

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shakespeare's language can seem scary, but give it a try! *Go at your own pace, and have fun!*



SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S
SIGNATURE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

So, this is awkward! **Oberon**, the fairy king, decides to get back at **Titania**, his wife, by giving her a love potion that makes her fall in love with the first thing she sees when she wakes up. They live in a forest, so he assumes it'll be a deer or a squirrel.

Very funny, Oberon. What could possibly go wrong??

Oberon gives the potion to **Puck**, a "knaveish sprite," who applies it to Titania's eyes. But, as he's leaving, a group of people decide to rehearse a play in the middle of the forest because that's a totally normal thing to do. Among them is an extremely silly man named **Bottom**. Puck decides it'd be fun to turn Bottom's head into that of a donkey, so he does. When Bottom, unaware of his transformation, makes his entrance, his friends run away screaming, and he is left alone.

Well, almost alone....

The Shakespeare

BOTTOM

I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me, to fright me if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can. I will walk up and down here and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.

(sings)

The ouzel cock, so black of hue
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill—

TITANIA

(waking) What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

BOTTOM

(sings)
The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plainsong cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark
And dares not answer "Nay"—

For indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? Who would give a bird the lie, though he cry "cuckoo" never so?

TITANIA

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.
Mine ear is much enamored of thy note,
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape,
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

BOTTOM

Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays. The more the pity that some honest neighbors will not make them friends. Nay, I can glean upon occasion.

TITANIA

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

BOTTOM

Not so, neither. But if I had wit enough to get out of this

wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

TITANIA

Out of this wood do not desire to go.
Thou shalt remain here whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate.
The summer still doth tend upon my state.
And I do love thee. Therefore go with me.
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep,
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.—
Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!

Enter four fairies: **PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED**

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

COBWEB

And I.

MOTH

And I.

MUSTARDSEED

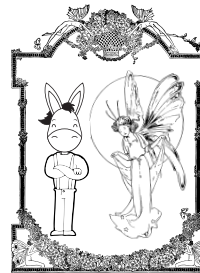
And I.

ALL

Where shall we go?

TITANIA

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes.
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.
The honey bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glowworms' eyes
To have my love to bed and to arise.
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.



COBWEB

Hail.

MOTH

Hail.

MUSTARDSEED

Hail.

BOTTOM

I cry your worships' mercy, heartily.—I beseech your worship's name.

COBWEB

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you.—Your name, honest gentleman?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too.—Your name, I beseech you, sir?

MUSTARDSEED

Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well. That same cowardly, giantlike ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house. I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

TITANIA

Come, wait upon him. Lead him to my bower.
Tie up my love's tongue. Bring him silently.



The Translation

BOTTOM

I see what they're up to. They want to make an ass of me, to scare me if they can. But I won't leave this spot, no matter what they do. I'll walk up and down and sing a song, so they'll know I'm not afraid.

(singing)

The blackbird with its black feathers
And its orange-and-tan beak,
The thrush with its clear voice,
The wren with its small, piping chirp—

TITANIA

(waking up) What angel is this who's waking me up from my bed of flowers?

BOTTOM

(singing)
The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The gray cuckoo with his simple song
That many men hear
But they don't dare say no to it—

Of course they don't say "no"! Who'd waste his time talking to such a stupid bird? Who'd bother to accuse a bird of lying, even if the bird were telling him that his wife was cheating on him?

TITANIA

Please sing again, sweet human. I love to listen to your voice, and I love to look at your body. I know this is the first time I've ever seen you, but you're so wonderful that I can't help swearing to you that I love you.

BOTTOM

I don't think you've got much of a reason to love me. But to tell you the truth, reason and love have very little to do with each other these days. It's too bad some mutual friend of theirs doesn't introduce them. Ha, ha! No, I'm just kidding.

TITANIA

You're as wise as you are beautiful.

BOTTOM

No, that's not true. But if I were smart enough to get out of this forest, I'd be wise enough to satisfy myself.

TITANIA

Don't bother wishing you could leave this forest, because you're going to stay here whether you want to or not. I'm no ordinary fairy. I rule over the summer, and I love you. So come with me. I'll give you fairies as servants, and they'll bring you jewels from the depths of the ocean, and sing to you while you sleep on a bed of flowers. And I'll turn you into a spirit like us, so you won't die as humans do.—Come here, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!

Four fairies—**PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED**—enter.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

COBWEB

Me too.

MUSTARDSEED

And me too.

ALL

Where should we go?

TITANIA

Be kind and polite to this gentleman. Follow him around. Leap and dance for him. Feed him apricots and blackberries, with purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries. Steal honey from the bumblebees, and make candles out of the bees' wax. Light them with the light of glowworms, so my love will have light when he goes to bed and wakes up. Pluck off colorful butterfly wings, and use them to fan moonbeams away from his eyes as he sleeps. Bow to him, fairies, and curtsy to him.



PEASEBLOSSOM

Hello, mortal!

COBWEB

Hello!

MOTH

Hello!

MUSTARDSEED

Hello!

BOTTOM

I beg your pardon, sirs.—Please tell me your name, sir?

COBWEB

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

I'd like to get to know you better, Mr. Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I'll use you as a bandage to stop the bleeding.—And your name, sir?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

Please, give my regards to your mother, Mrs. Peapod, and your father, Mr. Peapod. Good Mr. Peaseblossom, I'd like to get to know you better too.—And you, may I ask what your name is, sir?

MUSTARDSEED

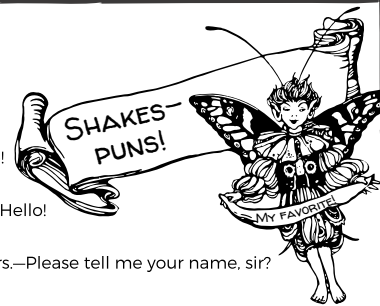
Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

Good Mr. Mustardseed, I know you very well. Those cowardly, gigantic sides of beef have been responsible for many of your family members getting eaten as a condiment on beef. I swear to you, many members of your mustard family have made my eyes water before. I look forward to getting to know you better, Mr. Mustardseed.

TITANIA

Take good care of him. Take him to my sleeping area. Keep my lover quiet. Bring him to me in silence.





A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

You can respond to these in any way you choose:

Write

ACT IT OUT

Talk about it

WAIT A MINUTE!

Draw

THINK ABOUT IT

... up to you!



SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S SIGNATURE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

How did Titania become Queen of the fairies?



SOMETHING'S FUNNY HERE... This scene is a mix of verse and prose. Titania speaks in verse. Bottom speaks in prose (but sings in verse, of course!)

Why? How does that affect the sound or feeling of the scene?

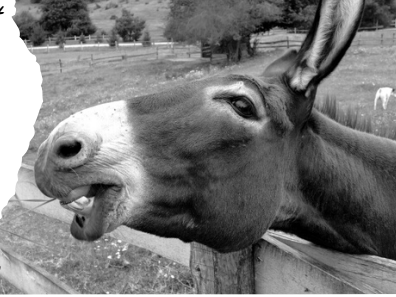
pun - a joke that uses one word to mean multiple things.

Bottom is very clever, and he puns on the fairies' names. (Conveniently, their names all sound like other words.) If you were Bottom, what punning joke would you make about the names?

This is a very strange situation, but Bottom just seems to roll with it!

How would you react in Bottom's position? (Remember, you don't know your head has been turned into a donkey's.)

When is it better to question your situation, and when is it better to just roll with it?



If you wanted to do this scene in some other form, how would you do it? A cartoon? A puppet show? A musical? A dance performance? A radio play? Something totally different and wild?

Well, I didn't vote for her.

You don't vote for fairy queens.

I thought we were an anarcho-syndicalist commune...

You've been watching too much Monty Python.

Peaseblossom* Moth

Cobweb

Mustardseed

*the flower of a pea plant

HOW WOULD YOU COSTUME THESE CHARACTERS?

What would Bottom be wearing? (Other than a donkey's head, of course!)

If you were on a super-tight budget, and you had to get all of your costumes from thrift shops, how would you costume this scene?



How would the fairies be dressed? What about Titania?

If you were on Broadway and had thousands of dollars for custom-made costumes, how would you costume the scene?



One costuming challenge that faces every production of *Midsummer* is how to do **Bottom's head**. How would you do it? Remember that the actor needs to be able to wear it for an extended period of time, he needs to be able to see and breathe, the audience needs to hear and understand what he is saying (or singing!), and it needs to be strong enough and well enough attached for Bottom to act in it for this scene.

Now, costume designers usually need to pitch their work before they're hired. And they usually want to have a *vision* for the overall look of the show. (Well, the director often tells designers what the look should be, but let's forget about them for now.)

So go ahead! Pitch your ideas to the director of this imaginary production of *Midsummer*!

Can you explain what you're doing with your costumes and why?

There are tons of ways to show off costume designs. You could sketch them, make a collage, describe them in words, make a vision board (a series of images that captures the look you want), or whatever you feel!

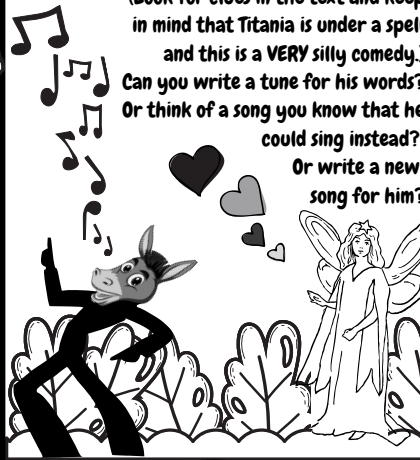
Want to send your designs to a real theatre? Feel free to mail 'em to:

Detroit Public Theatre
634 W Baltimore
Detroit, Mich. 48202



What is Bottom's singing like, do you think?

(Look for clues in the text and keep in mind that Titania is under a spell and this is a **VERY** silly comedy.) Can you write a tune for his words? Or think of a song you know that he could sing instead? Or write a new song for him?



"It shall be called 'Bottom's Dream', because it hath no bottom."
-Bottom

THAT WAS A WEIRD DREAM.

Despite the name of the play, everything that happens in *Midsummer* actually happens. In Act IV, the characters come to their senses after three acts of total silliness, and they all just agree to say that it was all a weird dream. What do we mean when we say something is a "dream" or "like a dream"? What experiences can seem like dreams (good or bad)? What is dreamlike about those experiences?

