overcast the night;
The starry welkin cover thou anon
With drooping fog as black as Acheron,
And lead these testy rivals so astray
As one come not within another’s way.
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue;
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong.
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius.
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
Till o’er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep.
Then crush this herb into Lysander’s eye,

[He gives a flower to Robin.]

Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
To take from thence all error with his might
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
When they next wake, all this derision
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision.
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
With league whose date till death shall never end.
While I in this affair do thee employ,
I’ll to my queen and beg her Indian boy;
And then I will her charmèd eye release
From monster’s view, and all things shall be peace.

ROBIN

My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night’s swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora’s harbinger,
At whose approach, ghosts wand’ring here and

there
Troop home to churchyards. Damned spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone.
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They willfully themselves exile from light
And must for aye consort with black-browed night.

OBERON

But we are spirits of another sort.
I with the Morning’s love have oft made sport
And, like a forester, the groves may tread
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessèd beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt-green streams.

But notwithstanding, haste! Make no delay.

We may effect this business yet ere day.  

[He exits.]

ROBIN

Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down.
I am feared in field and town.
Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one.

Enter Lysander.

LYSANDER

Where art thou, proud Demetrius? Speak thou now.

ROBIN, [in Demetrius’ voice]

Here, villain, drawn and ready. Where art thou?

LYSANDER        I will be with thee straight.

ROBIN, [in Demetrius’ voice] Follow me, then, to
plainer ground.  

[Lysander exits.]

Enter Demetrius.

DEMETRIUS      Lysander, speak again.

Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy
head?
ROBIN, *in Lysander's voice*

Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
And wilt not come? Come, recreant! Come, thou child!

I'll whip thee with a rod. He is defiled
That draws a sword on thee.

DEMETRIUS

Yea, art thou there?

ROBIN, *in Lysander's voice*

Follow my voice. We'll try no manhood here.

*They exit.*

*Enter Lysander.*

LYSANDER

He goes before me and still dares me on.
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.
The villain is much lighter-heeled than I.
I followed fast, but faster he did fly,
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,
And here will rest me. Come, thou gentle day,
For if but once thou show me thy gray light,
I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite.

*He lies down and sleeps.*

*Enter Robin and Demetrius.*

ROBIN, *in Lysander's voice*

Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why com'st thou not?

DEMETRIUS

Abide me, if thou dar'st, for well I wot
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,
And dar'st not stand nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now?

ROBIN, *in Lysander's voice*

Come hither. I am here.

DEMETRIUS

Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear
If ever I thy face by daylight see.
Now go thy way. Faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length on this cold bed.
By day’s approach look to be visited.

\[He\ \textit{lies down and sleeps.}\ 1

\textit{Enter Helena.}

\begin{verbatim}
HELENA
 O weary night, O long and tedious night,
 Abate thy hours! Shine, comforts, from the east,
 That I may back to Athens by daylight
 From these that my poor company detest.
 And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow’s eye,
 Steal me awhile from mine own company.
\[She\ \textit{lies down and sleeps.}\ 2
\end{verbatim}

\textit{ROBIN}

Yet but three? Come one more.
Two of both kinds makes up four.
Here she comes, curst and sad.
Cupid is a knavish lad
Thus to make poor females mad.

\[Enter Hermia.\ 3

\begin{verbatim}
HERMIA
 Never so weary, never so in woe,
 Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,
 I can no further crawl, no further go.
 My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
 Here will I rest me till the break of day.
 Heavens shield Lysander if they mean a fray!
\[She\ \textit{lies down and sleeps.}\ 4
\end{verbatim}

\textit{ROBIN}

On the ground
Sleep sound.
I’ll apply
\[To\ \textit{your eye,}\ 5
Gentle lover, remedy.
Robin applies the nectar to Lysander’s eyes.¹

When thou wak’st,
Thou tak’st
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady’s eye.
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.

He exits.¹
Scene 1

With the four lovers still asleep onstage, enter Titania, Queen of Fairies, and Bottom and Fairies, and Oberon, the King, behind them unseen by those onstage.

TITANIA

Come, sit thee down upon this flow’ry bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick muskroses in thy sleek smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

BOTTOM Where’s Peaseblossom?

PEASEBLOSSOM Ready.

BOTTOM Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where’s Monsieur Cobweb?

COBWEB Ready.

BOTTOM Monsieur Cobweb, good monsieur, get you your weapons in your hand and kill me a red-hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle, and, good monsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, monsieur, and, good monsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not; I would be loath to have you overflown with a honey-bag, signior. Cobweb exits.

BOTTOM Where’s Monsieur Mustardseed?

MUSTARDSEED Ready.

121
A Midsummer Night’s Dream

ACT 4. SC. 1

BOTTOM    Give me your neaf, Monsieur Mustardseed.  
           Pray you, leave your courtesy, good monsieur.
MUSTARDSEED    What’s your will?
BOTTOM    Nothing, good monsieur, but to help Cavalry Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber’s, monsieur, for methinks I am marvels hairy about the face. And I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

TITANIA  
What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?
BOTTOM    I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let’s have the tongs and the bones.

TITANIA  
Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.
BOTTOM    Truly, a peck of provender. I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay. Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

TITANIA  
I have a venturous fairy that shall seek The squirrel’s hoard and fetch thee new nuts.
BOTTOM    I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me; I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

TITANIA  
Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.—
Fairies, begone, and be all ways away.

[Fairies exit.]

So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle Gently entwist; the female ivy so Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.

O, how I love thee! How I dote on thee!

[Bottom and Titania sleep.]

Enter Robin Goodfellow.

OBERON    Welcome, good Robin. Seest thou this sweet sight?
Her dotage now I do begin to pity.
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,
Seeking sweet favors for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her and fall out with her.
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flouriets’ eyes,
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.
When I had at my pleasure taunted her,
And she in mild terms begged my patience,
I then did ask of her her changeling child,
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in Fairyland.
And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes.
And, gentle Puck, take this transformèd scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain,
That he, awaking when the other do,
May all to Athens back again repair
And think no more of this night’s accidents
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the Fairy Queen.

"He applies the nectar to her eyes."

Be as thou wast wont to be.
See as thou wast wont to see.
Dian’s bud o’er Cupid’s flower
Hath such force and blessèd power.

Now, my Titania, wake you, my sweet queen.

TITANIA, 'waking'

My Oberon, what visions have I seen!
Methought I was enamored of an ass.

OBERON

There lies your love.

TITANIA

How came these things to pass?

O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!
OBERON
Silence awhile.—Robin, take off this head.—
Titania, music call; and strike more dead
Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

TITANIA
Music, ho, music such as charmeth sleep!
Now, when thou wak’st, with thine own fool’s eyes peep.

ROBIN
[removing the ass-head from Bottom]

OBERON
Sound music.
Come, my queen, take hands with me,
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

[Music.]
[Titania and Oberon dance.]

Now thou and I are new in amity,
And will tomorrow midnight solemnly
Dance in Duke Theseus’ house triumphantly,
And bless it to all fair prosperity.
There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

ROBIN
Fairy king, attend and mark.
I do hear the morning lark.

OBERON
Then, my queen, in silence sad
Trip we after night’s shade.
We the globe can compass soon,
Swifter than the wand’ring moon.

TITANIA
Come, my lord, and in our flight
Tell me how it came this night
That I sleeping here was found
With these mortals on the ground.

[Oberon, Robin, and Titania exit.

Wind horn. Enter Theseus and all his train,
[Hippolyta, Egeus.]
A Midsummer Night’s Dream

ACT 4. SC. 1

THESEUS

Go, one of you, find out the Forester.
For now our observation is performed,
And, since we have the vaward of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.
Uncouple in the western valley; let them go.
Dispatch, I say, and find the Forester.

[A Servant exits.]

HIPPOLYTA

Go, one of you, find out the Forester.
For now our observation is performed,
And, since we have the vaward of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.
Uncouple in the western valley; let them go.
Dispatch, I say, and find the Forester.

We will, fair queen, up to the mountain’s top
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When in a wood of Crete they bayed the bear
With hounds of Sparta. Never did I hear
Such gallant chiding, for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seemed all one mutual cry. I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flewed, so sanded; and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-kneed, and dewlapped like Thessalian bulls;
Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tunable
Was never holloed to, nor cheered with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly.
Judge when you hear.—But soft! What nymphs are these?

EGEUS

My lord, this [is] my daughter here asleep,
And this Lysander; this Demetrius is,
This Helena, old Nedar’s Helena.
I wonder of their being here together.
THESEUS

No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May, and hearing our intent,
Came here in grace of our solemnity.

But speak, Egeus. Is not this the day
That Hermia should give answer of her choice?

EGEUS  It is, my lord.

THESEUS

Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

[A Servant exits.]

Shout within. Wind horns. They all start up.

THESEUS

Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past.
Begin these woodbirds but to couple now?

[Demetrius, Helena, Hermia, and Lysander kneel.]

LYSANDER

Pardon, my lord.

I pray you all, stand up.

[They rise.]

THESEUS

I know you two are rival enemies.
How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy
To sleep by hate and fear no enmity?

LYSANDER

My lord, I shall reply amazèdly,
Half sleep, half waking. But as yet, I swear,
I cannot truly say how I came here.

But, as I think—for truly would I speak,
And now I do bethink me, so it is:
I came with Hermia hither. Our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,
Without the peril of the Athenian law—

EGEUS

Enough, enough!—My lord, you have enough.
I beg the law, the law upon his head.
They would have stol’n away.—They would,

Demetrius,
Thereby to have defeated you and me:
You of your wife and me of my consent,
Of my consent that she should be your wife.

DEMETRIUS
My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood,
And I in fury hither followed them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power
(But by some power it is) my love to Hermia,
Melted as the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gaud
Which in my childhood I did dote upon,
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betrothed ere I saw Hermia.
But like a sickness did I loathe this food.
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will forevermore be true to it.

THESEUS
Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.—
Egeus, I will overbear your will,
For in the temple by and by, with us,
These couples shall eternally be knit.—
And, for the morning now is something worn,
Our purposed hunting shall be set aside.
Away with us to Athens. Three and three,
We’ll hold a feast in great solemnity.
Come, Hippolyta.

’TTheseus and his train,
including Hippolyta and Egeus, exit.’

DEMETRIUS
These things seem small and undistinguishable,
Like far-off mountains turnèd into clouds.
HERMIA
Methinks I see these things with parted eye,
When everything seems double.
HELENA
So methinks.

And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,
Mine own and not mine own.

DEMETRIUS
Are you sure
That we are awake? It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think
The Duke was here and bid us follow him?

HERMIA
Yea, and my father.

HELENA
And Hippolyta.

LYSANDER
And he did bid us follow to the temple.

DEMETRIUS
Why, then, we are awake. Let’s follow him,
And by the way let us recount our dreams.

"Lovers exit."

BOTTOM, "waking up"
When my cue comes, call me,
and I will answer. My next is “Most fair Pyramus.”
Hey-ho! Peter Quince! Flute the bellows-mender!
Snout the tinker! Starveling! God’s my life! Stolen
hence and left me asleep! I have had a most rare
vision. I have had a dream past the wit of man to say
what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about
"to" expound this dream. Methought I was—there
is no man can tell what. Methought I was and
methought I had—but man is but "a patched" fool if
he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of
man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen,
man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to
conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream
was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this
dream. It shall be called “Bottom’s Dream” because
it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the
latter end of a play, before the Duke. Peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death.

"He exits."

Scene 2

Enter Quince, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.

Quince Have you sent to Bottom’s house? Is he come home yet?

"Starveling" He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.

Flute If he come not, then the play is marred. It goes not forward, doth it?

Quince It is not possible. You have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

Flute No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraftman in Athens.

Quince Yea, and the best person too, and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flute You must say “paragon.” A “paramour” is (God bless us) a thing of naught.

Enter Snug the joiner.

Snug Masters, the Duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married. If our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

Flute O, sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life. He could not have ‘scape sixpence a day. An the Duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I’ll be hanged. He would have deserved it. Sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing!

Enter Bottom.
BOTTOM    Where are these lads? Where are these hearts?
QUINCE    Bottom! O most courageous day! O most happy hour!
BOTTOM    Masters, I am to discourse wonders. But ask me not what; for, if I tell you, I am not true Athenian. I will tell you everything right as it fell out.
QUINCE    Let us hear, sweet Bottom.
BOTTOM    Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is that the Duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps. Meet presently at the palace. Every man look o’er his part. For the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisbe have clean linen, and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion’s claws.
And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath, and I do not doubt but to hear them say it is a sweet comedy. No more words. Away! Go, away!

[They exit.]
HIPPOLYTA

'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

THESEUS

More strange than true. I never may believe
These antique fables nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact.
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold:
That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to Earth, from Earth to
heaven,
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy.
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

HIPPOLYTA
But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigured so together,
More witnesseth than fancy’s images
And grows to something of great constancy,
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

Enter Lovers: Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena.

THESEUS
Here come the lovers full of joy and mirth.—
Joy, gentle friends! Joy and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts!

LYSANDER
More than to us
Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

THESEUS
Come now, what masques, what dances shall we
have
To wear away this long age of three hours
Between our after-supper and bedtime?
Where is our usual manager of mirth?
What revels are in hand? Is there no play
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
Call Philostrate.

PHILOSTRATE, coming forward
Here, mighty Theseus.

THESEUS
Say what abridgment have you for this evening,
What masque, what music? How shall we beguile
The lazy time if not with some delight?

PHILOSTRATE, giving Theseus a paper
There is a brief how many sports are ripe.
Make choice of which your Highness will see first.
THESEUS

“The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.”
We’ll none of that. That have I told my love
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.
“The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.”
That is an old device, and it was played
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

“The thrice-three Muses mourning for the death
Of learning, late deceased in beggary.”
That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.
“A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisbe, very tragical mirth.”
“Merry” and “tragical”? “Tedious” and “brief”?
That is hot ice and wondrous strange snow!
How shall we find the concord of this discord?

PHILOSTRATE

A play there is, my lord, some ten words long
(Which is as brief as I have known a play),
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious; for in all the play,
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.
And tragical, my noble lord, it is.
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself,
Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

THESEUS

What are they that do play it?

PHILOSTRATE

Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
Which never labored in their minds till now,
And now have toiled their unbreathed memories
With this same play, against your nuptial.
A Midsummer Night’s Dream

ACT 5. SC. 1

THESEUS
And we will hear it.

PHILOSTRATE
No, my noble lord,
It is not for you. I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world,
Unless you can find sport in their intents,
Extremely stretched and coned with cruel pain
To do you service.

THESEUS
I will hear that play,
For never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in—and take your places, ladies.

HIPPOLYTA
I love not to see wretchedness o’ercharged,
And duty in his service perishing.

THESEUS
Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

HIPPOLYTA
He says they can do nothing in this kind.

THESEUS
The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake;
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
Takes it in might, not merit.

Where I have come, great clerks have purposèd
To greet me with premeditated welcomes,

Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
Make periods in the midst of sentences,

Throttle their practiced accent in their fears,
And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
Out of this silence yet I picked a welcome,

In the modesty of fearful duty,
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least speak most, to my capacity.

"Enter Philostrate."

PHILOSTRATE
So please your Grace, the Prologue is addressed.
THESEUS Let him approach.

Enter the Prologue.

PROLOGUE
If we offend, it is with our goodwill.
   That you should think we come not to offend,
But with goodwill. To show our simple skill,
   That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider, then, we come but in despite.
   We do not come, as minding to content you,
Our true intent is. All for your delight
   We are not here. That you should here repent
you,
The actors are at hand, and, by their show,
   You shall know all that you are like to know.
"Prologue exits."

THESEUS This fellow doth not stand upon points.
LYSANDER He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt;
   he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is
not enough to speak, but to speak true.
HIPPOLYTA Indeed he hath played on this prologue like
   a child on a recorder—a sound, but not in
government.
THESEUS His speech was like a tangled chain—nothing
impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

"Enter Pyramus (Bottom), and Thisbe (Flute), and
Wall (Snout), and Moonshine (Starveling), and Lion
(Snug), and Prologue (Quince)."

QUINCE, as Prologue
Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show.
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
This man is Pyramus, if you would know.
This beauteous lady Thisbe is certain.
This man with lime and roughcast doth present
“Wall,” that vile wall which did these lovers
sunder;
And through Wall’s chink, poor souls, they are
content
To whisper, at the which let no man wonder.
This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth “Moonshine,” for, if you will know,
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
To meet at Ninus’ tomb, there, there to woo.
This grisly beast (which “Lion” hight by name)
The trusty Thisbe coming first by night
Did scare away or rather did affright;
And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisbe’s mantle slain.
Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast.
And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain
At large discourse, while here they do remain.

I wonder if the lion be to speak.
No wonder, my lord. One lion may when
many asses do.

Lion, Thisbe, Moonshine, [and Prologue] exit.

In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one [Snout] by name, present a wall;
And such a wall as I would have you think
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe,
Did whisper often, very secretly.
This loam, this roughcast, and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall. The truth is so.
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

THESEUS Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

DEMETRIUS It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord.

THESEUS Pyramus draws near the wall. Silence.

BOTTOM, as Pyramus

O grim-looked night! O night with hue so black!
O night, which ever art when day is not!
O night! O night! Alack, alack, alack!
I fear my Thisbe’s promise is forgot.
And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
That stand’st between her father’s ground and mine,
Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
Show me thy chink to blink through with mine eyne.

Thanks, courteous wall. Jove shield thee well for this.

But what see I? No Thisbe do I see.
O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss,
Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

THESEUS The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

BOTTOM No, in truth, sir, he should not. “Deceiving me” is Thisbe’s cue. She is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

Enter Thisbe (Flute).

FLUTE, as Thisbe

O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans
For parting my fair Pyramus and me.
My cherry lips have often kissed thy stones,
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.\

**BOTTOM, as Pyramus**

I see a voice! Now will I to the chink
To spy an I can hear my Thisbe’s face.
Thisbe?

**FLUTE, as Thisbe**

My love! Thou art my love, I think.

**BOTTOM, as Pyramus**

Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover’s grace,
And, like Limander, am I trusty still.

**FLUTE, as Thisbe**

And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.

**BOTTOM, as Pyramus**

Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

**FLUTE, as Thisbe**

As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

**BOTTOM, as Pyramus**

O kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.

**FLUTE, as Thisbe**

I kiss the wall’s hole, not your lips at all.

**BOTTOM, as Pyramus**

Wilt thou at Ninny’s tomb meet me straightway?

**FLUTE, as Thisbe**

’Tide life, ’tide death, I come without delay.

**[Bottom and Flute exit.]**

**SNOUT, as Wall**

Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so,
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.  

**[He exits.]**

**THESEUS**

Now is the wall down between the two neighbors.

**DEMETRIUS**

No remedy, my lord, when walls are so willful to hear without warning.

**HIPPOLYTA**

This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

**THESEUS**

The best in this kind are but shadows, and
the worst are no worse, if imagination amend
them.

HIPPOLYTA   It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs.

THESEUS   If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

Enter Lion  \( \text{(Snug)} \) and Moonshine  \( \text{(Starveling)} \).

**SNUG, as Lion**

You ladies, you whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.

Then know that I, as Snug the joiner, am
A lion fell, nor else no lion’s dam;
For if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, ’twere pity on my life.

**THESEUS**   A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

**DEMETRIUS**   The very best at a beast, my lord, that e’er I saw.

**LYSANDER**   This lion is a very fox for his valor.

**THESEUS**   True, and a goose for his discretion.

**DEMETRIUS**   Not so, my lord, for his valor cannot carry his discretion, and the fox carries the goose.

**THESEUS**   His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valor, for the goose carries not the fox. It is well.

Leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the Moon.

**STARVELING, as Moonshine**

This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present.

**DEMETRIUS**   He should have worn the horns on his head.

**THESEUS**   He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.
STARVELING, as Moonshine
This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present.
Myself the man i’ th’ moon do seem to be.

THESEUS  This is the greatest error of all the rest; the
man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else
“the man i’ th’ moon”?

DEMETRIUS  He dares not come there for the candle,
for you see, it is already in snuff.

HIPPOLYTA  I am aweary of this moon. Would he would
change.

THESEUS  It appears by his small light of discretion that
he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason,
we must stay the time.

LYSANDER  Proceed, Moon.

STARVELING, as Moonshine  All that I have to say is to tell
you that the lanthorn is the moon, I the man i’ th’
moon, this thornbush my thornbush, and this dog
my dog.

Why, all these should be in the lanthorn,
for all these are in the moon. But silence. Here
comes Thisbe.

Enter Thisbe (Flute).

FLUTE, as Thisbe
This is old Ninny’s tomb. Where is my love?

SNUG, as Lion  O!

The Lion roars. Thisbe runs off,

dropping her mantle.

DEMETRIUS  Well roared, Lion.

THESEUS  Well run, Thisbe.

HIPPOLYTA  Well shone, Moon. Truly, the Moon shines
with a good grace.

Lion worries the mantle.

THESEUS  Well moused, Lion.

Enter Pyramus (Bottom).
A Midsummer Night's Dream

ACT 5. SC. 1

DEMETERIUS And then came Pyramus.

LYSANDER And so the lion vanished.

BOTTOM, as Pyramus

Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams.
I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright,
For by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight.—
But stay! O spite!
But mark, poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here!
Eyes, do you see!
How can it be!
O dainty duck! O dear!
Thy mantle good—
What, stained with blood?
Approach, ye Furies fell!
O Fates, come, come,
Cut thread and thrum,
Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

Theseus This passion, and the death of a dear friend,
would go near to make a man look sad.

HIPPOLYTA Beshrew my heart but I pity the man.

BOTTOM, as Pyramus

O, wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame,
Since lion vile hath here deflowered my dear,
Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame
That lived, that loved, that liked, that looked with
cheer?
Come, tears, confound!
Out, sword, and wound
The pap of Pyramus;
Ay, that left pap,
Where heart doth hop.  
[Pyramus stabs himself.]
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.
Now am I dead;
Now am I fled;  
My soul is in the sky.  
Tongue, lose thy light!
Moon, take thy flight!
Now die, die, die, die, die.  

["Moonshine exits.""]  
["Pyramus falls.""]

DEMETRIUS No die, but an ace for him, for he is but one.
LYSANDER Less than an ace, man, for he is dead, he is nothing.

THESEUS With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover and yet prove an ass.

HIPPOLYTA How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

THESEUS She will find him by starlight.

["Enter Thisbe (Flute).""]

Here she comes, and her passion ends the play.

HIPPOLYTA Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus. I hope she will be brief.

DEMETRIUS A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better: he for a man, God warrant us; she for a woman, God bless us.

LYSANDER She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

DEMETRIUS And thus she means, videlicet—

Asleep, my love?
What, dead, my dove?
O Pyramus, arise!
Speak, speak. Quite dumb?
Dead? Dead? A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,
These yellow cowslip cheeks
Are gone, are gone!

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Lovers, make moan;
His eyes were green as leeks.
   O Sisters Three,
   Come, come to me
With hands as pale as milk.
   Lay them in gore,
   Since you have shore
With shears his thread of silk.
   Tongue, not a word!
   Come, trusty sword,
   Come, blade, my breast imbrue!

   ❧Thisbe stabs herself.❧
   And farewell, friends.
   Thus Thisbe ends.
   ❧Thisbe falls.❧

   ❧Bottom and Flute arise.❧

   ❧Thisbe stabs herself.❧

THESEUS  Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.
DEMETRIUS  Ay, and Wall too.

   ❧Bottom and Flute arise.❧

   ❧Bottom.❧  No, I assure you, the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the Epilogue or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company?

   ❧Thisbe stabs herself.❧
   No epilogue, I pray you. For your play needs no excuse. Never excuse. For when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe’s garter, it would have been a fine tragedy; and so it is, truly, and very notably discharged. But, come, your Bergomask. Let your epilogue alone.

   ❧Dance, and the players exit.❧

   ❧Bottom.❧  The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.
   Lovers, to bed! ’Tis almost fairy time.
   I fear we shall oversleep the coming morn
   As much as we this night have overwatched.

   ❧Bottom.❧  Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.
   ❧Bottom.❧  Ay, and Wall too.
   ❧Bottom.❧  No epilogue, I pray you. For your play needs no excuse. Never excuse. For when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe’s garter, it would have been a fine tragedy; and so it is, truly, and very notably discharged. But, come, your Bergomask. Let your epilogue alone.

   ❧Dance, and the players exit.❧

   ❧Bottom.❧  The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.
   Lovers, to bed! ’Tis almost fairy time.
   I fear we shall oversleep the coming morn
   As much as we this night have overwatched.
This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled
The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed. 385
A fortnight hold we this solemnity
In nightly revels and new jollity.  They exit.

Enter Robin Goodfellow.]

ROBIN

Now the hungry [lion] roars,
   And the wolf [behows] the moon,
Whilst the heavy plowman snores,
   All with weary task fordone. 390
Now the wasted brands do glow,
   Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
   In remembrance of a shroud. 395
Now it is the time of night
   That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite
   In the church-way paths to glide.
And we fairies, that do run
   By the triple Hecate’s team
From the presence of the sun,
   Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic. Not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallowed house. 400
I am sent with broom before,
To sweep the dust behind the door.

Enter [Oberon and Titania,]
King and Queen of Fairies,
with all their train.

OBERON

Through the house give glimmering light,
   By the dead and drowsy fire.
Every elf and fairy sprite,
   Hop as light as bird from brier,
And this ditty after me,
Sing and dance it trippingly.
TITANIA

First rehearse your song by rote,
To each word a warbling note.
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
Will we sing and bless this place.

OBERON

Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessèd be,
And the issue there create
Ever shall be fortunate.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be,
And the blots of Nature’s hand
Shall not in their issue stand.
Never mole, harelip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious, such as are
Despisèd in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.
With this field-dew consecrate
Every fairy take his gait,
And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace, with sweet peace.
And the owner of it blest,
Ever shall in safety rest.
Trip away. Make no stay.
Meet me all by break of day.

ROBIN

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this and all is mended:
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend.
If you pardon, we will mend.
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearnèd luck
Now to 'scape the serpent’s tongue,
We will make amends ere long.
Else the Puck a liar call.
So good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

He exits.
Demetrius: Tragic Hero or Misunderstood Jerk? Discuss.

Anyone tackling *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* has to, at some point, tackle the thorny issue of Demetrius. At the beginning of the play, he is betrothed to Hermia, with her father’s approval, despite having “made love to Nedar’s daughter, Helena” (I.i.107). By the end of the play, however, he is married to Helena and vows that he “will for evermore true to” her” (IV.i.175). We have three paired sets of newlyweds, but Demetrius is the only character with an object of desire that changes (and stays changed) over the course of the play, the only one who loves a different person at the end than he does at the beginning.

So the question is this: despite the happy (or at least joyous) ending of the play, is the fate of Demetrius one to merit pity or joy?

When he first speaks to Hermia, his are not words of love, but of law, of privilege:

Relent, sweet Hermia, and, Lysander, yield
Thy crazed title to my certain right.
He simply wants what has been promised to him, a marriage. There is no discussion of love. Even when confronted with the revelation of his past liaison with Helena, he says nothing; he does not (cannot?) deny it. When Helena speaks of Demetrius’ feelings, she only states that “Demetrius loves (Hermia’s) fair” (I.i.182); even she knows that it’s not Hermia that he loves, but what makes her fair (some critics attribute this to complexion or race, but it could also be money, power, status). Already, we begin to wonder of his true loyalties.

When we see him with Helena in pursuit, he tells her,

I love thee not; therefore pursue me not.  
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?  
The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.  
Thou told'st me they were stolen unto this wood;  
And here am I, and wood within this wood,  
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.  
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

-II.i.188-194

While he tells Helena that he doesn’t love her, neither does he say that he loves Hermia. Hermia may “slayeth” him, we also get the feeling that all of this stems from a perceived pre-marital ownership, as he refers to her only as “my Hermia.” Even what he continues to tell Helena puts into question his emotional state:

Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?  
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth  
Tell you, I do not, nor I cannot love you?  
...  
Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit,  
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

-II.i.199-201, 211-212

While he does state that he does not love Helena, he expands upon that, saying he “cannot love” her, perhaps because of his marital agreement. Does he feel remorse for
this? Could this be the reason why he is “sick when (he does) look on” her?

Later, when Theseus finds the lovers in the woods, and Egeus calls Demetrius to take what is rightfully his (Hermia), Demetrius states:

My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood,
And I in fury hither followed them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power—
But by some power it is--my love to Hermia,
Melted as the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gaud
Which in my childhood I did dote upon,
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betrothed ere I saw Hermia,
But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food;
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

— IV.i.159-175

Yes, he is still under the spell of the pansy potion, but there is nothing in the speech that is false. He had been “betrothed” to Helena before Hermia (the result of his having “made love” to Helena?). He admits to once having a love for Hermia, but he now seems to equate that love to “an idle gaud // Which in (his) childhood (he) did dote upon,” in a reference to 1 Corinthians 13:11

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

But now, he says, he has returned to his “natural taste.” He has become a man.

Could the promise of riches, status, and marriage be the socially acceptable version of the pansy potion, making a boy “madly dote” (II.i.171) on that which normally makes no
difference whatsoever to a man? Could this then mean that the pansy potion has “corrected” the effects of Egeus’ “prestige potion” of a marriage arrangement?

Some have argued that the ending of *Midsummer* is actually sad and tragic, in that Demetrius is no longer feeling his true feelings (since he’s still under the pansy potion’s effects). Sure, it can be played that way. Or it can be simply ignored (as many productions do). But I think there’s another way to play this: Demetrius first loved Helena, then abandoned that love for the promise of status and money, and only by the pansy potion is returned to his “natural taste.” And that way the ending truly is magical, joyous... and happy.

3 Replies to “Demetrius: Tragic Hero or Misunderstood Jerk? Discuss.”

**heralde7**

March 6, 2015 at 9:20 AM

I really enjoyed your analysis. It’s typical for academic types to approach the ending of *Midsummer* with skepticism. But optimism is equally valid. When Demetrius is declaring his love for Helena at the end, it’s not in the loopy manner he (and Lysander) had earlier. As you say: This time he, quite reasonably, considers his past choices when sorting out his feelings for Helena and Hermia. That gives his declaration of love a ring of truth. Rather than remaining in a dream, you can argue the dream woke him up to reality.
“the dream woke him up to reality”... what a beautifully poetic way of putting it!

Thanks, lol. It also helps that Lysander mentions Demetrius and Helena had an affair at the start of the story. It’s not a revelation that comes out of nowhere at the end.

It’s like in Wizard of Oz film, where the farmhands show up in the real world and the dream world, to give it all a sense of reality.

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Teacher: Why I don’t want to assign Shakespeare anymore (even though he’s in the Common Core)

By Valerie Strauss

June 13, 2015 at 3:00 a.m. CDT

A new report on the teaching of Shakespeare in higher education found that English majors at the vast majority of the country’s most prestigious colleges and universities are not now required to take an in-depth Shakespeare course — but the Bard remains a fixture in high school English classes. In fact, studying Shakespeare is a requirement in the Common Core English Language Arts standards, mentioned in specific standards throughout high school.

For example, in ninth and tenth grades:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.9
Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

And in eleventh and twelfth grades:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly rich, precise, and beautiful (Include Shakespeare and all other authors).
Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

Shakespeare, of course, is seen by many as the greatest writer in the English language and central to the Western canon. The idea of not teaching Shakespeare works — with their insights into the human condition — is anathema to many English teachers. But not all of them. Some wish they could stop teaching William Shakespeare’s works altogether. One of those teachers is Dana Dusbiber, a veteran teacher at Luther Burbank High School. Luther Burbank is the largest inner-city school in Sacramento, California, with all students coming from low-income homes and a majority of them minorities. In this post, she explains why she doesn’t want to teach Shakespeare to Luther Burbank (or any) students. (You can read a response to her from another English teacher here.)

[Skipping Shakespeare? Yes, English majors can often bypass the Bard]

By Dana Dusbiber

I am a high school English teacher. I am not supposed to dislike Shakespeare. But I
do. And not only do I dislike Shakespeare because of my own personal disinterest in reading stories written in an early form of the English language that I cannot always easily navigate, but also because there is a WORLD of really exciting literature out there that better speaks to the needs of my very ethnically-diverse and wonderfully curious modern-day students.

I do not believe that I am “cheating” my students because we do not read Shakespeare. I do not believe that a long-dead, British guy is the only writer who can teach my students about the human condition. I do not believe that not viewing “Romeo and Juliet” or any other modern adaptation of a Shakespeare play will make my students less able to go out into the world and understand language or human behavior. Mostly, I do not believe I should do something in the classroom just because it has “always been done that way.”
decided upon so long ago and do it without question. I am sad that we don’t believe enough in ourselves as professionals to challenge the way that it has “always been done.” I am sad that we don’t reach beyond our own often narrow beliefs about how young people become literate to incorporate new research on how teenagers learn, and a belief that our students should be excited about what they read — and that may often mean that we need to find the time to let them choose their own literature.

I was an English major. I am a voracious reader. I have enjoyed reading some of the classics. And while I appreciate that many people enjoy re-reading texts that they have read multiple times, I enjoy reading a wide range of literature written by a wide range of ethnically-diverse writers who tell stories about the human experience as it is experienced today. Shakespeare lived in a pretty small world. It might now be appropriate for us to acknowledge him as chronicler of life as he saw it 450 years ago and leave it at that.

What I worry about is that as long as we continue to cling to ONE (white) MAN’S view of life as he lived it so long ago, we (perhaps unwittingly) promote the notion that other cultural perspectives are less important. In the 25 years that I have been a secondary teacher, I have heard countless times, from respected teachers (mostly white), that they will ALWAYS teach Shakespeare, because our students need Shakespeare and his teachings on the human condition.
So I ask, why not teach the oral tradition out of Africa, which includes an equally relevant commentary on human behavior? Why not teach translations of early writings or oral storytelling from Latin America or Southeast Asia other parts of the world? Many, many of our students come from these languages and traditions. Why do our students not deserve to study these “other” literatures with equal time and value? And if time is the issue in our classrooms, perhaps we no longer have the time to study the Western canon that so many of us know and hold dear.

Here then, is my argument: If we only teach students of color, as I have been fortunate to do my entire career, then it is far past the time for us to dispense with our Eurocentric presentation of the literary world. Conversely, if we only teach white students, it is our imperative duty to open them up to a world of diversity through literature that they may never encounter anywhere else in their lives. I admit that this proposal, that we leave Shakespeare out of the English curriculum entirely, will offend many.

But if now isn’t the time to break some school rules and think about how to bring literature of color to our student’s lives, when will that time be?

Let’s let Shakespeare rest in peace, and start a new discussion about middle and high school right-of-passage reading and literature study.

—

Here’s a response:

Teacher: Why it is ridiculous not to teach Shakespeare