

Discussion Questions for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

1. Many references are made in the play to dreams. What is the significance of the dreams in the play? How do dreams relate to reality within the play? What are the dreams that the play refers to?
2. There are several love themes within the play, including: Theseus and Hippolyta, Lysander and Hermia, Demetrius and Hermia, Lysander and Helena, Demetrius and Helena, Titania and Bottom, Pyramus and Thisbe. Are these love themes somehow related, and if so, how? Do the love themes somehow influence the theme of dreams? What is the significance of midsummer night to the themes of love?
3. The play of Pyramus and Thisbe is one of Shakespeare's devices of a "play within a play." Is this play meant only as a farce, or are we to take some sort of clue from it? If so, what is the clue that they lay gives us?
4. At one point in the play, Theseus compares madmen with poets and lovers (V, i; lines 1-27). What are we to make of this comparison? Is Theseus justified in making this comparison? Does the fact that Theseus is also a lover in some way cloud his judgment in making this comparison?
5. There are three distinct groupings of people within the play: the court, the fairies and the "mechanicals," who put on the play of Pyramus and Thisbe. How do these three classes interact in the play? Is it significant that at Midsummer's night and at other festival times, all three classes mingle together, while during the rest of the year they are separated?
6. In the traditional plot of a comedy, the mistakes or differences the characters encounter within the play are resolved in the closing act. In *The Dream*, the plot resolution occurs in the fourth act, leaving a void to be filled in the fifth act. Does the play of Pyramus and Thisbe, and subsequent appearance by Oberon, Titania and Puck fill that void? Does the ending of the play tie-up any other loose ends?
7. There is an underlying theme which contrasts the life of the city (Athens) with the life of the forest. The courtiers in the play (who represent the city life of Athens) get lost in the forest, and find their true loves. Titania loses herself for awhile and becomes enamored with Bottom, who has been turned into an ass. Is Shakespeare saying that we need to balance these two elements in our life? Is he advocating a return to the forest? What do the symbols of the city and forest represent within the play?