

Year 7 English Autumn Term

Reading Shakespeare's Imagination: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

<u>Plot</u>	<u>Key Characters</u>	<u>Key Quotations</u>	<u>Key Themes</u>
<p>Four lovers, having an argument in the Athenian woods at midnight, are confused by fairies who are only trying to help. Throw in some magic, a custody battle over a little boy, and an amateur actor who unsuspectingly becomes the fairy queen's love interest... oh and a magic set of ass's ears... and there you have it - <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>, a comedy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hermia runs away with Lysander instead of marrying Demetrius. • The King and Queen of the fairies fight over a little boy. • Puck muddles up the lovers and causes havoc with a love potion. • Bottom gets the ears of an ass and Titania falls in love with him. • Oberon puts things right and wins the little boy from Titania. • The lovers get married. Bottom's friends put on a play to celebrate. • The play is about Pyramus and Thisbe. • The fairies bless the marriages. 	<p>Puck - Also known as Robin Goodfellow, Puck is Oberon's jester, a mischievous fairy who delights in playing pranks on mortals.</p> <p>Lysander - A young man of Athens, in love with Hermia.</p> <p>Demetrius - A young man of Athens, initially in love with Hermia and ultimately in love with Helena.</p> <p>Hermia - Egeus's daughter, a young woman of Athens. Hermia is in love with Lysander and is a childhood friend of Helena.</p> <p>Helena - A young woman of Athens, in love with Demetrius.</p> <p>Bottom - The overconfident weaver chosen to play Pyramus in the craftsmen's play for Theseus's marriage celebration.</p> <p>Oberon - The king of the fairies.</p> <p>Titania - The beautiful queen of the fairies.</p> <p>Egeus - Hermia's father, who brings a complaint against his daughter to Theseus.</p> <p>Theseus - The heroic duke of Athens, engaged to Hippolyta.</p> <p>Hippolyta - The legendary queen of the Amazons, engaged to Theseus.</p>	<p>"Ay me, for aught that I could ever read, Could ever hear by tale or history, The course of true love never did run smooth ..."</p> <p>"Lord, what fools these mortals be!"</p> <p>"I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had—but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream. It shall be called 'Bottom's Dream', because it hath no bottom."</p> <p>"If we shadows have offended, Think but this, and all is mended: That you have but slumbered here, While these visions did appear; And this weak and idle theme, No more yielding but a dream, Gentles, do not reprehend. If you pardon, we will mend."</p>	<p>Love: Shakespeare explores the lighter side of love in <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>. Love makes us behave in strange ways - the lovers fight in a most uncivilised way in the woods. It can bring out the best and bravest qualities in a character - Hermia risks her life for love. Lovers often feel invincible against a world that doesn't understand them, just as Hermia and Lysander stand alone against Athens's law. Love can make us ridiculous - Helena asks a boy to treat her like a dog, whilst Titania falls in love with a donkey. Love can be cruel - Helena and Demetrius fall desperately in love with someone who doesn't love them back. Love also has a powerful magical quality: falling in love can be like being under a spell.</p> <p>Appearance and Reality: Sometimes things are not quite what they seem. Sometimes we fail to see situations as they really are. People often pretend to be something that they're not, hiding their true selves for one reason or another. Shakespeare was really interested in this idea and explored it in many of his plays. This theme is usually referred to as appearance and reality.</p> <p>Order and Disorder: Much of the comedy of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> comes from the chaos created when the natural order of things is disrupted. But there's a darker side too. There's not one character that isn't relieved when Oberon finally restores the midnight world to a happier one by day.</p>
<p><u>Context</u></p> <p>The most influential writer in all of English literature, William Shakespeare was born in 1564 to a successful middle-class glove-maker in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. Shakespeare attended grammar school, but his formal education proceeded no further. In 1582 he married an older woman, Anne Hathaway, and had three children with her. Around 1590 he left his family behind and travelled to London to work as an actor and playwright. Public and critical success quickly followed, and Shakespeare eventually became the most popular playwright in England and part-owner of the Globe Theatre. His career bridged the reigns of Elizabeth I (ruled 1558-1603) and James I (ruled 1603-1625), and he was a favourite of both monarchs. Indeed, James granted Shakespeare's company the greatest possible compliment by bestowing upon its members the title of King's Men. Wealthy and renowned, Shakespeare retired to Stratford and died in 1616 at the age of fifty-two.</p>			

