

A Midsummer Night's Dream – Study Questions

ACT I, SCENE I

1. How is Hippolyta's reasoning concerning how quickly the next four days will pass different from that of Theseus?
2. Why has Egeus brought his daughter and her two suitors to Theseus? What does Egeus expect him to do?
3. What was the proper role for women/daughters in Athenian society according to Egeus and Theseus?
4. What is Theseus's ruling concerning Hermia?
5. How does Lysander's comment about Demetrius's previous love affair with Helena complicate things?
6. What do Lysander and Hermia plan to do about this seemingly impossible situation?
7. Why do they tell Helena what they plan to do?
8. Even though Helena loves Demetrius and is Hermia's best friend, why does she decide to tell Demetrius of Hermia and Lysander's plans?

ACT I, SCENE II

1. Why does Nick Bottom want to play all the parts?
2. How do you suppose the threat of being handed if they scare the ladies will affect the artisans' interpretation of the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisby?
3. In what way is this scene funny? Why do you suppose Shakespeare included this scene?
4. Where are the actors to meet the following night? Who else is meeting in these same woods at the same time?

ACT II, SCENE I

1. What does the reader find out about the current relationship between Oberon, King of the Fairies, and Titania, Queen of the Fairies, from Puck and the first fairy?
2. How have Oberon and Titania been involved in the past with Theseus and Hippolyta, and why have they come to Athens?
3. What effect has their quarrel had on nature, on the seasons, on humans?

4. Why won't Titania give up the changeling to Oberon?
5. What does Oberon send Puck to find?
6. What are Oberon's plans for Titania?
7. How does Helena react to Demetrius's verbal abuse?
8. What is her response to his threats of physical abuse?
9. In what way is Helena's behavior inappropriate for Athenian women?
10. What does Oberon tell Puck to do about Demetrius and Helena?

ACT II, SCENE II

1. Why does Oberon want Titania to wake and fall in love with some vile thing?

2. Why does Hermia insist Lysander sleep a little ways from her?
3. Why does Puck anoint Lysander's eyes?
4. How does Helena react to Lysander's sudden love for her when he awakens?
5. How is Hermia's dream a reflection of reality?

ACT III, SCENE I

1. How are the actors going to keep from scaring the ladies when Pyramus kills himself or when the lion roars?
2. How are the actors going to manage the setting/scenery such as the moonlight and the wall?
3. Why do the rest of the actors run off when Bottom reappears?
4. What does Puck plan to do when he follows after the other actors?
5. How does Bottom react to Titania and the other fairies?

6. Bottom says, "...reason and love keep little company together nowadays." Why is this such an apt statement at this point in the play?

ACT III, SCENE II

1. What does Hermia accuse Demetrius of doing?

2. How are Puck and Oberon going to correct Puck's earlier mistake?

3. Why is Helena upset when Demetrius says he loves her? Isn't this what she had wanted all along?

4. Of what does Helena accuse Hermia?

5. How close had Hermia and Helena been in the past?

6. How does Lysander treat Hermia? Why can't she believe what he says?

7. Of what does Hermia accuse Helena?

8. Why is Helena afraid of Hermia?

9. What are Lysander and Demetrius going off to do?

10. What does Oberon tell Puck to do about the two young men?

11. What is Oberon going to do about Titania?

12. Why doesn't Oberon fear the coming of day?

13. How well does Puck's trickery work?

ACT IV, SCENE I

1. How has Bottom adjusted to the attention of Titania and her fairies?

2. What is Oberon's reaction to Titania's infatuation with Bottom?

3. What sort of explanation will Oberon make to Titania's question about what happened to her? Do you think he will tell her the truth?

4. Why are Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and the others out in the woods so early in the morning?

5. What is Theseus's first explanation of why the young people are asleep in the woods?

6. What explanation does Demetrius make? Why does he compare his love for Hermia to an illness?

7. What is Theseus's decision concerning the four young people?
8. Why can't the young people be sure whether they are awake or dreaming?
9. Bottom believes he too has had a dream. How is he going to use that dream to entertain the Duke?

ACT IV, SCENE II

1. What opinion do the other artisans now have of Bottom since they think he is lost?
2. What do they most regret losing by not being able to perform the play?
3. Why must the artisans hurry to the Duke's palace?

ACT V

1. Why does Theseus dismiss the stories of the four young people?
2. Why does Theseus choose to see the play about Pyramus and Thisby rather than the other entertainments?

3. Why does Philostrate try to keep Theseus from seeing the play? What does he say is wrong with it?

4. What does Theseus mean by the lines, “For never anything can be amiss, when simpleness and duty tender it”?

5. What is accomplished by having the Prologue tell the whole story that the actors are then going to enact?

6. How does Shakespeare use the comments from the audience to enhance the humor of the play that they are watching?

7. What is Hippolyta’s reaction to the play?

8. In what way is Thisby’s final speech humorous?

9. What does Oberon tell the fairies to do?

10. What is the purpose of Puck’s final speech?