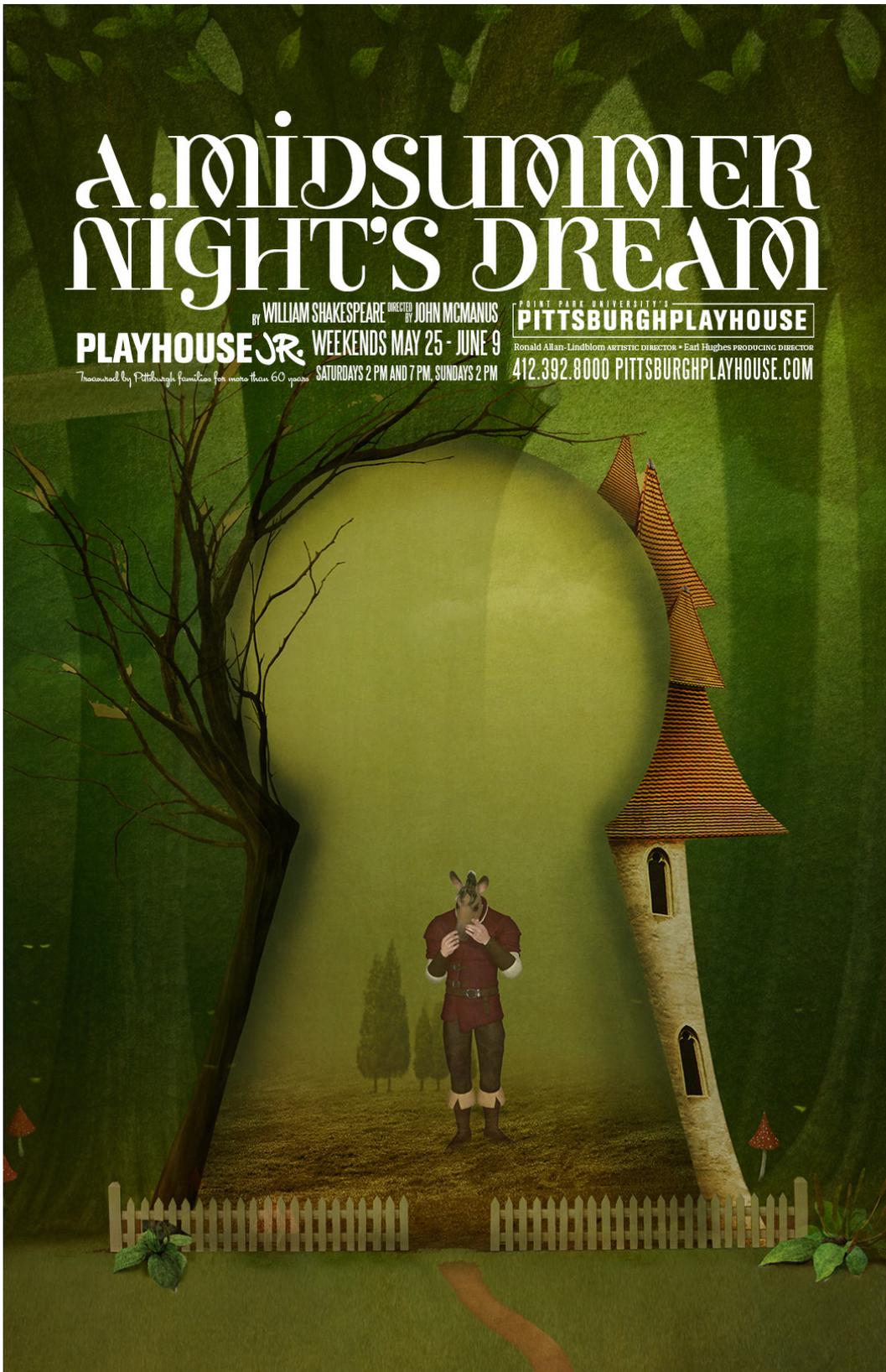


A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE DIRECTED BY JOHN MCMANUS
PLAYHOUSE JR. WEEKENDS MAY 25 - JUNE 9
Transcribed by Pittsburgh families for more than 60 years SATURDAYS 2 PM AND 7 PM, SUNDAYS 2 PM

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Teacher's Resource Guide

A Midsummer Night's Dream

A Midsummer Night's Dream is one of William Shakespeare's most popular comedies, enchanting audiences for hundreds of years with romance and dreams and potions. When introducing it to your classroom before coming to see the play, you'll want to familiarize them with the language of the play, the unusual names, and the big themes that dominate the characters' decisions. This way, the students will be able to have fun with the magical, musical world created on stage and follow along with the story, even when the language is complicated.

Summary

When the play begins, Duke Theseus has been asked by Egeus to help with his rebellious daughter, Hermia. Hermia is in love with a romantic poet named Lysander but her father has already promised her to Demetrius. Duke Theseus tells Hermia the facts: Her father makes the rules, what he says goes. She has to either marry Demetrius or become a nun and never marry anyone at all.

Hermia and Lysander have no choice but to run away. They get as far as the forest outside of Athens and start to make their plans when Hermia's best friend Helena arrives, and she's really upset. It turns out she's in love with Demetrius! Hermia realizes that if Demetrius would fall in love with Helena instead of pursuing her, she could marry Lysander and they would all be happy!

In the forest, more drama is happening with the king and queen of the fairies, Oberon and Titania. Titania has been taking care of a human boy that Oberon wants to make into a servant. When Titania says no, he gets his helper, a mischievous forest creature named Puck, to go find the rare magical flower whose nectar is a potion that makes people fall in love. Not just any kind of love though, love at first sight. Oberon tells Puck to take the flower and use it on Titania, so that she falls in love with Oberon again and forgets her interest in the human boy.

When night falls, the four lovers from Athens are lost in the woods: Hermia and Lysander are trying to escape, Demetrius is chasing Hermia, Helena is chasing Demetrius. Oberon sees Demetrius being mean to Helena when she begs for his love, so he tells Puck to use some of the magical flower potion on Demetrius as well.

There's a lot going on in all through the forest! Nearby, a group of workers, called The Mechanicals, are practicing a play that they will be performed on Duke Theseus' wedding day. One of the players, Nick Bottom, wants to be the star of the show and he's very loud about it. Oberon's servant, Puck, has been spying on the players and decides that it would be a funny prank to set up Titania to fall in love with Bottom, rather than the king. To make it even funnier, he uses his magical powers to turn Bottom's head into a donkey head. When the mechanicals see Bottom with a donkey head, they run away screaming, which wakes up Titania, and she falls in love at first sight with him.

Puck is pretty happy with his joke and continues on his way through the forest to his next job: making Demetrius fall in love with Helena. However, he mistakes sleeping Lysander for Demetrius. Of course Lysander falls in love with Helena by mistake, Helena doesn't want the attention and Hermia is mad that

her friend is trying to steal her boyfriend. Puck realizes his mistake and puts the drops in Demetrius' eyes. He instantly falls in love with Helena too. Hermia and Helena fight about it, Helena thinks it's a prank on her. It's a mess. Oberon tells Puck he better fix it or else.

Puck figures it all out that night and when they wake up in the morning, Lysander and Hermia are happy, Demetrius and Helena are happy, and the lovers have all been sorted out. When they get out of the forest, they tell Egeus and Duke Theseus about their love and the men accept it. Oberon releases Bottom from his donkey head and reverses the effect of the potion on Titania. They return to their happy lives, no longer fighting. Puck delivers one of Shakespeare's most famous speeches, apologizing for the harm that he caused:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd 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:
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck a liar call;
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends

--V, i. 440-455

The Cast of Characters

Here's who you can expect to see on stage. Keep in mind that sometimes actors will play several roles. Ask your class to discuss how we can tell which character might be which. How might the fairies dress? The Athenian Court? What other ways can we tell them apart?

The Lovers and the Athenian Court

- Theseus, Duke of Athens
- Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus
- Egeus, Hermia's father
- Hermia, in love with Lysander
- Lysander, in love with Hermia

- Helena, in love with Demetrius
- Demetrius, in love with Hermia

The Fairies

- Oberon, King of the Fairies
- Titania, Queen of the Fairies
- Puck, Oberon's right hand man!
- Changeling Boy, Titania's page boy
- Titania's Fairy Band

The Mechanicals

- Nick Bottom, Weaver, plays Pyrimus in the production
- Peter Quince, Carpenter, director of the production
- Francis Flute, Bellows Mender, plays Thisbe in the production
- Robin Stavelling, Tailor, plays Moonshine in the production
- Tom Snout, Tinker, plays Wall in the production
- Snug, Joiner, plays Lion in the production

Iambic Pentameter

Shakespeare's plays are mostly written in a style of poetry that is called iambic pentameter. An "iamb" is two syllables that when read aloud follow a specific rhythm: "da-DUM, da-DUM." This mimics the way we often speak in everyday life. Some words that naturally occur as iambs are balloon and because: the first part of the word is quieter, the second part is stronger. Try to say them with the opposite emphasis and it will sound strange. Meter refers to the number of "feet," or iambs, in a line. In Shakespeare's plays, there are typically five iambs in a line: Penta (five)-meter.

An easy way to introduce your students to the idea of listening for iambs is through Dr. Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham*:

I do not like them, Sam-I-Am

I do not like green eggs and ham

I would not like them here or there

I would not like them anywhere

I do not like green eggs and ham

I do not like them, Sam-I-Am.

Sam's responses follow the opposite iambs:

Would you like them in a house?

Would you like them with a mouse?

Try reading *Green Eggs and Ham* aloud with your students and have them experiment with trying different emphasis. Can they think of any other poems that follow this pattern? Have students read Puck's monologue from the end of the play. What words does he emphasize? How does iambic pentameter change the way you read the poem?

Who is William Shakespeare?

Bio reproduced from www.ducksters.com

Very little is known about William Shakespeare's childhood. He was born in the English city of Stratford-upon-Avon about 100 miles northwest of London in 1564. William's father was a successful leather merchant who once held the public position of alderman. He was the third of six children including two older sisters and three younger brothers. Growing up in Stratford-upon-Avon William lived in a house with his big family on Henley Street. He went to the local grammar school where he learned about poetry, history, Greek, and Latin.

When William turned eighteen he married Anne Hathaway. Anne was eight years older than William. They soon had a family including a daughter named Susanna and twins named Hamnet and Judith.

London and the Lost Years

After William and Anne had the twins, there are no records of the next several years of his life. Historians often refer to these years as the "lost years." There are lots of theories and stories about what William was doing during this time. In any event, he and his family eventually ended up in London where William was working at the theatre.

Lord Chamberlain's Men

William was part of an acting company called Lord Chamberlain's Men. An acting company in England at this time worked together to put on plays. There were typically around ten actors in a company including a lead actor, character actors, and some comedians. Young boys typically played women's roles as women were not allowed to act.

Shakespeare wrote plays for the Lord Chamberlain's Men. His plays became very popular in London and soon the Lord Chamberlain's Men were one of the most popular acting companies in the city. Some of Shakespeare's early plays include *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The Theater Shuts Down

These early plays were put on at a theater called the "Theatre". While Lord Chamberlain's Men owned the Theatre, the land was owned by Giles Allen. In 1597 Allen decided he wanted to tear the Theatre down. He locked it up and refused to let the actors perform. They tried to renegotiate the lease on the land, but Allen again refused.

One night, several members of the company dismantled the Theatre and moved the timber across the Thames River to another spot. There they built a new theatre called the Globe Theatre.

The Globe Theatre

The Globe Theatre became the place to be in London. It could house up to 3,000 spectators and had a uniquely designed stage with a painted ceiling, columns, and stage wall. They had specially trained musicians who made special effects noises during the plays. They even had a cannon that fired blanks.

Later Plays

Many of Shakespeare's greatest plays were written in the last half of his career. These included *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. His success in the theatre, as well as his investments in land and the Globe, made Shakespeare a wealthy man. He purchased a large home in Stratford for his family called New Place.

Poetry

Shakespeare also became famous for his poetry. His most famous poem of the time was *Venus and Adonis*. He also wrote poems called sonnets. A book of 154 of Shakespeare's sonnets was published in 1609.

Death and Legacy

William retired to his home in Stratford and died on his fifty-second birthday.

Shakespeare is considered by many to be the greatest writer of the English language. He is also one of the most influential. Through his works, he is credited with introducing nearly 3,000 words to the English language. In addition, his works are the second most often quoted after the Bible.

Interesting Facts about William Shakespeare

The lead actor and star of many of Shakespeare's plays was Richard Burbage.

The original Globe Theatre burned down in 1613. It was rebuilt in 1614, but was then closed in 1642.

A modern reconstruction of the Globe was built in London by American actor Sam Wanamaker. It opened in 1997.

He wrote 37 plays in his lifetime averaging about 1.5 plays per year he was writing. Some scholars think that he wrote around 20 more plays that have been lost, which would put the total to 57!

His plays were performed for both Queen Elizabeth I and King James I.

You can take the letters from "William Shakespeare" and write "I am a weakish speller."

Before you visit:

You'll be watching *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with a lot of other people, not to mention dozens of actors, actresses, and people backstage who all need to know what's going on at all times. Here are a few rules to share with the students before you see the show:

- Use the restroom before the show begins. Only get up if it's an emergency, and try to leave quietly.
- You may laugh when it's funny, or cry when it's sad, but please don't talk! The actors can hear you, even if you're whispering.
- The performers love applause so make sure you let them know you like the show by clapping at the end of the songs and at the end of the show. If you really liked it you can stand up and clap at the end. This is called a standing ovation.
- Please do not eat or drink anything inside the theatre.

The Elements of a Play:

A play is a story told on stage, through words and actions, by a character or characters in front of an audience.

Plot: The sequence of events that takes place in a play.

Conflict: The struggle between two opposing forces.

Character: A person or figure who undertakes the action in the plot.

Dialogue: Spoken conversation between two or more characters.

Setting: The particular time and place in which the plot occurs.

Storytelling

What is a play? It has actors but it's different from a movie. It tells a story, but it's different from a book. So what exactly is it? A play is a story about a character, told through action and dialogue for a live audience. When telling a story, especially on stage, there are many things to consider. How many characters are in the story? What is the conflict? How will it be resolved? Does the main character get what he or she wants in the end? Is there a lesson learned? Choose a familiar story (a common fairy tale, popular movie, etc) and have the students identify the different elements.

One-word story

This activity works best if the class is arranged into a circle so that everyone can see each other. One person from the group will start a made-up story by saying the first word only, beginning with the phrase "Once upon a time..." The next person will say the next word in the story. As it travels around the circle, each person will continue by adding one word each to the story at a time. When the story feels complete you can end it and start a new one! Start with a theme, like "Adventure," or "Magic" to kick things off.

Chalk Talk: Play versus Movie

What makes seeing a play different from watching a movie? What about behind the scenes? How is creating a play different from creating a movie?

Draw a line down the middle of the chalkboard. On one side of the line write PLAY, on the other side write MOVIE. Have everyone in the class grab some chalk and begin to fill up the chalkboard writing things that they know about plays and movies on the correct sides (alternatively, the students can make their suggestions to the teacher to write). Keep it to simple phrases and not whole sentences, so that everyone will have a chance to write multiple ideas. Some might fit into both columns, others will not. Feel free to list everything you can think of!

Once everyone has had a turn or two, or when the board is full, sit back and examine the work. How are plays and movies similar? How are they different? How about the difference in audiences? Talk with your students about what to expect when you come to the Pittsburgh Playhouse.

Collaboration

Collaborating, or working with a group of people towards the same goal, is a very important part of theatre. Unlike painting, sculpting, or playing an instrument, theatre is a form of art that takes many different people to create the final project. For example, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had dozens of people to help! There were directors and producers that instruct the actors what to do, set designers that make the stage look like the forest, costume designers that create the clothes, and tons of people back stage making sure it all runs smoothly. It takes patience, planning, and a willingness to work together to make a good production.

Discussion questions: It can be hard to work with so many other people on the same project. What are some problems you can imagine coming from working with so many people? Compare this problem to a problem you've faced in your own life. How would you resolve this problem?

What kind of collaboration do you think happens in a play? Who might be involved? Some answers to consider: actors, designers, the director, back stage crew, etc. Does the audience play a part in the collaboration?

Be the Designer!

At the end of this packet, you will find a person-shaped drawing. Make enough copies so that each student has one. Instruct the students to pick a character from the play. On the template provided use markers, crayons, glitter, fabric swatches, and cut outs from magazines to design the costume for that character. You can make this a group activity by assigning the students to small groups and asking each group to design for a different character. After the students have finished their design ask them to share their designs with the class.

For a more hands-on approach, make groups of 4-5 students each and assign each group a character from the play. Each group should get a paper bag containing the following items: a roll of paper towels (or toilet paper), a roll of masking tape, several paper bags, a large black trash bag, a pair of scissors, and anything else you might think is fun or useful. Then, instruct the groups to use as much of the given materials as they like to create a costume for that character on one of their group members. Have the groups show off their designs, runway style in the classroom.

Magic Potion

There is a handout attached to the back of the packet with a drawing of a potion bottle. After introducing the story of Puck and his magic love potion, the students might have some ideas for potions they'd like to use! Have the students fill the bottle with the ingredients for their magic potion by drawing them inside the bottle. What would the potion do if someone drank it? How does it work?

More Resources

A website for elementary classrooms with notes and activities by elementary students:

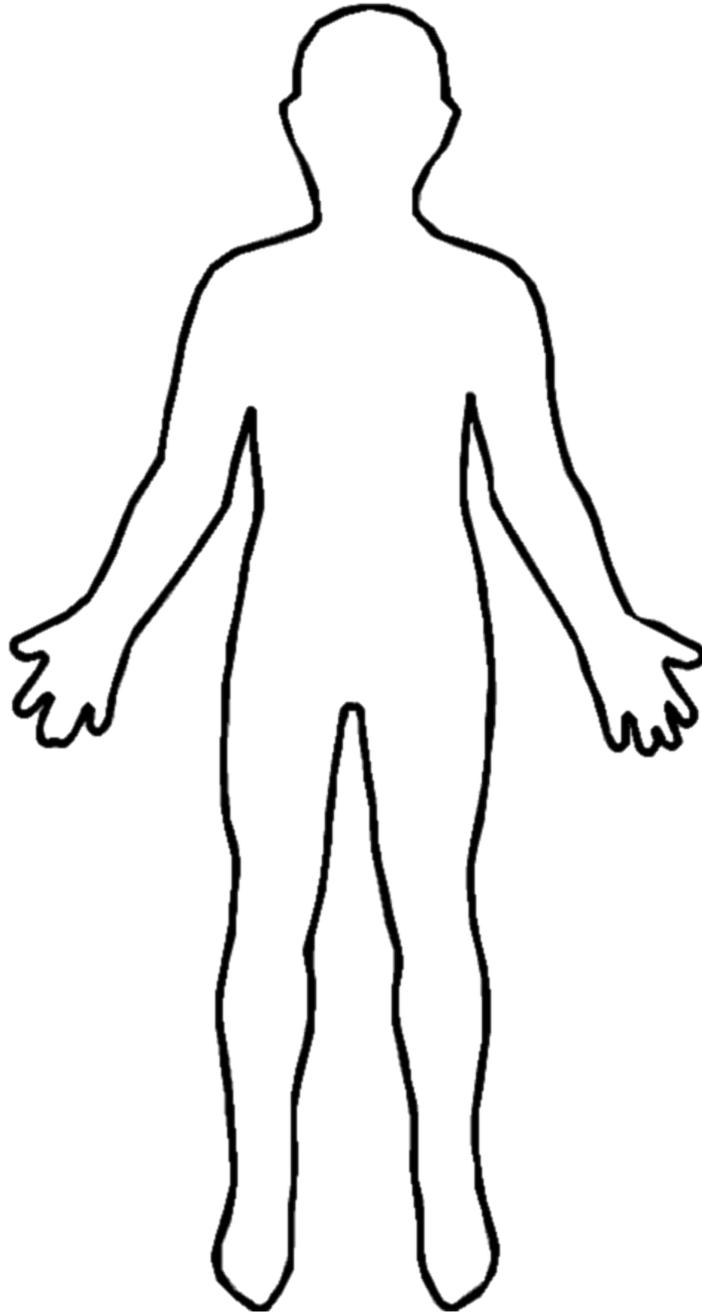
Shakespeare is Elementary: <http://www.cps.ednet.ns.ca/pageone.htm>

PBS In Search of Shakespeare project:

<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/elementary/indepth.html>

Video: Kids explain *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQiSzmykL0>

Name:



Character:

Name: _____



This is my magic potion! If you drink it, you will _____

_____, because it contains these special ingredients: _____
