

A Midsummer Night's Dream: Overview 8.1

Characters	
1. Oberon	The king of the fairies.
2. Titania	The queen of the fairies.
3. Puck	Also known as Robin Goodfellow, Puck is Oberon's jester. He is a mischievous fairy who likes to play tricks on humans.
4. Lysander	He is in love with Hermia but cannot marry her because her father doesn't approve. He becomes the victim of misapplied magic.
5. Demetrius	Initially he loves Hermia and wants to marry her but she does not love him back.
6. Hermia	Egeus' daughter who is in love with Lysander and is best friends with Helena.
7. Helena	She is in love with Demetrius but lacks confidence.
8. Egeus	Hermia's father. He is very strict and wants her to marry Demetrius, not Lysander.
9. Theseus	The Duke of Athens. He is engaged to Hippolyta and represents power and order.
10. Hippolyta	The Queen of the Amazons. She is engaged to Theseus.
11. Bottom	He is a weaver and is part of The Mechanicals. A magic trick leads Titania to fall in love with him.

Context	
1. Ancient Athens, Greece	
2. Patriarchy	Legally, women were the possessions of men , so Renaissance fathers and husbands often treated their daughters and wives as objects to be used as they saw fit.
3. Fairies and Folklore	

Themes	
1. Love	The play is all about love going out of balance. Hermia loves Lysander, Lysander loves Hermia, Helena loves Demetrius, and Demetrius loves Hermia instead of Helena.
2. Magic	Shakespeare uses magic both to embody the almost supernatural power of love (symbolized by the love potion) and to create a surreal world.
3. Dreams	Dreams are linked to the bizarre, magical mishaps in the forest. The theme helps to attempt to explain bizarre events. At the end of the play, Puck extends the idea of dreams to the audience members, saying that, if they have been offended by the play, they should remember it as nothing more than a dream.
4. Jealousy	Helena begins the play feeling jealous of Hermia, who has managed to snag two men. Helena loves Demetrius, who in turn feels jealous of his rival for Hermia's affections, Lysander. When misplaced fairy mischief leads Lysander into an amorous pursuit of Helena, the event drives Hermia into her own jealous rage.

Key Vocabulary	
1. Subvert	To undermine power and authority.
2. Obedience	Compliance with an order, request, or law or submission to another's authority.
3. Patriarchy	A society in which men hold the power.
4. Soliloquy	An act of speaking one's thoughts aloud.
5. Unrequited love	Love that is one-sided, not returned.
6. Ethereal	Extremely delicate and light in a way that seems not to be of this world.
7. Mesmerising	To capture the complete attention of.
8. Dramatic Irony	When the audience knows more than the characters.
9. Hyperbole	Exaggeration
10. Superstition	A belief in the supernatural, especially about good and bad luck.
11. Motif	A repeated image or idea.

A Midsummer Night's Dream 8.2

Plot	
1. Act 1.1	Theseus and Hippolyta are talking about their wedding. Egeus is upset because his daughter Hermia refuses to marry Demetrius - she wants to marry Lysander. Lysander and Hermia devise a plan to run away. Hermia tells Helena about the plan but she decides to go to Demetrius.
2. Act 1.2	The 'Mechanicals' meet to rehearse a play. Their aim is to practice and perform the play on Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding night.
3. Act 2.1	Puck meets with another fairy who serves Titania. Oberon and Titania then arrive and she accuses him of loving other women and of following her around. Titania explains she promised the boy's mother she would look after him and will not give him up. Oberon then sends Puck to find a flower called 'love-in-idleness'. He plans to use it on Titania. Puck sees Demetrius and Helena arguing in the woods. He decides to use the juice from the flower to help Helena.
4. Act 2.2	Whilst Titania is sleeping, Oberon puts the juice from the flower in her eyes. Puck finds a sleeping Lysander and mistakes him for Demetrius. He puts the juice in his eyes by mistake. Helena arrives and Lysander wakes up, immediately falling in love with her. Helena thinks he is making fun of her. When Hermia wakes up she is shocked to find Lysander has gone and goes in search of him.
5. Act 3.1	The mechanicals meet in the woods for their next rehearsal. Whilst Bottom is preparing, Puck stumbles upon the group and uses his own magic to transform Bottom's head into the head of an 'ass' or donkey. Bottom's singing accidentally wakes Titania, who was sleeping nearby, and as she opens her eyes the first thing she sees is Bottom. She falls in love with him.
6. Act 3.2	Oberon realises Puck's mistake with Lysander and orders him to find Helena. He puts the juice in the eyes of Demetrius. When he wakes he falls in love with Helena. Helena thinks the men are making fun of her and then men start arguing. Hermia arrives and is confused. Hermia and Helena argue. Oberon confronts Puck and tells him to put everything right.

7. 4.1	- Oberon gives Titania the antidote to remove her from the magic spell. Puck then takes away Bottom's transformed head and returns him to normal. - Theseus and his party find the four lovers sleeping on the ground in the woods. - Lysander explains how he and Hermia had tried to run away and is interrupted by Egeus who remind Theseus of the law. - Demetrius announces that he now loves Helena and explains how his feelings have changed and that he no longer desires Hermia. Theseus declares that the couples will get married. - Once everyone has left, Bottom wakes up and declares he has had a bizarre dream.
8. 4.2	- The mechanicals have been searching for Bottom as he hasn't returned from the woods and they are worried that they can't perform without him. - Bottom suddenly appears. When Quince asks him to tell them, Bottom doesn't tell them about what happened to him in the woods but that they need to get their things ready and be ready to perform their play.
9. 5.1	Hippolyta and Theseus get married and the 'Mechanicals' perform their play. The lovers all retire to bed. Puck appears and tells the audience if they have been offended by the play, they should remember it as nothing more than a dream.

Who loves who?	
1. Act 1	Hermia loves Lysander. Lysander loves Hermia. Demetrius loves Hermia. Helena loves Demetrius.
2. Act 2	Hermia loves Lysander. Lysander loves Helena. Helena loves Demetrius. Demetrius loves Hermia.
3. Act 3	Hermia loves Lysander. Lysander and Demetrius love Helena. Helena loves nobody.
4. Act 4 and 5	Hermia and Lysander love each other. Demetrius and Helena love each other.

