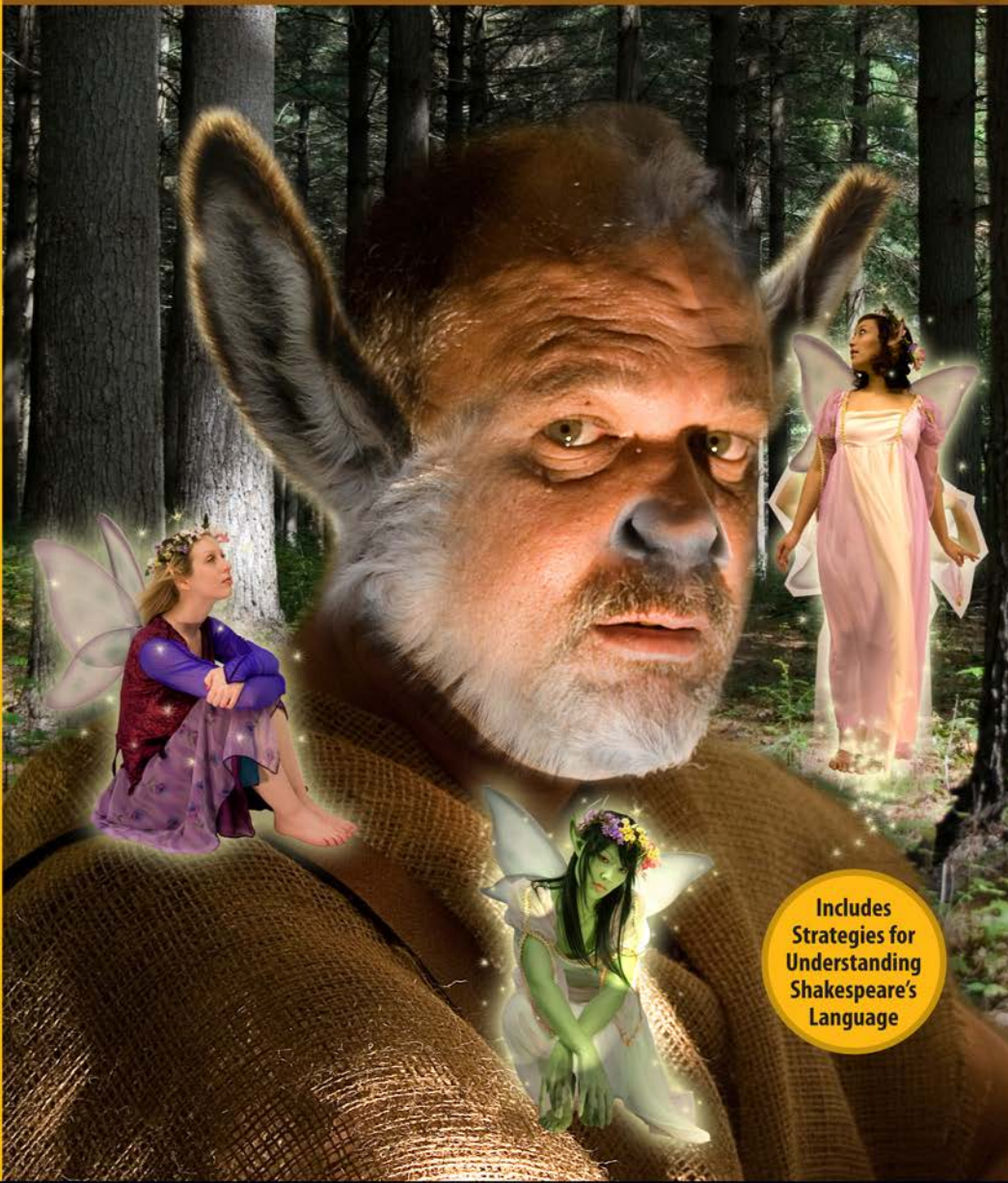


PRESTWICK HOUSE LITERARY TOUCHSTONE CLASSICS

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

by William Shakespeare



Includes
Strategies for
Understanding
Shakespeare's
Language

UNABRIDGED WITH GLOSSARY AND NOTES

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM



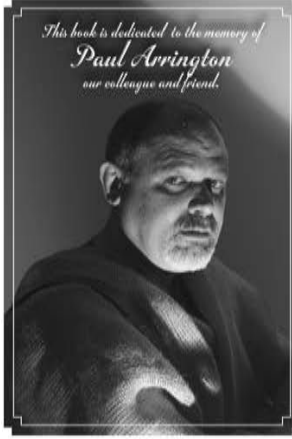
William Shakespeare



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STRATEGIES

Strategies for Understanding Shakespeare's Language

1. When reading verse, note the appropriate phrasing and intonation.

DO NOT PAUSE AT THE END OF A LINE unless there is a mark of punctuation. Shakespearean verse has a rhythm of its own, and once a reader gets used to it, the rhythm becomes very natural to speak in and read. Beginning readers often find it helpful to read a short pause at a comma and a long pause for a period, colon, semicolon, dash, or question mark.

Here's an example from *The Merchant of Venice*, Act IV, Scene i:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd, (*short pause*)
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: (*long pause*) it is twice blest; (*long pause*)
It blesseth him that gives, (*short pause*) and him that takes; (*long pause*)
'Tis mightiest in the mighties; (*long pause*) it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown; (*long pause*)

2. Read from punctuation mark to punctuation mark for meaning.

In addition to helping you read aloud, punctuation marks define units of thought. Try to understand each unit as you read, keeping in mind that periods, colons, semicolons, and question marks signal the end of a thought. Here's an example from *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act I, Scene i:

LUC. Tranio, I saw her coral lips to move,
And with her breath she did perfume the air;
Sacred, and sweet, was all I saw in her.
TRA. Nay, then, 'tis time to stir him from his trance.
I pray, awake, sir: if you love the maid,
Bend thoughts and wits to achieve her.



READING POINTERS

Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

Readers should look for incidents or comments that support these major concepts in the play:

1. The relationship between reality and fantasy:

A Midsummer Night's Dream explores several levels of consciousness and awareness. Dreams, altered states, and the presence of mythical creatures distort reality for some of the characters. As you progress through the play, pay attention to how the mixing of these worlds confuses the characters and adds humor.

2. The various types of love:

The love among couples in this play varies by type, degree, and source. Take note of how love changes throughout the course of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

3. The balance between the rational and the irrational, and the necessity of both forces:

In this play, science and reason (the rational), are at odds with love and magic (the irrational). Pay special attention to the sources of conflicts in the play, and also notice which one of the opposing forces seems to provide resolution to the problems. In the play, logic and social custom comprise the rational. Art, magic, myth, and action based on emotion comprise the irrational.

As you read, be aware of the following elements and terms, and note when each appears:

- allusion
- malapropism
- pun
- double entendre
- The opposition motif: Identify the contrasting pairs of characters and the elements of setting. In many instances, these pairs are complete opposites; for example, night and day, love and hate, beauty and ugliness, the city and the country, grace and foolishness, etc..
- Styles of speech determined by characters' social status or emotional state: Watch for changes in rhyme and meter, and note which character is speaking when a change occurs.





A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THESEUS, Duke of Athens
HIPPOLYTA, Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus
PHILOSTRATE, Master of the Revels to Theseus
EGEUS, father to Hermia
LYSANDER, in love with Hermia
DEMETRIUS, in love with Hermia
HERMIA, daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander
HELENA, in love with Demetrius

OBERON, King of the Fairies
TITANIA, Queen of the Fairies
PUCK, or ROBIN GOODFELLOW
PEASEBLOSSOM, fairy
COBWEB, fairy
MOTH, fairy
MUSTARDSEED, fairy

QUINCE, a carpenter
SNUG, a joiner
BOTTOM, a weaver
FLUTE, a bellows-mender
SNOUT, a tinker
STARVELING, a tailor



PROLOGUE, PYRAMUS, THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE, LION are presented
by: QUINCE, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, STARVELING, AND SNUG

Other Fairies attending their King and Queen
Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta

A M I D S U M M E R N I G H T ' S D R E A M



ACT I

SCENE I

[The Palace of Theseus in Athens]

Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, [with Philostrate, and Attendants]

THESEUS: Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace;¹ four happy days bring in
Another moon; but, O, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes!² She lingers³ my desires,
5 Like to a step-dame⁴ or a dowager,⁵
Long withering out a young man's revenue.⁶

¹quickly

²goes down, vanishes

³delays

⁴stepmother

⁵widow

⁶inheritance

⁷plunge

⁸marriage festivities

⁹lively

¹⁰ceremony

HIPPOLYTA: Four days will quickly steep⁷ themselves in night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;[†]
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
10 New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.⁸

THESEUS: Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;
Awake the pert⁹ and nimble spirit of mirth;
15 Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our pomp.¹⁰
[Exit Philostrate]

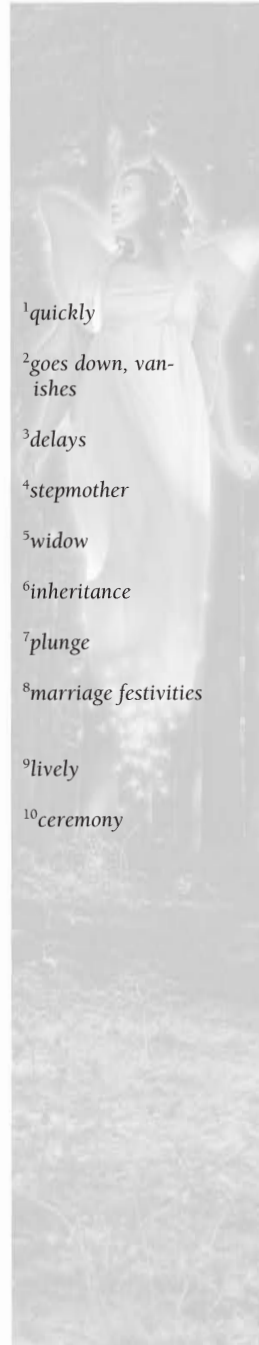
Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
20 With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.

Enter Egeus, and his daughter Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius

EGEUS: Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke!

THESEUS: Thanks, good Egeus; what's the news with thee?

[†]Terms marked in the text with (†) can be looked up in the Glossary for additional information.



¹¹agitation

EGEUS: Full of vexation¹¹ come I, with complaint
 Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
 25 Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
 This man hath my consent to marry her.
 Stand forth, Lysander. And, my gracious duke,
 This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child.
 Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
 30 And interchanged love-tokens with my child;
 Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,
 With feigning¹² voice, verses of feigning love,
 And stolen the impression of her fantasy
 With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds,¹³ conceits,¹⁴
 35 Knacks, trifles, nose-gays,¹⁵ sweetmeats, messengers
 Of strong prevailment¹⁶ in unhardened youth;
 With cunning hast thou filch'd¹⁷ my daughter's heart;
 Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,
 To stubborn harshness. And, my gracious duke,
 40 Be it so she will not here before your Grace[†]
 Consent to marry with Demetrius,
 I beg the ancient privilege of Athens:
 As she is mine, I may dispose of her;[†]
 Which shall be either to this gentleman
 45 Or to her death, according to our law
 Immediately¹⁸ provided in that case.

¹²insincere¹³trinkets¹⁴fancy gifts¹⁵showy flowers¹⁶persuasiveness¹⁷stolen¹⁸Clearly

THESEUS: What say you, Hermia? Be advis'd, fair maid.
 To you your father should be as a god;
 One that composed your beauties; yea, and one
 50 To whom you are but as a form in wax,
 By him imprinted, and within his power
 To leave the figure, or disfigure it.
 Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

HERMIA: So is Lysander.

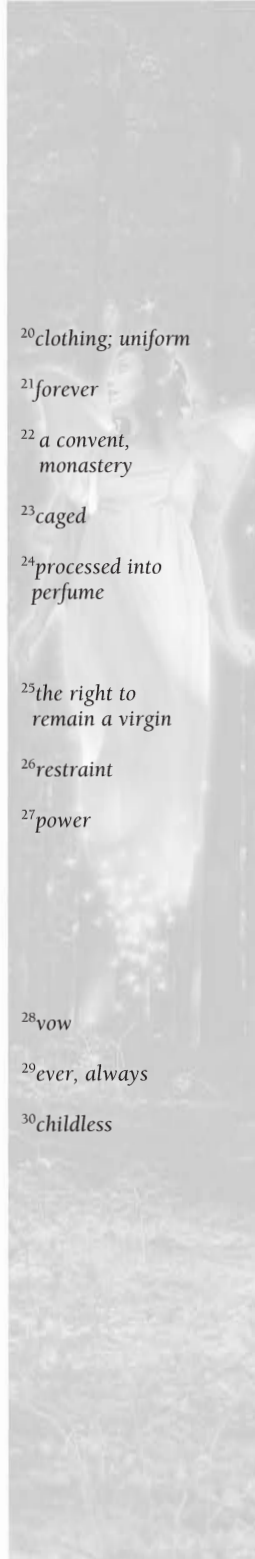
55 THESEUS: In himself he is;
 But in this kind,¹⁹ wanting your father's voice,
 The other must be held the worthier.

HERMIA: I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

THESEUS: Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

60 HERMIA: I do entreat your Grace to pardon me.
 I know not by what power I am made bold,
 Nor how it may concern my modesty,

¹⁹case, situation

²⁰clothing; uniform²¹forever²²a convent,
monastery²³caged²⁴processed into
perfume²⁵the right to
remain a virgin²⁶restraint²⁷power²⁸vow²⁹ever, always³⁰childless

In such a presence here to plead my thoughts;
But I beseech your Grace that I may know
65 The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

THESEUS: Either to die the death, or to abjure
For ever the society of men.

Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires,
70 Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery²⁰ of a nun,
For aye²¹ to be in shady cloister²² mew'd,²³
To live a barren sister all your life,
75 Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.[†]
Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;[†]
But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd²⁴
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn
80 Grows, lives, and dies, in single blessedness.

HERMIA: So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent²⁵ up
Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke²⁶
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.²⁷

85 THESEUS: Take time to pause; and by the next new moon—
The sealing-day betwixt my love and me
For everlasting bond of fellowship,—
Upon that day either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will,
90 Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would,
Or on Diana's[†] altar to protest²⁸
For aye²⁹ austerity³⁰ and single life.

DEMETRIUS: Relent, sweet Hermia; and, Lysander, yield
Thy crazed title to my certain right.

95 LYSANDER: You have her father's love, Demetrius;
Let me have Hermia's; do you marry him.

EGEUS: Scornful Lysander! True, he hath my love;
And what is mine my love shall render him;
And she is mine; and all my right of her

100 I do estate unto Demetrius.

LYSANDER: I am, my lord, as well derived as he,
As well possess'd; my love is more than his;

VOCABULARY

Act I, Scene I

abjure – to give up, reject

ought – anything

avouch – to declare

beguiled – deceived

beseech – to beg, plead

brake – an area overgrown with plants; a thicket

dotes – idolizes, worships

edict – a law; a declaration

enthrall'd – enslaved (by love)

entreat – to ask, beg

ere – before

mirth – merriment, laughter

pale – colorless

perjured – forsworn; lying under oath

siege – to attack; to gain entrance (used metaphorically in this context)

trifles – small gifts; sweets

vexation – aggravation; turmoil

vile – disgusting

visage – a face

Act I, Scene II

bellows – a chamber used to pump air onto a fire to keep it ablaze

dogg'd – bothered

discretion – consideration; judgment

interlude – a short play (usually performed between the acts of a longer play)

lofty – impressive, sublime

mar – to harm, injure

marry – an oath expressing surprise or emphasis

tawny – tan in color

Act II, Scene I

brier – a type of plant with thorny or prickly stems

chaste – pure

chide – to reprimand (also seen as *chid*)

crimson – red in color

dale – a valley

dissension – a disagreement

flout – to scorn

forsooth – indeed

rear – to raise or bring up

woodbine – a type of plant similar to honeysuckle

Act II, Scene II

clamorous – noisy

disdainful – hateful

dissembling – deceitful

flout – to flaunt; expose

heresies – controversial opinions (usually considered to be false)

swoon – to faint

Act III, Scene I

abide – to bear, tolerate, put up with

auditor – an audience member

bower – an arbor; a woman's chamber in a castle; a cottage

brake – an area overgrown with plants; a thicket

knavery – mischief; trickery

loam – a mixture of clay, sand, and straw

parlous – [*perilous*] risky, dangerous

rough-cast – a mixture of lime and gravel

Act III, Scene II

asunder – split into pieces

chronicled – recorded

confederacy – a group of people united to commit an unlawful act; a conspiracy

confounding – confusing; mixing up

congealed – solidified; frozen

cur – a dog; a coward

derision – ridicule

disparage – to mock, belittle

forester – the official responsible for the forest land

fray – a fight

heraldry – the system used for creating different symbols or shields to identify specific families

minimus – [Latin] of the smallest size

preposterously – foolishly, absurdly

vixen – an ill-tempered woman

Act IV, Scene I

coronet – a small crown, garland, or wreath

discord – disharmony

peck – a quarter bushel (8 quarts)

swain – a man who dates a woman; a suitor

upbraid – to scold, reprimand

Act IV, Scene II

marred – ruined