

Shakespeare's Comedies

William Shakespeare

Retold by
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LEVEL B1.2

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www.globalelt.co.uk

ISBN: 978-1-78164-421-8



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A Midsummer Night's Dream

CHAPTER

1

Two Men and Two Women Get Mixed up in Love

Preview Questions

1. How will the two men and women get mixed up?
2. How do you think they can solve their problem?
3. Do you think a father should tell his daughter whom she can marry?

Theseus was in love. He was the Duke of Athens, and he loved Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. They were very happy because they were going to marry at the next full moon. It would be a big wedding.

Four days before the wedding, Egeus came to see Theseus with his daughter Hermia and two young men called Demetrius and Lysander. Egeus had a problem. Demetrius wanted to marry Hermia. He liked Demetrius and had given him his permission to marry her. The problem was that Hermia did not want to marry Demetrius. She was in love with Lysander and wanted to marry him instead. Lysander loved Hermia and wanted Egeus to give him permission to marry Hermia.

Theseus, however, said that girls should not decide whom they would marry. Their fathers should make this decision. He agreed with Egeus. He told Hermia that she should obey her father and marry Demetrius. He told her that if she did not, she would die, or they would put her in a **convent** where she could never marry.

Hermia argued with him. She told him that her father was

wrong. Lysander would be better husband because he loved her, and she loved him. But Theseus didn't listen. He told her that she must decide before the next full moon, which was the day of his own wedding with Hippolyta.

5 Demetrius begged Hermia to marry him. He asked Lysander to agree that Egeus had the right to decide whom Hermia should marry. Hermia and Lysander did not agree with Demetrius.

Lysander told Theseus that he loved Hermia more than Demetrius and that he had just as much money as Demetrius. He
10 also had something that Demetrius did not have. He had Hermia's love. He could not understand why Egeus wanted Hermia to marry Demetrius. He **reminded** Theseus that Demetrius used to love another girl called Helena and had promised to marry her. Then, when Demetrius saw Hermia, he broke his
15 promise to Helena. Helena, however, still loved Demetrius and wanted to marry him.

Theseus still did not listen. He agreed with Egeus. He warned Hermia again that she should obey her father, or she would die.

Lysander and Hermia were very disappointed and made a
20 plan to run away together. They planned to go to Lysander's aunt. She was very rich and thought of Lysander as a son. She lived faraway where the law of Athens had no power. They would be able to marry there and be safe. Hermia was sorry to leave Athens because she loved living there, but she knew it was
25 the only way she could marry Lysander. They promised to meet each other in the forest the next night to begin their journey to Lysander's aunt. Helena saw them speaking and came to talk to them.

She told them she still loved Demetrius.

30 "Why does he love you instead of me?" she asked Hermia. "How did you make him do it?"

Hermia said that she didn't love Demetrius and didn't want him to love her. She had tried to stop him.

"The more I hate him, the more he loves me," said Hermia.

"The more I love him, the more he hates me," said Helena.

5 Hermia and Lysander felt sorry for Helena and told her about their plan to escape from Athens and marry in a faraway place.

"We will leave Athens tomorrow night and begin a new life faraway," said Lysander.

"Demetrius will never see me again," said Hermia.

10 They said goodbye to Helena and wished her good luck. They hoped that Demetrius would fall in love with her again when he discovered that Hermia was married to Lysander and lived faraway from Athens.

15 Helena thought about the plan that Lysander and Hermia had made. She was angry that Demetrius did not love her any more. She decided to tell Demetrius about the plan. Then, Demetrius would understand that Hermia did not love him and would never marry him. Perhaps he would love Helena again and marry her.

* * *

20 Some workers in Athens were preparing to perform a play for the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. The play was called *The Sad Comedy and Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe*.

25 Quince was the leader. He told the others it was a very funny play and very suitable for the wedding. Then he told them which parts they had to play. He told Bottom to play Pyramus, a lover who kills himself for love. Bottom told him he would play it very well. He would make the audience cry. Nevertheless, he said that he could play a bad man even better. However, Quince **insisted** that he play Pyramus.

N E W W O R D S

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Chapter 1

duke *n.* a rich man who governs a city

convent *n.* a religious place for women to live

remind *v.* to help someone to remember

comedy *n.* a funny play

insist *v.* to say something very certainly

mask *n.* a false face

roar *v.* make a loud noise like a lion

Chapter 2

fairy *n.* a little person who can do magic

demand *v.* to order

mischievous *adj.* often playing tricks on people

Chapter 3

prologue *n.* a speech before a play, to explain the story

costume *n.* special clothes for actors

have fun at someone's expense *phr.* to laugh at someone

Chapter 4

honey *n.* sweet food made by bees

bee *n.* a flying insect that makes honey from flowers

normal *adj.* ordinary

Chapter 5

epilogue *n.* a speech at the end of a play

As You Like It

Chapter 1

inherit *v.* to get what your father owns when he dies

wrestler *n.* a person who fights by throwing opponents to the ground

banish *v.* to send someone away from a certain place and never allow the person to return

bench *n.* a hard seat for two or more people that is usually found outside

compliment *v.* to say good things about someone, usually to that person

Chapter 2

jester *n.* a person who tells jokes or does funny things

maid *n.* a servant of a lady; a female servant

praise *v.* to say good things about someone, usually to others

Chapter 3

shepherd *n.* a person who looks after sheep

carve *v.* to cut shapes and letters into wood

guess *v.* to try to find the answer

monastery *n.* a religious place for men to live

Chapter 4

ceremony *n.* a formal, often religious, celebration

protest *v.* to disagree

snail *n.* a garden animal with a shell on its back

exclaim *v.* to say something in a surprised way

Chapter 5

disguise *n.* clothing worn to conceal one's identity

convince *v.* to persuade

bind *v.* tie up with cloth/bandages

Twelfth Night

Chapter 1

shipwrecked *adj.* lost at sea after one's ship sank

howl *v.* to make a noise made by



Playlet

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Cast

Theseus	Snug
Lysander	Hippolyta
Demetrius	Hermia
Quince	Helena
Bottom	Flute
Snout	Starveling

Theseus, Lysander, Demetrius, Hippolyta, Hermia, and Helena are sitting on chairs ready to watch a play. Quince enters.

Quince: The play is ready to begin. It is probably not very good, but we hope you like it anyway. It is a short, boring, sad comedy. The actors are ready. They are not very good actors, but they will do their best. Enjoy!

Theseus: This is nonsense. How can it be sad and a comedy? How can it be short and boring?

Lysander: It is like black snow or hot ice.

Hermia: How can we enjoy something that is not very good?

Theseus: Let's see what happens next.

Quince: Here are the actors!

Bottom, Flute, Snout, Starveling, and Snug come onto the stage.

Quince: The story is about a man called Pyramus, (*Bottom puts up his hand*) who loves a beautiful lady called Thisbe (*Flute puts up his hand*). They meet near a wall (*Snout puts up his hand*) and agree to meet in the moonlight (*Starveling puts up his hand*). When Thisbe arrives, a lion (*Snug puts up his hand*) chases her

away. She drops her coat, and the lion tears it. When Pyramus finds it, he thinks that the lion has killed Thisbe. He is sad and kills himself. Thisbe comes back and finds him dead. She kills herself, too.

Quince, Bottom, Flute, Starveling, and Snug all leave the stage.

Helena: It sounds very sad.

Hermia: It sounds very funny.

Demetrius: It sounds boring.

Hippolyta: I hope it is short!

Theseus: It sounds like a short, boring, sad comedy!

Snout: My name is Snout. I am the wall. The wall has a small hole in it. (*He puts his thumbs and forefingers together to make a small hole.*) The lovers often whisper through this hole.

Theseus: I have never heard a wall speak so well!

The other spectators all agree, nodding their heads and saying “Yes,” or “That’s right,” or “Neither have I.” Bottom enters the stage.

Theseus: Look, here comes Pyramus. Let’s listen!

Bottom: What a dark night this is! I hope Thisbe has not forgotten me. Hello beautiful, wonderful wall! Show me your hole. (*Snout makes a hole again with his thumbs and forefingers.*) Thank you, wonderful wall. But what can I see? Nothing! I cannot see Thisbe. You are a terrible, horrible wall! I hate you.

Theseus: I think the wall should tell Pyramus how stupid he is!

Bottom: No, My lord. He shouldn’t. When I say ‘I hate you,’ that is the cue for Thisbe to enter, and I will see her through the hole. Watch.

Flute comes onto the stage.

Flute: Hello, sweet wall! You often hear me cry because you stand between my lover and me.

Bottom: I hear a voice. I will go to the hole to see if I can see my Thisbe’s face. Thisbe?

A Midsummer Night's Dream

[Chapter 1] Two men and two women get mixed up in love

I. Put the sentences in order from 1 (first) to 5 (last).

- _____ Helena listened to Hermia's plan.
- _____ Hermia and Lysander decided to run away.
- _____ Egeus went to see Theseus about his daughter Hermia.
- _____ Some workers prepared a play for the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta.
- _____ Theseus told Hermia she must marry Demetrius.

II. Choose the best answer.

1. Why did Egeus go to see Theseus?
 - a. Because Hermia wanted to marry Lysander
 - b. Because Hermia wanted to marry Demetrius
 - c. Because Helena wanted to marry Lysander
 - d. Because Helena wanted to marry Demetrius
2. Where were Hermia and Lysander going to go?
 - a. Athens
 - b. To see Lysander's aunt
 - c. To see Theseus
 - d. The Amazon
3. Who was Helena going to tell about Hermia's plan?
 - a. Egeus
 - b. Theseus
 - c. Demetrius
 - d. Quince
4. Who was the leader of the workers planning the play?
 - a. Bottom
 - b. Pyramus
 - c. Flute
 - d. Quince

III. Write the correct word in each blank.

wedding	convent	comedy	masks	roar
disappointed	permission	begged	perform	insisted

1. Theseus and Hippolyta were going to marry and have a big _____ at the next full moon.
2. Hermia's father gave his _____ for Demetrius to marry Hermia.
3. If Hermia did not listen to Theseus, she would go to live in a _____ and would never marry.
4. Demetrius _____ Hermia to marry him because he loved her so much.
5. Helena was very _____ that Demetrius did not love her.
6. Quince was preparing a _____ that would be suitable for the wedding.
7. The workers were going to _____ for Theseus and Hippolyta.
8. Even though Bottom wanted to play the part of a bad man, Quince _____ he play the role of Pyramus, who was a good man.
9. It did not matter if a man played the part of a woman because the actors wore _____ so their faces did not show.
10. Snug was going to play the lion, so he only had to remember to _____.

IV. Write a summary by answering the questions.

1. Why did Egeus want to meet with Theseus?
2. What did Theseus tell Hermia would happen if she did not listen to her father and get married?
3. How come Hermia did not want to marry Demetrius?
4. What did Hermia and Lysander plan to do?

Summary: _____

