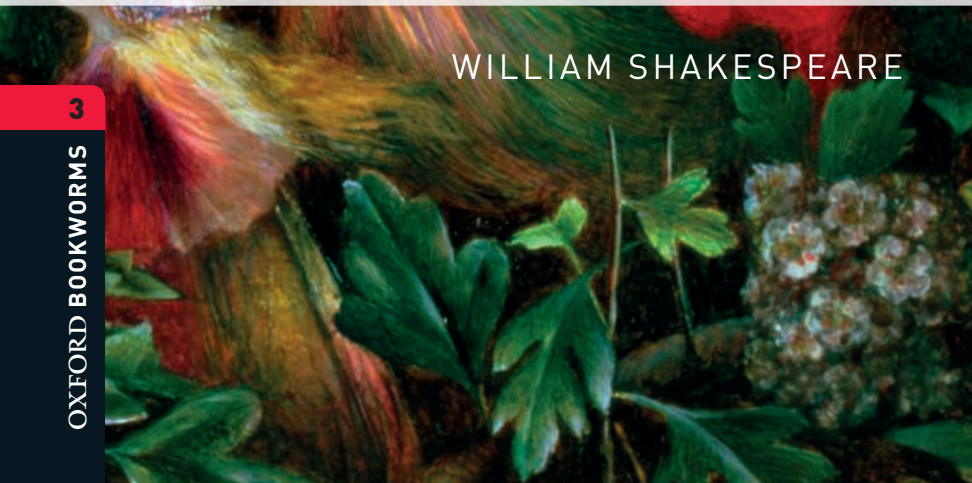


A Midsummer Night's Dream

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



3

OXFORD BOOKWORMS

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

'True love is never easy,' says Lysander. The four young Athenians in this story – Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena – find this out. And so, looking for answers to their difficulties, they run away to the forest outside Athens.

But Shakespeare's forest is a place where wildly impossible things happen … The young people chase each other around the forest, but who is in love with whom, and why does love change so quickly? And they are not the only people in the forest that night. A group of workmen from the city are meeting to rehearse their play for the Duke of Athens. What extraordinary thing happens to one of the workmen? Why do his friends run from him in fear?

Because on this midsummer night, there are also fairies in the forest, spirits of the night, unseen by human eyes. They are everywhere – watching, laughing, singing, dancing, arguing. Where there are fairies, there is magic. And where there is magic, anything can happen …

Or perhaps everything that happens is just a dream – a wonderful, midsummer night's dream …



OXFORD BOOKWORMS LIBRARY

Classics

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Stage 3 (1000 headwords)

Series Editor: Jennifer Bassett
Founder Editor: Tricia Hedge
Activities Editors: Jennifer Bassett and Christine Lindop

CONTENTS

	STORY INTRODUCTION	i
	PEOPLE IN THIS STORY	viii
1	Young love	1
2	The actors	8
3	The forest	13
4	Magic in the eyes	19
5	The head of an ass	24
6	Mistakes and misunderstandings	30
7	True love returns	40
8	The play in the palace	50
	GLOSSARY	59
	ACTIVITIES: Before Reading	61
	ACTIVITIES: While Reading	62
	ACTIVITIES: After Reading	64
	ABOUT WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE	68
	ABOUT THE BOOKWORMS LIBRARY	70

PEOPLE IN THIS STORY

THE ATHENIANS

Theseus, *Duke of Athens*

Hippolyta, *soon to become Theseus's wife and Duchess of Athens*

Egeus, *an Athenian lord*

Hermia, *Egeus's daughter, in love with Lysander*

Lysander, *in love with Hermia*

Demetrius, *in love with Hermia*

Helena, *in love with Demetrius*

THE ACTORS

Peter Quince, *who reads the Prologue*

Nick Bottom, *who plays Pyramus*

Francis Flute, *who plays Thisbe*

Tom Snout, *who plays Wall*

Snug, *who plays Lion*

Robin Starveling, *who plays Moonshine*

THE FAIRIES

Oberon, *the fairy King*

Titania, *the fairy Queen*

Puck, *fairy servant to Oberon*

Cobweb
Peaseblossom } *fairy servants to Titania*



Chapter 1

Young love

Athens, on a summer night. The air is soft and warm. In the sky the moon shines, throwing its bright silvery light over the old city and the dark forest beyond. There are faces at a window in the great palace on top of the hill. It is Theseus, Duke of Athens, and the beautiful Hippolyta, looking up at the moon . . .

'Hippolyta, my love,' said the Duke, 'our wedding day comes closer. In four happy days there will be a new moon.' He took Hippolyta's hand and pulled her towards him. 'But how slow this old moon is!' He sighed. 'Why can't it hurry away and bring our wedding day faster.' He kissed Hippolyta's hand, and she laughed.

'Four days will quickly end in nights,' she said softly, 'and four nights will quickly pass in dreams. And then the new moon will shine on our celebrations.'

Theseus smiled. 'And they will be the finest celebrations ever seen in Athens,' he said. 'We will have happiness and smiling faces, and all the young people of Athens singing and dancing. There will be no sadness at our wedding!'

At the other end of the long palace room there was a

sudden noise. Voices were heard outside the room, and a servant opened the great doors. Theseus and Hippolyta turned to look. Four people entered. An older man, a young and beautiful woman, and two young men – all looking angry and unhappy.

'My Lord Theseus,' said the older man. He bowed deeply.

'Well, Egeus,' Theseus said. 'What's the news with you?'

'It's my daughter Hermia,' Egeus said. He spoke in a hard, angry voice. 'She will not obey me, my Lord. I have chosen a husband for her – Demetrius.' He looked at the young man on his right, who stepped forward and bowed to the Duke. 'But Hermia refuses to marry him because she says she is in love with Lysander!'

At this, the other young man now stepped forward and bowed. Egeus stared at him angrily.

'Lysander has stolen my daughter's heart, given her presents, sung under her window in the moonlight . . .' said Egeus. He turned back to the Duke. 'My Lord, the laws of Athens say a daughter must obey her father. And if she will not agree to marry Demetrius, then she must die. Is that not our Athenian law, my Lord?'

Theseus sighed. He looked at Hippolyta, but she turned away, and went to the window. Then Theseus came towards Hermia, and the young woman looked up at him. There was fear in her eyes, but she held her head up bravely.

'Well, Hermia,' said the Duke. 'You surely know, dear child, that you must obey your father in these things. He made you, he gave you your life. And he can take it away. Demetrius is a good man.'

'So is Lysander,' said Hermia. Her voice was quiet, but it seemed to fill the room.

'Yes, he is,' said the Duke calmly. 'But your father wants you to marry Demetrius, so Demetrius is the better man.'

'I wish my father would try to understand,' said Hermia.

'*You* should try to understand your father,' said the Duke. His voice was cold.

There was a little silence. Hermia looked quickly up into the Duke's face, and then away again. 'I'm sorry, my Lord,' she whispered. 'I should not speak in this way to the Duke of Athens. But please, my Lord, please tell me what will happen to me if I refuse to marry Demetrius?'

'Death,' said the Duke, 'or life in a convent, where you will never see a man again and will spend your days shut away from the world behind high walls. So think carefully, Hermia. By the next new moon – which will be my wedding day – you must choose. Death, marriage with Demetrius, or life in a convent.'

Hermia held her head high, and spoke out loudly and clearly. 'I will live and die in a convent, my Lord,' she said. 'I will not give myself to this man.'

Then everybody began to speak at once.

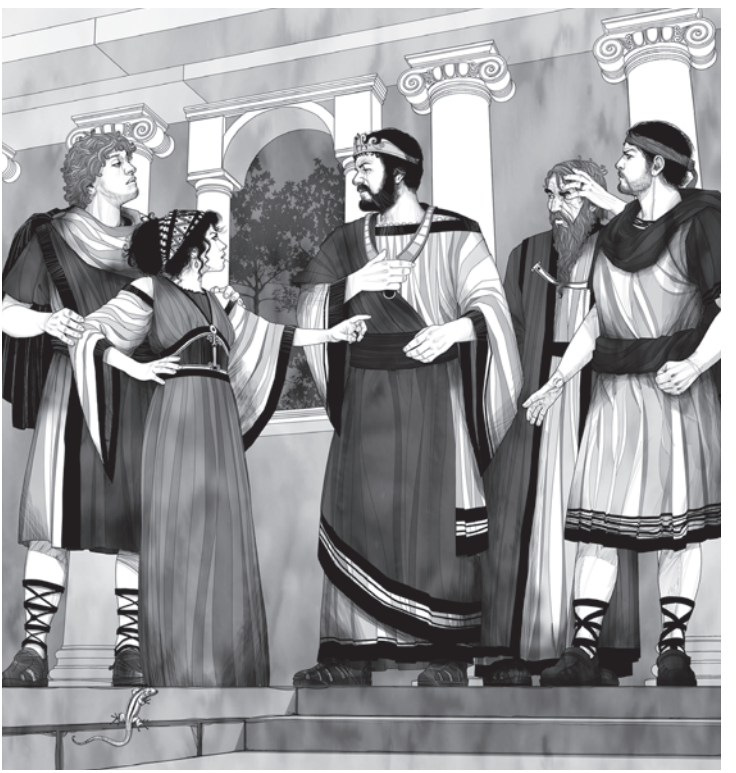
'Don't say that, dearest Hermia!' said Demetrius. He turned to Lysander. 'Let her go, Lysander. Egeus has given her to me!'

'You have her father's love, Demetrius,' said Lysander. 'Let me have Hermia's love. Why don't you marry him?'

Egeus began to speak angrily to Lysander, but Lysander turned to the Duke. 'My Lord, I come from just as good

a family as Demetrius, I am just as good a man as he is. And more than all this, Hermia loves me! Why doesn't Demetrius marry Helena? For months he's been telling her he loves her, and she, poor girl, loves him with all her heart. Now he won't even speak to her.'

'Mmm,' said Theseus. 'I had heard about that, and had planned to speak to Demetrius about it. But I have been busy with other things.' He looked at Hippolyta by the



'I will not give myself to this man,' said Hermia.

window, and smiled. 'Come, Hippolyta, we are finished here. Egeus has his answer, and Hermia must obey her father. If not, it is death or the convent. She must choose.'

The moon climbs higher in the sky, and the streets of Athens are full of a soft silvery light. The night is still young, and people are coming and going in the streets. Near the palace, there is a little square, with seats under some trees. There, Lysander meets Hermia . . .

'You look so sad, my love,' said Lysander. Hermia's eyes were red from crying, and Lysander held her hands. 'True love is never easy,' he said. 'People fall in love, and problems follow – problems of family, or money, or age . . .'

Hermia sighed. 'I know,' she said. 'It's the same for so many people. So we must be patient, and strong.'

'That's right,' Lysander said. 'And now listen, Hermia. I have an aunt. She's rich, has no children, and loves me like a son. She lives some way from Athens, and there, dearest Hermia, we can marry, because there, we will be beyond the reach of Athenian law.'

'Oh, Lysander!' cried Hermia. She threw her arms around him. 'Oh, Lysander!'

Soon they had a plan. The meeting place was in the forest outside the city walls. Tomorrow night, soon after nightfall.

'I will be there, dearest Lysander!' said Hermia. 'I promise, on my life!'

They left the square and began to walk down the street to Egeus's house – and met Helena coming the other way.

Helena had been Hermia's friend since they were both young children. These days, because of her hopeless love for Demetrius, Helena always looked unhappy.

'How are you, Helena?' said Hermia brightly. 'You're looking well.'

'Oh, don't say that!' Helena said. 'I never look as good as you. And that's why Demetrius loves you, and not me. To him, your eyes are stars, your voice sweeter than a songbird's. I just wish I had your voice, your eyes, your mouth. Can't you teach me how to make him love me?'

Hermia sighed. 'I give him hard words, and he gives me love.'

'I give him sweet words, and he gives me nothing!' cried Helena.

'I hate him more and more,' said Hermia, 'but he just follows me.'

'I love him more and more,' said Helena, 'and he just hates me.' The sadness in her face was terrible to see.

'Listen,' Hermia said. 'We'll tell you our secret. After tomorrow, Demetrius will never see my face again. Lysander and I are leaving Athens.'

Helena stared, her eyes wide with surprise, as Hermia and Lysander explained their plan to escape from Athens, to find a new life, among new friends.

'Wish us luck, dear Helena,' said Hermia. 'And we wish you luck with Demetrius. I hope he soon loves you as much as you love him.'

Hermia kissed Helena goodbye, and they all went home their different ways.

Helena had much to think about. 'How happy they are!' she thought. 'Everyone in Athens thinks I'm as pretty as Hermia, but Demetrius doesn't think so. He used to love me – until he saw Hermia. I think I'll go and tell him that Hermia is running away from Athens, and then perhaps he will thank me. Perhaps he will be grateful . . . and even smile at me.'



'How happy they are!' thought Helena.

GLOSSARY

ass a donkey – an animal like a horse, with long ears
astonished very surprised
audience the people who watch something together (e.g. a play)
bow (*v*) to move the top half of your body forwards and down (when meeting an important person)
breath air that you take in and out through your mouth or nose
celebrate (*v*) to do something special for an important day or other reason; **celebration** (*n*)
clearing (*n*) an open place in a forest where there are no trees
convent a place where religious women called nuns live
costume the clothes worn by actors in a play or film
cruel unkind
duchess the wife of a duke
duke one of the most important men in a country
entertain to interest and amuse somebody
epilogue at the end of a book, play or film, something that is said or written about what has happened
exhausted very tired
fairy a small person in stories who can do magic
fog (*n*) a kind of thick cloud just above the ground; **foggy** (*adj*)
fool someone who says or does things that are not intelligent
fun/make fun of to laugh at somebody or something unkindly
furious very angry
guest a person that you invite to your home (or a party, etc.)
human a person
jealous wishing you had something that somebody else has
juice the liquid from fruit or vegetables (or, here, a flower)
kiss to touch somebody with your lips to show love
knee the part between the top and bottom of the leg

law rules in a country that say what people can or can't do
lead to go with or in front of somebody to show them the way
lion a kind of cat, which is large, yellow, and dangerous
lord (**my Lord**) a name used when talking to people like dukes
magic making impossible things happen by saying special words or doing special things
mischievous (*adj*) enjoying doing things that annoy other people; **mischief** (*n*)
newly-wed (*n*) someone who is just married
offend to make someone feel angry or unhappy
press (*v*) to push something hard with your hand
prologue an introduction to a play, book, or film
rehearse to practise something (e.g. a play) before you do it in front of other people
roar to make a loud deep sound
scratch to move your fingers and nails across your skin
servant a person who works in another person's house
sigh to let out a deep breath because you are sad, tired, etc.
spirit a magic character like a fairy; also, the part of a person that is not their body
stab to push a knife or sword into something or somebody
stage the part of a theatre where the actors do their play
sword a very long sharp knife, used for fighting
terrified/terrifying very frightened/frightening
upset (*v*) to make somebody feel unhappy or worried

NON-STANDARD LANGUAGE USED IN THIS STORY

t'other the other
'em them
learnin' learning
not . . . nobody not anybody
on me own on my own
somethin' something

ACTIVITIES

Before Reading

1 Read the introduction on the first page of the book, and the back cover. What do you know now about the story? Choose T (True) or F (False) for each of these sentences.

1 Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia have love problems. T / F
2 In the forest they watch the play by the workmen. T / F
3 Something happens to one of the workmen which makes his friends very frightened. T / F
4 The Athenians cannot see the fairies in the forest. T / F
5 This is a funny story about love and magic. T / F

2 What can you guess about this story? Choose endings for these sentences (you can choose more than one).

1 In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* . . .
a) people fall in and out of love very quickly.
b) a fairy gives one of the lovers a donkey's head.
c) the Duke of Athens gets married.
d) the four young Athenians fall asleep in the forest.

2 At the end of the story . . .
a) there are three weddings and a play.
b) someone dies.
c) everyone goes back to Athens.
d) the workmen make a lot of money.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, a small town in central England. His father was a glove-maker, and a businessman who bought and sold things. His mother was Mary Arden, the daughter of a landowner.

Little is known about Shakespeare's early life. He went to school in Stratford, and at eighteen he married a local girl called Anne Hathaway, with whom he had three children. His wife and children stayed in Stratford, but by 1592 Shakespeare was living in London, writing plays and also working as an actor. In 1594 he joined a company of actors called The Lord Chamberlain's Men, and began to write more and more plays. In 1595 he wrote *Romeo and Juliet*, his famous play about love and families at war. In 1599 The Lord Chamberlain's Men built a theatre called The Globe, where many of Shakespeare's plays were performed. The company also took the plays to court, and acted them before Queen Elizabeth I, and after her death, King James I.

By the time he was in his late forties, Shakespeare was successful and rich, buying houses and land in London and Stratford. He began to spend more time in Stratford with his family, only going to London for business or rehearsals of a new play. He died in Stratford on his birthday in 1616, when he was only fifty-two years old. You can read more about the events and people in his life in a story in the Oxford Bookworms Library, *William Shakespeare* (at Stage 2).

Shakespeare wrote more than thirty plays, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is one of the most popular. It was written in the 1590s, and has been performed on stages around the world, and also made into ballets, operas, and films.

What a strange play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is, in so many ways! At the very beginning, Theseus tells us that in four days there will be a new moon – but the following nights are both dark and moonlit. The workmen are told who they will be in their play *Pyramus and Thisbe*, but some of the parts they are given never appear. And the fairies are so small they can sleep in nutshells, but their queen Titania can put her arms around Nick Bottom, a fully grown man. The play is full of impossible problems like these – but because it is so magical, none of them seem to matter.

So what is the most important part of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? Even after 400 years, people are still arguing about it. Some people think that the workmen/actors who perform the *Pyramus and Thisbe* play show Shakespeare at his cleverest and funniest. Some people think that the fairies are the most important thing in the play, because they control what happens to everyone else. Other people believe very strongly that the love story of the four young Athenians is the heart of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The best thing is to go and see the play in a theatre or watch a film of it, and decide for yourself!

OXFORD BOOKWORMS LIBRARY

Classics • Crime & Mystery • Factfiles • Fantasy & Horror
Human Interest • Playscripts • Thriller & Adventure
True Stories • World Stories

The OXFORD BOOKWORMS LIBRARY provides enjoyable reading in English, with a wide range of classic and modern fiction, non-fiction, and plays. It includes original and adapted texts in seven carefully graded language stages, which take learners from beginner to advanced level. An overview is given on the next pages.

All Stage 1 titles are available as audio recordings, as well as over eighty other titles from Starter to Stage 6. All Starters and many titles at Stages 1 to 4 are specially recommended for younger learners. Every Bookworm is illustrated, and Starters and Factfiles have full-colour illustrations.

The OXFORD BOOKWORMS LIBRARY also offers extensive support. Each book contains an introduction to the story, notes about the author, a glossary, and activities. Additional resources include tests and worksheets, and answers for these and for the activities in the books. There is advice on running a class library, using audio recordings, and the many ways of using Oxford Bookworms in reading programmes. Resource materials are available on the website <www.oup.com/elt/gradedreaders>.

The *Oxford Bookworms Collection* is a series for advanced learners. It consists of volumes of short stories by well-known authors, both classic and modern. Texts are not abridged or adapted in any way, but carefully selected to be accessible to the advanced student.

You can find details and a full list of titles in the *Oxford Bookworms Library Catalogue* and *Oxford English Language Teaching Catalogues*, and on the website <www.oup.com/elt/gradedreaders>.

THE OXFORD BOOKWORMS LIBRARY GRADING AND SAMPLE EXTRACTS

STARTER • 250 HEADWORDS

present simple – present continuous – imperative – *can*/*cannot*, *must* – *going to* (future) – simple gerunds …

Her phone is ringing – but where is it?

Sally gets out of bed and looks in her bag. No phone. She looks under the bed. No phone. Then she looks behind the door. There is her phone. Sally picks up her phone and answers it. ***Sally's Phone***

STAGE 1 • 400 HEADWORDS

… past simple – coordination with *and*, *but*, *or* – subordination with *before*, *after*, *when*, *because*, *so* …

I knew him in Persia. He was a famous builder and I worked with him there. For a time I was his friend, but not for long. When he came to Paris, I came after him – I wanted to watch him. He was a very clever, very dangerous man. ***The Phantom of the Opera***

STAGE 2 • 700 HEADWORDS

… present perfect – *will* (future) – (*don't*) *have to*, *must not*, *could* – comparison of adjectives – simple *if* clauses – past continuous – tag questions – *ask*/*tell* + infinitive …

While I was writing these words in my diary, I decided what to do. I must try to escape. I shall try to get down the wall outside. The window is high above the ground, but I have to try. I shall take some of the gold with me – if I escape, perhaps it will be helpful later. ***Dracula***

STAGE 3 • 1000 HEADWORDS

… *should*, *may* – present perfect continuous – *used to* – past perfect – causative – relative clauses – indirect statements …

Of course, it was most important that no one should see Colin, Mary, or Dickon entering the secret garden. So Colin gave orders to the gardeners that they must all keep away from that part of the garden in future. ***The Secret Garden***

STAGE 4 • 1400 HEADWORDS

… past perfect continuous – passive (simple forms) – *would* conditional clauses – indirect questions – relatives with *where*/*when* – gerunds after prepositions/phrases …

I was glad. Now Hyde could not show his face to the world again. If he did, every honest man in London would be proud to report him to the police. ***Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde***

STAGE 5 • 1800 HEADWORDS

… future continuous – future perfect – passive (modals, continuous forms) – *would have* conditional clauses – modals + perfect infinitive …

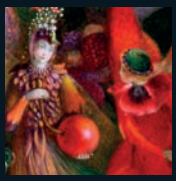
If he had spoken Estella's name, I would have hit him. I was so angry with him, and so depressed about my future, that I could not eat the breakfast. Instead I went straight to the old house. ***Great Expectations***

STAGE 6 • 2500 HEADWORDS

… passive (infinitives, gerunds) – advanced modal meanings – clauses of concession, condition

When I stepped up to the piano, I was confident. It was as if I knew that the prodigy side of me really did exist. And when I started to play, I was so caught up in how lovely I looked that I didn't worry how I would sound. ***The Joy Luck Club***

A Midsummer Night's Dream



There are broken hearts and kisses and then weddings, so this is a story about love. There are actors who are funny because they cannot act, so it is also a story that makes people laugh. And there are fairies, spirits of the night, so it is a story about mischief and magic too. What happens when love and laughter come together with magic in an Athenian forest?

A Midsummer Night's Dream was written in about 1596 and is one of Shakespeare's most popular plays. It has been retold for Bookworms, not as a play, but as a story. (Word count 11,167)

STAGE 6
STAGE 5
STAGE 4
STAGE 3
STAGE 2
STAGE 1
STARTER

1000 Headwords

CLASSICS

AUDIO AVAILABLE

digital

For **apps**, **e-books**, **audio downloads**, and **free resources** go to www.oup.com/elt/gradedreaders

Text adaptation by R. J. Corrall
Cover image courtesy of Bridgeman Art Library Ltd (The Fledgling, Fitzgerald, John Anster (1832-1906) / Private Collection / Photo © The Maas Gallery, London)

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.oup.com/elt

CEFR
B2
B1
A2

ISBN 978-0-19-478613-3
9 780194 786133

OXFORD BOOKWORMS 3