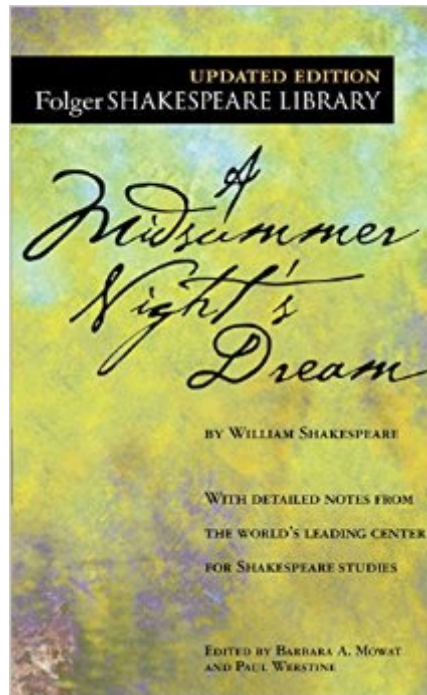


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A Midsummer Night's Dream (Folger Shakespeare Library)



Synopsis

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare stages the workings of love. Theseus and Hippolyta, about to marry, are figures from mythology. In the woods outside Theseus's Athens, two young men and two young women sort themselves out into couples—but not before they form first one love triangle, and then another. Also in the woods, the king and queen of fairyland, Oberon and Titania, battle over custody of an orphan boy; Oberon uses magic to make Titania fall in love with a weaver named Bottom, whose head is temporarily transformed into that of a donkey by a hobgoblin or a puck, a Robin Goodfellow. Finally, Bottom and his companions ineptly stage the tragedy of a Pyramus and Thisbe. • The authoritative edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from The Folger Shakespeare Library, the trusted and widely used Shakespeare series for students and general readers, includes:

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Essay by Catherine Belsey

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Customer Reviews

There are many reasons for the popularity of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream", not the least among them is the almost unique joining of the humorous misuse of language (by the tradesman actors) and the utter beauty of language and expression (by Puck, Oberon, and Titania). One usually gets a farce of language or an attempt at the sublime. Here the music of the two enriches both. How can one put together these four disparate plotlines into such a wonderful whole? The quartet of lovers and their mixed and varied attentions forms the basis of the plot in the comedy and it is a delightful enough farce. The squabble of Demetrius and Lysander over Hermia while Helena pines over Demetrius, Oberon and Titania's argument over one of her servants and Oberon's use of Puck to manipulate Titania's affections including Puck's mistaken application of Oberon's potion to Lysander's eyes, the pending marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta, and the wonderfully, magically awful play being put on by the tradesman for the nobles. Putting all this into a wonderful whole is an achievement that I believe is unmatched. I do want to say that this play has suffered a great deal in our sex obsessed age. We have foisted on this play an eroticism that it does not claim for itself nor display. While the "adult" couples (Theseus & Hippolyta, Oberon & Titania) interact and talk in ways that include that aspect of their lives, the youthful couples always talk and act in ways that are concerned with propriety and modesty. Bottom is hardly the lust blinded brute depicted in modern productions. He is much more interested in eating and chatting with his Fairy friends than Titania.

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