

PRESENTS

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

STUDY GUIDE

CSC

DEAR TEACHERS,

This study guide from the CSC archives was created by Kathleen Dorman, former CSC Director of Education, in compliance with 2015 Common Core Anchor Standards for English Language Arts as well as the NYC Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts; all activities align with at least one standard in each category. It's packed full of information about Shakespeare, his language, the play, and our production of the play.

Feel free to photocopy pages for your students!

We've also included bonus lessons that correspond with each of our workshops. If you would like to attend a student matinee of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or schedule a workshop with your students for the 2020 - 2021 school year, please email Education Coordinator Marella Martin Koch at **marella.martinkoch@classicstage.org**.

For more updates on CSC, we encourage you and your students to follow us on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook @classicstage.

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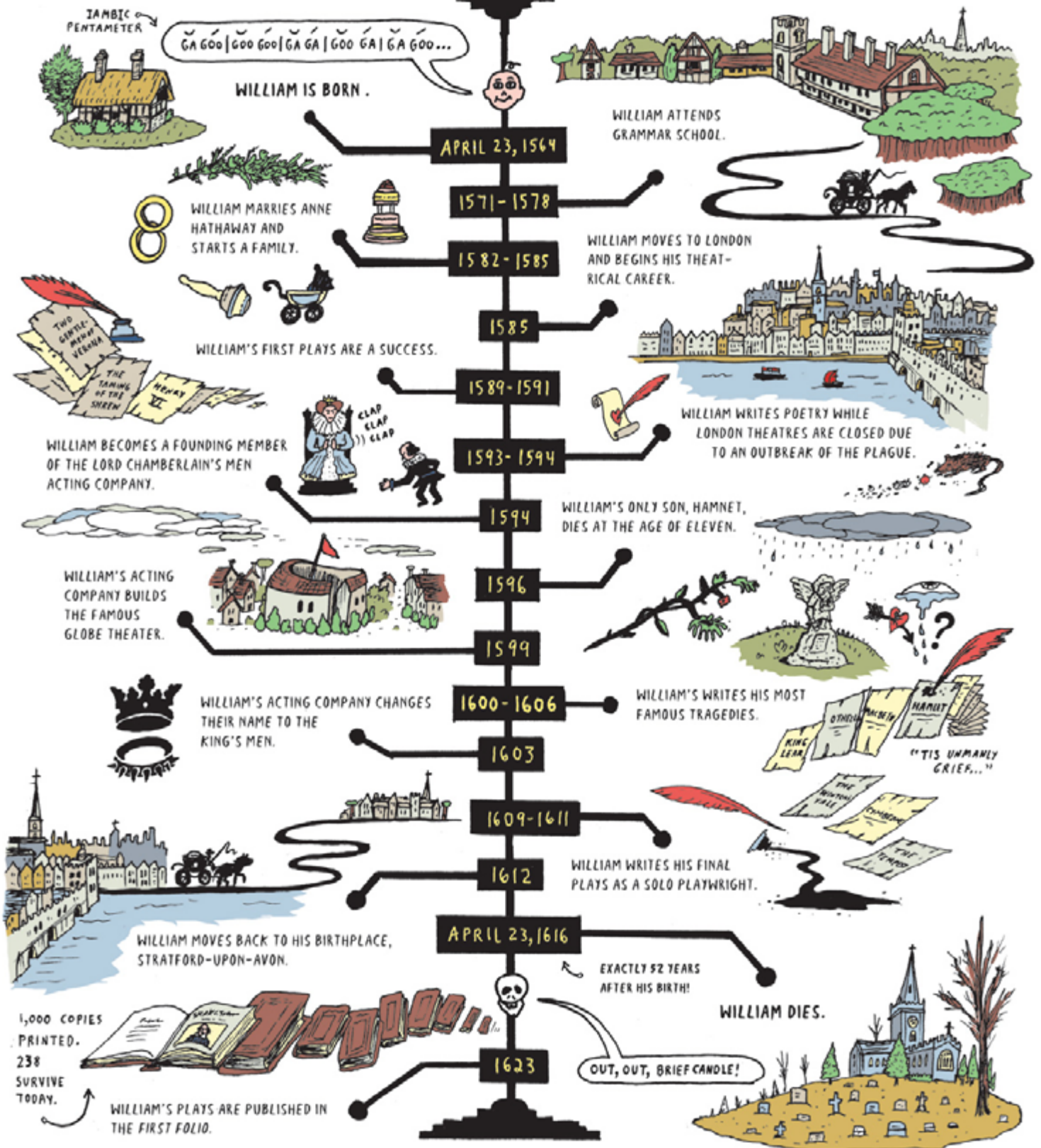
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PART ONE:
SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE AND
THEATRE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE - AN ILLUSTRATED BIOGRAPHY

ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID HEATLEY



ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

IN 16TH CENTURY ENGLAND, religion and politics were one **and the same**. People believed in the “divine right of kings” – that is, monarchs were given their right to rule directly from God, and were subject to no earthly authority. In 1534, **King Henry VIII** famously broke from the Catholic Church when they denied him the right to a divorce from his first wife, **Catherine of Aragon**, who had not produced a male heir. He declared himself head of the new Anglican Church, which eventually became part of the Protestant Reformation. His actions resulted in a time of bitter and violent religious disputes in England, and the crown changed hands frequently in a short period of time.

BY THE TIME SHAKESPEARE WAS BORN IN 1564, **Queen Elizabeth**—Henry VIII’s second eldest daughter, born to his second wife, **Anne Boleyn**—was in power. Her 44 years on the throne provided the kingdom with more stability than the previous short-lived reigns of her two half-siblings, **Edward VI** (crowned at age 9 and dead by age 16) and **Mary Tudor** (nicknamed “Bloody Mary” for the nearly 300 Protestants she had burned at the stake).

QUEEN ELIZABETH’S REIGN WAS A TIME OF THRIVING CULTURE. English citizens loved her, nicknaming her “Good Queen Bess”. Because she remained unmarried throughout her rule and did not give birth to an heir, a distant relative, **King James VI** of Scotland, was named as her successor. Both Elizabeth and James were great patrons of the theatre, and enjoyed Shakespeare’s plays. In fact, King James honored Shakespeare’s company of actors with the title of “The King’s Men”, and they performed at court regularly.



ELIZABETHAN TWITTER FEED

A CSC exclusive! We went back in time and got the scoop from the Royals themselves (plus Shakespeare, and his dad!) via Twitter.



King Henry VIII @VIIIKING · 1531
@CatAra you are outta here. This king needs a [#maleheir](#).
[#kingsgreatmatter](#)



Anne Boleyn @AnnieB · January 25, 1533
@CatAra check me out!!!. You better recognize, I AM THE NEW QUEEN!



Catherine of Aragon @CatAra · December 1535
The [#kingsgreatmatter](#) is literally killing me. Missing my daughter @BloodyMary.



Edward IV @Eddie_the_KING · January 28, 1547
I’m the King of the world!!!! [#kidsrule](#) [#9yearsold](#) [#winning](#)



Mary Tudor @BloodyMary · July 19, 1553
Turn down 4 Protestantism. Turn up 4 Catholicism! This one’s for my mom, @CatAra, RIP. [#sorrynotsorry](#)



Queen Elizabeth @GoodQueenB · November 17, 1558
There’s a new Queen Bee in the house y’all! @BloodyMary you’re about to get a taste of your own medicine.



Queen Elizabeth @GoodQueenB · 1560
Philip II, Eric XIV of Sweden, Henry of Anjou...So many suitors. So little time. [#singleNready2mingle](#) (j/k I have work to do)



John Shakespeare @Stratfor_Dad · April 26, 1564
Baptized my son William today @HolyTrinityChurch! [#blessed](#)



William Shakespeare @BillyShakes · 1589
Working on my 1st play! RT with title suggestions. It’s a comedy w/ a lot of errors.



Queen Elizabeth @GoodQueenB · April 23, 1597
Saw a HYSTERICAL play by @BillyShakes! Chek out Merry Wives of Windsor b4 it closes!



King James 1 @Scotty · March 24, 1603
RIP @GoodQueenB, thanks 4 the throne!
[#transformationtuesday](#) [#JacobeanEra](#)



King James 1 @Scotty · March 19, 1603
Congrats to my boy @BillyShakes and his players @RBurb & @ArminRob! [#thekingsmen](#)



GROWING UP SHAKESPEARE:

Fun, Games, and School

BOYS AND GIRLS began “petty school” around the age of four in order to learn how to read. Girls left school at age six to be taught at home by their mothers, or, if they were rich, a private tutor. If boys belonged to a middle class or wealthy family, they could continue on to “grammar school” after leaving petty school, or they were sent to work in some sort of trade, such as farming. At grammar school boys would study Latin, drama, poetry, and history for long hours with no desks. Learning Latin was important for any boy wanting to enter a career in law, medicine, or the Church. Because Shakespeare’s father made a sustainable living in public and government jobs, Shakespeare was able to attend grammar school where he likely picked up his love of drama and writing.



FOOTBALL—or soccer, as we know it—was a popular sport for people in the countryside around Shakespeare’s hometown. The balls were made from inflated pigs’ bladders! Shakespeare makes mention of this sport in *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*: “Am I so round with you as you with me, that like a football you do spurn me thus?” Other popular sports of the day Shakespeare mentions in his works include tennis, bowling, wrestling, rugby, billiards, and archery.



FESTIVALS occurred at various times of the year. One of the most popular was on May 1st—May Day, the celebration of the arrival of summer! Columns were erected (maypoles) and adorned with ribbons and flowers, traditionally as part of a dance. This tradition is referenced in *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM*: “They rose early to observe the rite of May.”

RIGHT: Children learned to read using “hornbooks” like these—a piece of wood covered with printed paper, protected by a transparent sheet of horn.



LONDON CITY LIVING

Filth, Fashion, and Fighting

IF YOU LIVED IN LONDON during Shakespeare's time, you would have encountered overly crowded streets, heaps of trash on the sidewalk, and the heads of executed criminals placed on poles for all to see. But amidst the grime, there were also beautiful churches and large mansions filled with nobles and wealthy merchants. Most items you needed would have been purchased from street vendors, including vegetables, fruits, toys, books and clothing.



ABOVE: Like New York City today, space was tight. Many buildings were designed with vertical living in mind, as London quickly became the epicenter of culture for England.



SHAKESPEARE MOVED TO LONDON to work in the theatre. But theatre wasn't the only cultural event happening in London. You could also view bloody tournaments between animals, and public executions! Gambling was also popular.

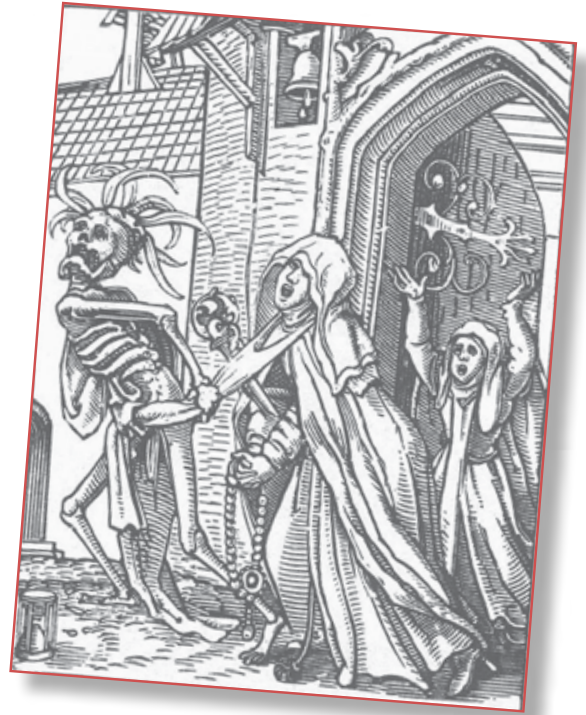


The first theatre was built in 1576. Its shape—like The Globe (**ABOVE**)—was influenced by bear fighting-rings, which were popular in London at the time. Shakespeare referenced this Elizabethan sport in *MACBETH* when Macbeth states, "They have tied me to the stake. I cannot fly, But bear-like I must stay and fight the course." (**RIGHT**)



OUTBREAKS OF THE PLAGUE were common in Elizabethan London. Many Londoners believed the plague was caused by the various smells throughout the city, so they carried containers filled with herbs to combat the stench. What they didn't know was that the plague was actually spread by fleas that lived on rats, which were rampant on the dirty streets.

In 1592, the plague forced London theatres to shut their doors for two whole years. 12,000 Londoners lost their lives. With no playhouses to produce his works, Shakespeare focused his attention on writing narrative poems and sonnets.



CLOTHING WAS A SIGN OF ONE'S RANK so there were strict rules dictating what citizens could and could not wear. Those dressing above their status could be arrested! Exceptions were made for actors as they often played nobles on stage.



ABOVE: As a rule, the less practical the outfit, the higher the rank of its wearer. Wealthy men often wore hats with ostrich feathers for decoration, and huge "ruff" collars. Wealthy women wore wide padded dresses with puffy sleeves.

RIGHT: The less wealthy wore practical clothing conducive to labor. While the wealthy were wearing luxurious fabrics such as silk and velvet, the lower-status citizens often wore rough wool.



WELCOME TO THE GLOBE THEATRE

LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT "THIS WOODEN O."

THE COMPANY WAS HAVING DIFFICULTY RENEWING THE LEASE ON OUR FIRST THEATER, SO IN 1599 WE TOOK IT DOWN AND MOVED ITS TIMBERS ACROSS THE THAMES RIVER TO THE BANKSIDE AND BUILT THE GLOBE.

THE BANKSIDE IS GREAT - IT'S JUST OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF THE CITY OF LONDON, SO WE'RE SAFE FROM CITY OFFICIALS WHO THINK THAT THE THEATER IS IMMORAL AND WANT TO ABOLISH IT.

THE ORIGINAL GLOBE BURNED DOWN IN 1613 WHEN CANNON FIRE—PART OF A PERFORMANCE OF HENRY VIII—ACCIDENTALLY SET THE THATCHED ROOF AFLAME! OOPS!

WE BUILT A SECOND, MORE ELABORATE GLOBE ON THE SAME SITE, AND IT REMAINED IN USE UNTIL CIVIL WAR BROKE OUT IN ENGLAND IN 1642.

THE FLAG IS FLYING! THAT MEANS WE'VE GOT A PERFORMANCE TODAY.

MY TICKET COST TWICE AS MUCH AS WHAT THAT GENTLEMAN PAID FOR HIS CUSHIONED SEAT. I'M RIGHT ABOVE ALL THE ACTION! EVERYONE CAN SEE THAT I'M A VIP.

THE STAGE ROOF PROTECTS THE ACTORS FROM THE WEATHER, AND ALSO ACTS AS A SET PIECE WE CALL THE "HEAVENS." SEE THE STARRY SKY WE PAINTED?

THE BALCONY IS GREAT FOR WINDOW SCENES.

O ROMEO, ROMEO, WHEREFORE ART THOU ROMEO?

DID YOU KNOW JULIET WAS PLAYED BY A BOY? NO GIRLS ALLOWED!

THIS IS A "THRUST" STAGE, MEANING WE HAVE AUDIENCE MEMBERS ON THREE SIDES. JUST LIKE AT CSC!

THIS TRAP DOOR LEADS TO "HELL," THE SPACE BENEATH THE STAGE. IT MAKES A GREAT GRAVE, TOO!

ALAS, POOR YORICK. I KNEW HIM...

MY TICKET COST TWICE AS MUCH AS WHAT THOSE "GROUNDLINGS" PAID TO STAND IN THE YARD BELOW. AND FOR AN EXTRA PENCE, I GET TO SIT ON A CUSHION!

THE GLOBE CAN ACCOMMODATE NEARLY 3,000 AUDIENCE MEMBERS. CSC'S HOUSE ONLY SEATS ABOUT 200.

CHEAPEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE! WELL, IT'S NOT A SEAT, EXACTLY. AT LEAST I GET TO SEE THE SHOW!

THE "GROUNDLINGS" SOMETIMES THREW FRUIT AT THE ACTORS IF THEY DIDN'T LIKE A PERFORMANCE!

Joseph D. Rotunno

DAVID HEATLEY



PART TWO: THE PLAY

BY D. HEATLEY

WELCOME TO ATHENS!

DUKE THESEUS IS PLANNING HIS MARRIAGE TO HIPPOLYTA, QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS.

EGEUS INTERRUPTS, DEMANDING HIS DAUGHTER HERMIA MARRY DEMETRIUS.

DEMETRIUS IS A WORTHY GENTLEMAN.

SO IS LYSANDER.

SHE REFUSES.

EGEUS ASKS FOR THE RIGHT TO PUNISH HERMIA IF SHE WON'T OBEY. THE DUKE AGREES.

LYSANDER AND HERMIA DECIDE TO FLEE BY NIGHT INTO THE WOODS WHERE THEY CAN ESCAPE THE LAW AND GET MARRIED.

THEY TELL THEIR PLAN TO **HELENA**, HERMIA'S BEST FRIEND.

BUT HELENA IS IN LOVE WITH DEMETRIUS, AND HE WAS ONCE IN LOVE WITH HER. HOPING TO REGAIN HIS FAVOR, SHE TELLS HIM HERMIA'S PLAN.

DEMETRIUS SETS OUT AFTER THE RUNAWAY LOVERS AT ONCE, AND HELENA FOLLOWS HIM INTO THE WOODS.

DEEP IN THE WOODS, THE KING AND QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES ARE ARGUING.

I LOVE THEE NOT, THEREFORE PURSUE ME NOT.

ILL MET BY MOONLIGHT, PROUD **TITANIA**.

WHAT! JEALOUS, **OBERON**!

HOW HAPPY SOME O'ER OTHER SOME CAN BE!

TITANIA LEAVES ANGRILY. OBERON PLAYS A TRICK ON HER.

HE SENDS **PUCK**, HIS MISCHIEVOUS SPRITE, TO FETCH A MAGICAL FLOWER WITH THE POWER TO INDUCE LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

DEMETRIUS PASSES BY WITH LOVESICK HELENA IN PURSUIT.

OBERON, PITTING HELENA, COMMANDS PUCK TO PUT THE JUICE ONTO DEMETRIUS' SLEEPING EYES SO THAT, UPON WAKING, HE WILL FALL BACK IN LOVE WITH HER.

WITH THE JUICE OF THIS I'LL STREAK HER EYES AND MAKE HER FULL OF HATEFUL FANTASIES.

HE'S WEARING ATHENIAN GARMENTS

BUT... UH-OH! PUCK MISTAKES LYSANDER FOR DEMETRIUS!

HELENA FINDS LYSANDER AND WAKES HIM UP. THE MAGIC FLOWER WORKS!

OBERON REALIZES THE MISTAKE AND PUTS THE JUICE ONTO DEMETRIUS' EYELIDS. HELENA BELIEVES SHE IS BEING MOCKED.

THAT'S HIM!

NOT HERMIA BUT HELENA I LOVE.

WHEREFORE WAS I TO THIS KEEN MOCKERY BORN?

O HELEN, GODDESS, NYMPH, PERFECT, DIVINE!

O SPITE! O HELL!

HE AWAKES TO FIND HELEN



HERMIA AWAKES AND IS SHOCKED AT WHAT SHE FINDS. LYSANDER IS NO LONGER IN LOVE WITH HER, AND IT SEEMS THAT HELENA HAS BETRAYED HER! ALL FOUR LOVERS BEGIN TO QUARREL.

MEANWHILE, A GROUP OF ATHENIAN WORKMEN VENTURES INTO THE WOODS IN SEARCH OF A PLACE TO REHEARSE THESEUS' WEDDING DAY PLAY.

I AM AMAZED AND KNOW NOT WHAT TO SAY.

HERE'S A MARVELOUS CONVENIENT PLACE...

NEAR TITANIA'S BOWER, WHERE SHE LIES SLEEPING

PUCK STUMBLES UPON THEIR REHEARSAL AND DECIDES TO CAUSE TROUBLE.

PUCK TRANSFORMS THE LEAD ACTOR **BOTTOM**— HE TURNS HIS HEAD INTO THAT OF AN ASS!

TITANIA AWAKES AND SHE FALLS IN LOVE WITH BOTTOM AT FIRST SIGHT!

O MONSTROUS! O STRANGE! WE ARE HAUNTED. HELP!

WHY DO THEY RUN AWAY?

SHE AND HER FAIRIES DOTE ON HIM FOR HOURS...

AFTER HAVING A LAUGH WITH PUCK, OBERON PITIES HIS QUEEN AND DECIDES TO SET THINGS RIGHT.

HE RELEASES TITANIA FROM THE SPELL, AND PUCK RETURNS BOTTOM TO HIS NORMAL SELF.

PUCK ALSO PAIRS HELENA WITH DEMETRIUS AND HERMIA BACK WITH LYSANDER.

MY MISTRESS WITH A MONSTER IS IN LOVE!

MY OBERON, WHAT VISIONS HAVE I SEEN!

JACK SHALL HAVE JILL, NAUGHT SHALL GO ILL.

THE NEXT MORNING, THESEUS AND EGEUS COME UPON THE SLEEPING LOVERS. ANGRY, EGEUS DEMANDS TO PUNISH HERMIA— BUT DEMETRIUS INTERVENES AND TELLS THEM HE IS BACK IN LOVE WITH HELENA!

THESEUS OVERRULES EGEUS AND INVITES BOTH COUPLES TO GET MARRIED THAT DAY ALONGSIDE HIMSELF AND HIPPOLYTA.

BOTTOM AWAKES AND ASSUMES THE WHOLE NIGHT WAS A DREAM.

THESE COUPLES SHALL ETERNALLY BE KNIT. AWAY WITH US TO ATHENS.

I HAVE HAD A MOST RARE VISION.

THE ACTORS PERFORM **PYRAMUS & THISBE** FOR THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA AND THE LOVERS AT THE TRIPLE WEDDING.

EVERYONE GOES TO BED. PUCK TELLS THE AUDIENCE IF THEY DIDN'T LIKE THE PLAY, THEY SHOULD IMAGINE IT WAS ALL A DREAM.

LION, MOONSHINE, WALL, AND LOVERS TWAIN...

O SWEET AND LOVELY WALL, SHOW ME THY CHINK.

MY FAIR PYRAMUS

ROAR!

WE'LL ROARED, LION.

WE'LL SHONE, MOON.

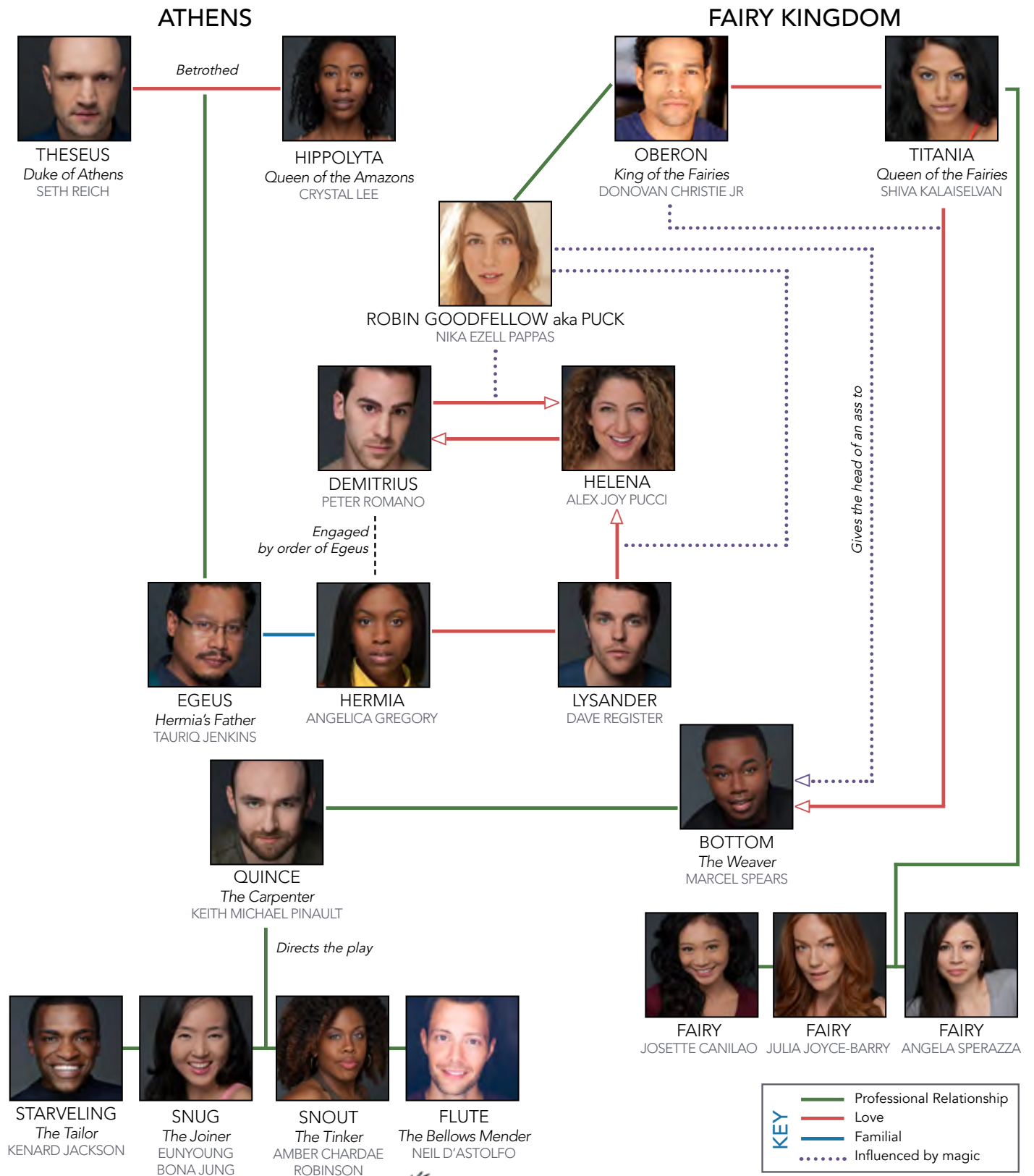
IF WE SHADOWS HAVE OFFENDED, THINK BUT THIS, AND ALL IS MENDED: THAT YOU HAVE BUT SLUMBERED HERE, WHILE THESE VISIONS DID APPEAR.

BRAVO!

END



WHO'S WHO from CSC's 2015 Young Company Production



NOTES ON THE PLAY

Essays by MIDSUMMER Dramaturg **CHRISTINA HURTADO**

Costume Designs by **ANDREA HOOD**

When Was A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM Written?

Dates are tricky when it comes to Shakespearean history. The records that still exist today are, well, kind of random. For example, we know that Queen Elizabeth had 40 pairs of velvet shoes, but we don't actually know when A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM was first performed. We do know that it was entered into the Stationer's Register in 1600, and that it was probably written at least a few years before that. So many plays were written and performed in Elizabethan England that it would often take years for a publisher to determine that a play was popular enough to even bother printing. We also know that the first performance couldn't have been before 1594, because the theaters had closed down due to an outbreak of plague.

Therefore, it seems most likely that A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM was first written and performed sometime in 1595-96, one year after the first performances of ROMEO & JULIET. Given the light-hearted frivolity and large number of dances, it's likely that the A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM was first commissioned as a wedding play to celebrate the nuptials of an important aristocrat, and then entered the repertoire of Shakespeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, due to its popularity.

QUESTION: How many references to marriage can you find in the play?
Can you count the number of times that the word "love" is used in the play?

If You're Gonna Steal, Steal from the Best

It's no secret that most of Shakespeare's plays are based on pre-existing stories, both historical and fictional, that were popular during his lifetime. Most of Shakespeare's contemporaries used the same source material, and sometimes they even attended each other's productions in order to steal dialogue to create their own plays. It's like comic book franchise movies: do you like Tim Burton or Christopher Nolan's *Batman*? Neither of them created *Batman*, but we enjoy seeing each director's take on the character! At the end of the day, the best playwrights told the best stories, and those are the plays that survived.

So what stories did Shakespeare borrow to create the A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM? One of the most likely sources was the work of Edmund Spenser, who wrote copiously about sprites in *The Faerie Queene* (which was really a metaphor for Queen Elizabeth I, but more on that later) and the *Epithalamion*, which is an ancient Greek-style poem about weddings. Shakespeare also pulled from Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, which describes two men fighting over a woman, forcing Theseus to intervene, as well as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, from which Shakespeare plucks the entire Pyramus & Thisbe story, and *Dur Busant*, a German poem about an eloping couple that get lost in the woods.

The important thing is that while Shakespeare did use parts of other people's stories, he combined them in a way that was uniquely his own. By using a story the audience was familiar with, Shakespeare was able to avoid tedious exposition and get straight to the meat and fun of the narrative.



QUESTION: Other than comic books like *Batman*, what stories have you seen multiple versions of?



Royal Fairy Drama!

Is Titania, Queen of the Fairies, a reference to Queen Elizabeth I, the most influential woman in the world at the time *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* was being performed? Shakespeare's audiences would have been familiar with Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, a thinly veiled ode to the virtues of Elizabeth. Obviously, if Shakespeare was going to have a "fairy queen," she would also be a stand-in for Elizabeth. Following that logic, it seems bold on Shakespeare's part to be so cruel to Titania. After all, what is he saying about the monarchy by setting the queen up with a donkey?

But then Shakespeare does something clever- he actually references Queen Elizabeth as the virginal paragon of womanhood (who is NOT Titania):

That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth
Cupid, all armed.
A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal thronèd by the west, *(That's Queen Elizabeth!)*
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon, *(Cupid's arrow misser her...)*
And the imperial vot'ress passèd on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free *(...so she never marries)*
(II.i.155–164).

Nice save, Willie! Guess your Queen of the Fairies isn't actually the Virgin Queen on the English throne... or is it?



QUESTION: What other fictional stories have painted a colorful picture of a world leader?
What other Shakespeare play comments on a real political situation?

An Athens State of Mind

Like any good playwright, Shakespeare carefully chose the settings for his plays to enhance his stories. From the Scandinavian bleakness of Denmark in *Hamlet*, the fertile foliage of the Arden Forest in *AS YOU LIKE IT*, or the magical Mediterranean island in *THE TEMPEST*, Shakespeare clues us in to the kind of story we can expect with the location. So why pick Athens? Why not set this story at home, in the English countryside? Why not Italy, where most of his non-England stories takes place? Why not some place further north, like Germany or Sweden, who have strong traditions of fairy stories? Why not Brooklyn? Oh wait, **Brooklyn wasn't established yet.**

By setting the play in Athens during the reign of Theseus, the fictional founder of the city, Shakespeare essentially begins the play by saying, "A long time ago, in a city far, far away..." to put his audience at ease. "Don't worry guys, this isn't Elizabethan England—none of this could happen to you." So Shakespeare takes us to ancient Greece to lull us into a false sense of security. The distance between us and the characters means we are able to look at them objectively and learn from them, rather than getting caught up in our own prejudices.

He also wanted a place that had authority, and that conjured a man-made world full of rules, regulations and restrictions. In fact, the name Theseus in Ancient Greek means "Establishment", enhancing the power of the city.





And then there are the woods—a mysterious, surprising and riotous escape. The woods in **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** are a place where mischief lurks behind every corner, and where one is freed from the strict rules and regulations of the city. Greek woods are also known as the domain of Pan, the goat-legged precursor to Puck, who likes to party too much and cause trouble to those who stumble into the woods. In plays like **MACBETH**, the woods indicate danger. After all, the most terrifying warning sign Macbeth receives is that the woods will come to the castle! But the woods in **MIDSUMMER** are more playfully anarchic than foreboding.

QUESTION: What clues can we pick up from the settings of Shakespeare's other plays? How does setting teach us the rules of the world? Where in your world do you go to escape?

Wakey Wakey

The play is called **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**, but what part of the story is actually a dream? Sure, there are times when people sleep, but the action continues around them. Is the dream simply the events that happen to the characters under the influence of flower juice? Maybe. Are all of the events in the forest a dream? After all, when the lovers tell their tale to Theseus, he is quick to dismiss the whole thing as a dream, although Hippolyta points that all the stories match up. Ok, so maybe the dream starts when we enter the woods with Puck at the beginning of Act II. I mean, fairies? Really? But wait! Let's go all the way back to the beginning! Theseus turns to the Master of Revels and says, "Stir up the Athenian youth to merriment; Awake pert and nimble spirit of mirth." Within moments, Hermia, Lysander, Helena and Demetrius arrive, caught in a very dramatic lovers rectangle. In the very next scene, Puck arrives to stir up trouble. It almost seems like Theseus magically invokes the rest of the play, doesn't it?

But then, at the end of the play, when all is resolved, including the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta, and the stage is completely empty, except for Puck, he turns to the audience and says "If we shadows have offended, think but this, and all is mended, that you have but slumber'd here whilst these visions did appear."

Whoa. I feel like I am dreaming writing this!



Demetrius



Hermia & Lysander

QUESTION: Where do you think the dream begins?

What's a Dramaturg?

Did you know that almost every production of Shakespeare modifies the play that we read in the classroom for performance? For example, to get our **MIDSUMMER** down to an hour-and-a-half (we couldn't keep you out of school too much longer than that!), we cut several scenes, a lot of lines, and even a few characters! A dramaturg on a Shakespeare production is someone who helps to make these kinds of decisions about cuts and changes to the play, and then helps the director and the actors to understand everything they are saying. In general, a dramaturg can serve many different roles in the theatre, from working with contemporary playwrights on new plays to giving feedback to a director about how a production could be stronger. Dramaturgy requires a lot of research and being an expert on the play. The dramaturg also makes sure the play stays true to the playwright's intentions.



QUIZ: WHO ARE YOU IN MIDSUMMER?

1. IT'S FRIDAY NIGHT! WHERE ARE YOU?

- A. Enjoying an exquisite French dinner.
- B. At a party with friends, of course!
- C. Curled up with a blanket, writing in your journal.
- D. Playing pranks on unsuspecting tourists in Times Square.
- E. Studying everyone else's lines for the school play. You never know when they'll need an understudy.

2. AFTER SCHOOL YOU CAN BE FOUND:

- A. Sitting on a blanket in Central Park.
- B. At your student council meeting.
- C. Spending time with the guidance counselor.
- D. In detention.
- E. Planning the annual talent show.

3. IF YOU WERE AN ANIMAL, WHICH WOULD YOU BE?

- A. Butterfly
- B. Lion
- C. Giraffe
- D. Fox
- E. Elephant

4. THE PICTURES ON YOUR INSTAGRAM ARE MOSTLY:

- A. Pictures from your latest vacation. No filter needed.
- B. Of you in your varsity letterman jacket.
- C. Your favorite song lyrics written in interesting fonts.
- D. Funny memes.
- E. Your new headshots.

5. YOUR YEARBOOK SUPERLATIVE IS:

- A. Best Dressed
- B. Best Eyes
- C. Teacher's Pet
- D. Class Clown
- E. Most Gullible

6. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SPORT?

- A. Dancing
- B. Football
- C. Basketball
- D. Track and Field
- E. You see yourself as more of a coach

7. IF YOUR BEST FRIEND HAD TO DESCRIBE YOU IN ONE WORD, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

- A. Crafty
- B. Adventurous
- C. Manic
- D. Mischievous
- E. Bossy

8. WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE YOUTUBE CHANNEL?

- A. Michelle Phan
- B. Epic Rap Battles
- C. One Direction's VEVO
- D. Epic Meal Time
- E. Miranda Sings

IF YOU ANSWERED MOSTLY:

- A. You are **Titania**
- B. You are **Lysander**
- C. You are **Helena**
- D. You are **Puck**
- E. You are **Bottom**



TABLE WORK:

How Actors Unpack Shakespeare's Language

IS THIS REALLY WRITTEN IN ENGLISH? Yes, it is! But it's also poetry. Elizabethans used poetry for the same reason we still use it today: to express heightened states of emotion. So the language may be more densely packed with all those great rhetorical devices you learned in English class—metaphors, alliteration, irony—but it's definitely still English.

DID PEOPLE IN SHAKESPEARE'S DAY SPEAK IN VERSE? No, no more than we speak in rap today. But people both then and now enjoy the rhythm and rhyme of verse. It helps us tune in more immediately, more completely to the feelings and choices of the characters.

IS SHAKESPEARE HARDER FOR ACTORS TO PERFORM THAN REGULAR PLAYS? Actually, for most actors, Shakespeare is easier! The rhythm of the language makes it easy to memorize. (You know how song lyrics get stuck in your head, or how you can remember silly little rhymes from when you were a kid? It's like that.) And all those rhetorical devices act as clues to tell the actors how their character feels.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "CLUES"? At the start of the rehearsal process, actors do what's called table work. They sit down with each other and with the director and talk about all the discoveries they've made while studying their scenes. They use this information to make choices as they move forward with rehearsals.

Shakespeare invented many words and phrases that we use on a regular basis today. Below are some examples:



Verse or Prose?

All of Shakespeare's language falls into one of two categories: verse or prose. Prose is what we think of as everyday speech, without specific rules regarding rhyme or rhythm. Verse, then, can be defined as giving order or form to the random stress patterns of prose.

A quick way to tell verse from prose: lines of verse begin with capital letters, while prose will appear in paragraph form.

Blank Verse

Blank Verse is the standard poetic form Shakespeare uses in his plays. It can also be defined as unrhymed iambic pentameter—that is, a line of poetry containing five ("penta" from the Greek prefix meaning five) iambic feet, not rhyming with any adjacent line. That's ten syllables all together. The pattern flows easily for speakers of English, because the stresses match the human heart beat:

ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM

or, a good way to remember the word "iamb" is to think of it as:

i AM, i AM, i AM, i AM, i AM

If you say, "The Yankees and the Mets are baseball teams." with natural inflection, you will have spoken a line of iambic pentameter.

The YANK | ees AND | the METS | are BASE | ball TEAMS.

Here are two more:

I TAKE | the SUB | way EV | ery DAY | to SCHOOL

I CAN'T | go OUT | be CAUSE | my HOME | work's LATE

Now say a line from A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM:

PUCK

My mistress with a monster is in love.

my | MISS | tress | WITH | a | MON | ster | IS | in | LOVE

A repeating combination of stressed and unstressed syllables is known as a foot, which is the basic unit of verse. An iamb is a foot of poetry containing two syllables, with an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable: ta DUM.

Prose

Prose is the everyday language used then and now. Since verse was the conventional method of writing in Elizabethan England, Shakespeare was actually pushing the literary boundaries by including prose in his plays.

At first glance, it may seem that Shakespeare used verse and prose to indicate a character's status (rich, powerful, educated characters speak in verse; poor, common, fools speak in prose) but upon closer look, you'll find that many characters go back and forth between verse and prose, and they do so at very specific moments in the play.

Actors pay close attention to when characters speak in verse and when they speak in prose because Shakespeare made these choices on purpose, and it can tell the actor a lot about how their character thinks and feels.

Bottom and the "Rude Mechanicals" (the Athenian workmen) speak most of the prose in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM:



BOTTOM

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 Rude Mechanicals speak in verse while performing their play at the Royal Court. By contrast, the Royals and the Lovers respond in prose as they watch the performance. **What might this tell the actors about the power dynamics in this scene?**

Rhyming Verse

Even though most of Shakespeare's plays are written in blank verse, he still makes frequent use of rhyme—especially when he wants to call your attention to something. Words that rhyme really stand out when we hear them spoken aloud, so these words are of particular importance to the actors.

In MIDSUMMER, you will notice rhyme everywhere – about 44% of this play is written in rhyming verse! **Why do you think Shakespeare made this choice? What effect do you think it will have on an audience? Does it contribute to a sense of magic?**

Irregular Verse

Shakespeare doesn't always write verse in perfect iambic pentameter. The rhythmic patterns change, and so do the number of syllables. This was pretty innovative stuff in Shakespeare's day. He was one of the first writers to break form. Just like a change from prose to verse is a clue for the actor, so is a variation in the verse pattern. Here are some of the most common variations found in MIDSUMMER.

Shared Lines & Split Lines

Shakespeare sometimes splits a line of verse, so that two characters share the ten syllables. This is called a shared line or a split line, and it helps to show quick thinking or strong emotion, as well as creating a sense of accelerated action. Thus we have both the effect of poetry AND of natural speech.

Have a look at these lines shared by friends Hermia and Helena as they try to unravel the tangled web of love and confusion caused by Puck and his magic flower juice:

HERMIA

Do not you jest?

HELENA

Yes, sooth, and so do you.

They scan as:

do YOU | not JEST | yes SOOTH | and SO | do YOU

This particular scene is known as the "lovers' quarrel," and contains some of the most concentrated amounts of shared lines in the play.

If you were directing MIDSUMMER, how might this language influence how you would stage this scene?



Feminine Endings

A “feminine ending” is a line of verse that ends with an unstressed extra syllable. The result is that the rhythm of the verse is thrown off just enough to indicate that the characters feel unsettled about something. Here’s an example, spoken by Hermia as she tries to make sense of her lover Lysander’s behavior after he leaves her alone in the woods:

HERMIA

Since night you loved me. Yet since night you left me.

since NIGHT | you LOVED | me YET | since NIGHT | you LEFT | me

Other Types of Poetry

A trochee is another type of poetic foot. Its pattern of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable is the exact opposite of an iamb: TA dum. Compared to an iamb, this feels surprisingly unnatural to speakers of the English language, so Shakespeare often uses trochees for his supernatural characters.

In MIDSUMMER, many of Puck’s speeches are in trochaic tetrameter—that is, a line of poetry containing four (“tetra” from the Greek prefix meaning four) trochaic feet. Here’s a famous example, from the Epilogue:

PUCK

If we shadows have offended
Think but this, and all is mended.

IF we | SHA dows | HAVE o | FEN ded
THINK but | THIS and | ALL is | MEN ded

Try tapping out the rhythm of iambic pentameter, then tapping out the rhythm of the excerpt from Puck’s epilogue. How does each one feel? Does one feel faster or easier than the other? Which one do you think more naturally represents the way we speak today?



AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR TYNE RAFAELI from CSC's 2015 Young Company

Why this play now? How is this story still important for us to hear today?

It can't be just a coincidence that A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM is, for so many great theatre artists, the reason they fell in love with theatre. A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM captures how endlessly delightful and playful theatre can be, while addressing profound concerns of our condition. The play has stood the test of time, endlessly reimagined by every generation of theater artists as a celebration of the boundless range of human imagination and the wild, sublime experience of falling in love.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM brings together different worlds, representing each level of society: powerful politicians, young teenage lovers, workmen, figures from both the city and the spirit world of our dreams. It speaks to the stunning diversity and complexity of our own dreamscape, the 21st Century city, which imposes its own rules and codes of behavior - which may be upset, changed and modified when we step outside our self-imposed walls.



ABOVE: Tyne Rafter

This "Dream" animates our relationship with the unknown: the world as it is when we are asleep: dreams, fairies, knavish sprites with a magical influence on our actions and emotions, beckoning us from the restrictions of our everyday lives.

But, on the most human level, MIDSUMMER is a play about the profound universal experience of falling in love and the freedom and dizziness this entails. This is as powerful relevant today as it was 500 years ago.

What are the differences you see between the woods and Athens?

The rich tension in *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* between the frozen rigidity of the ordered world of Athens and the chaotic freedom of the forest forms the backbone of the visual world of our production.

We are setting our production in a modern urban world, with each grouping in the play as a different urban tribe. From the Hipsters of the East Village, to the Mayor at Gracie Mansion, the backdrop of our production is contemporary New York.

The forest serves as a portal to another world, where we are emancipated from the laws and regulations of our lives. A place of escape, of exile from authority. This is where the outlaws and rebels go, becoming a place of considerable danger, but also of possibility and excitement. I see the fairies as a force of anarchy in their mischief, willfulness, and curiosity.

Further, the seasonal marker of Midsummer had a different cultural resonance for the Elizabethans than is familiar to us. To those of the 1500's, Midsummer was a time of danger, an erotically charged period of seasonal transition and harvest, a ticking time bomb of suppressed energy. The myths of Midsummer are when fairies are most active. To protect against these spirits – or perhaps the unconscious forces they represented – people hung summer garlands on the doors of their houses and the cradles of their children. To the Elizabethans, this was not purely a happy, easy, relaxed time of year. It was an un-nerving time when portals between worlds were open to unimaginable surprises.



ABOVE: Tyne Rafaeli



Concentrating and distilling that forest experience into this breathless and extraordinary night, in which people are pushed to the extreme, finding themselves becoming like animals as they discover their true natures, is my priority in this production.

What do you think Shakespeare was trying to say about love?

The course of true love never did run smooth...

The nature of chaotic, all consuming love is explored in each world of MIDSUMMER, from the jealousy of Titania and Oberon, to the power struggles between Theseus and Hippolyta, to the fantastical humor of Bottom and Titania. But the place where the passion and heartfelt vulnerability is most rigorously examined is with our four lovers: Hermia, Helena, Demetrius and Lysander.

These young lovers go on the most transformative journey through A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM. We meet them as sheltered children, struggling with the trials and tribulations of young love within a restrictive and highly regulated world. Their behavior and choices are tightly controlled by their parents and the demands of society. However, we follow them through the forest in their quest for freedom, as they bravely pursue the appetites of their hearts against the expectations of their elders.

Shakespeare puts them through the crucible of the forest, for which they initially appear unprepared and ill-equipped. This journey forces them to reassess their positions on what love is, and the value system by which they choose their partners. They must develop a new sense of self-awareness and confidence in following their own instincts. For example, Lysander's language changes over the play from speaking in luxuriant, romantic, rather empty, poetical images to expressing himself in simpler and more honest terms by the end.

Their journeys to true love also spur the most comic and wildest moments in the story, leading Puck to famously declare "Lord what fools these mortals be..."

Love in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM is sudden and all consuming, like most teenage love! But with Shakespeare's nuances of human frailty and vulnerability clearly visible within all that rapture and desire.

Dreams are very important in this play, why do you think that is? What does this theme do to enhance Shakespeare's view on love?

Shakespeare captures the very human sense we all have upon waking from a dream, that it is above all, fleeting. If we blink, the dream is forgotten. Yet, dreams appear to be deeply significant. They seem to have been a way for us of working out the challenges in our lives, and often emancipating ourselves from social norms and dilemmas. Some scientists have claimed that dreams are a time for the brain to rehearse the difficulties and challenges we face and to have a trial run of what might happen if this or that occurred.

There is a distinct contrast between the madness liberated by the night and the control and exposure of daytime.

Shakespeare focuses on that sense of unfathomable things happening in the dream-state because they are without motive or explanation. Strange events occur in the forest that can only be rationalized by reference to sleep and to dreams. In his day, omens foretold the inexplicable, and dreams could be vision of the future. If the fairies are fantasies causing events to happen, perhaps only dreams can give a clue as to why.

Perhaps Shakespeare's own rationale for the chaotic fantasy and bizarre happenings of MIDSUMMER is that it is "all just a dream". As Puck informs the audience, "We have but slumbered here, while these visions did appear". This is a nimble sidestep by delivering a happy-ever-after resolution to a seemingly unsolvable love story, which we, the audience, even 500 years later, willingly buy into.



PART THREE:
ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES
For Teachers

A TEACHER'S GUIDE

Curriculum Connections: Learning Standards

NYC Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts: Theatre

1. **Theatre Making:** Acting, Playwriting/Play Making, Design and Technical Theatre, and Directing: Students learn to use their minds, bodies, voices and emotions to examine the world and its meaning.
2. **Developing Theatre Literacy:** Students explore theatre history, use theatre vocabulary, and develop critical, analytical and writing skills through observing, discussing and responding to live theatre and dramatic literature.
3. **Making Connections:** Students make connections to theatre by developing an understanding of self. They respond to theatre by identifying personal issues, and apply learning in other disciplines to their inclusive understanding of theatre.
4. **Working with Community and Cultural Resources:** Community resources that support Theatre Making, theatre literacy, theatre connections and career exploration expand students' opportunities for learning.
5. **Exploring Careers and Life Long Learning:** Students develop audience skills and a connection to theatre that allows them to value theatre throughout their lives. They explore the scope and variety of theatre careers.

Common Core ELA Standards (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards)

READING

Key Ideas and Details (Strands 1-3)
Craft and Structure (Strands 4-6)
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (Strands 7-9)
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (Strand 10)

WRITING

Text Types and Purposes (Strands 1-3)
Production and Distribution of Writing (Strands 4-6)
Research to Build and Present Knowledge (Strands 7-9)
Range of Writing (Strand 10)

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Comprehension and Collaboration (Strands 1-3)
Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas (Strands 4-6)

LANGUAGE:

Conventions of Standard English (Strands 1-2)
Knowledge of Language (Strand 3)
Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (Strands 4-6)



ACTIVITIES

After Workshop 1: CELEBRITY CASTING

Based on what your students know about the characters in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM from the story WOOSH, have your class choose their own celebrity cast (actors, singers, politicians, television stars, etc.) for the play. Put up a list of all the characters and/or hand out lists to the class:

THE COURT

Theseus
Hippolyta
Egeus

THE LOVERS

Hermia
Lysander
Demetrius
Helena

THE FAIRIES

Oberon
Titania
Puck

RUDE MECHS

Bottom
Quince

Go through the characters one at a time and talk about who they are, and what celebrity could be cast as that character.

Example: Powerful Oberon has a commanding presence and a bit of a temper, but his jealous nature is rooted in his passion: he has a weakness for the ideals of true love. Idris Elba would make a good Oberon because he has played many characters with strong convictions and larger-than-life personas.

Blueprint Strand 3: Making Connections

Common Core Strands: R.1 & W.9 (have your students cite specific passages from the play to support their choices); SL.1 (have your students work in pairs or small groups); SL.4 (have students present their casting choices to the class—you can even do this in roll, as a casting director making a pitch to the artistic director!)

After Workshop 2: "SHAKESPEARE" IT!

Today your students worked on paraphrasing Shakespeare into modern speech. Altering Shakespeare's words—the very thing that makes Shakespeare "Shakespeare"—may have felt irreverent, but the truth is: Shakespeare LOVED word-play, inventing new words, and paraphrasing well-known stories into his own works!

Shakespeare hyphenated words, added prefixes (un-, be-, en-, de-, dis-), turned adjectives into verbs, and made up new words entirely. Come up with your own list of words with the class. (Examples: unstaple, belight, ensleep, destart, dismark)

When you have a variety of examples, have your students step into the role of Shakespeare writing his next play. Give them ten minutes to write the first few lines of a story—or even a play! (Example: I belit the room to unstaple my paper—he was ensleep'd and I woke him up...)

Then have a few volunteers read their work aloud. If doing a scene, students can cast their play within "the ensemble" (the class) and do a reading of the scene.

Blueprint Strand 1: Theatre Making: Playwriting

Common Core Strands: R.4 (pair and share: have students evaluate each other's work); W.3, W.4, W.5 (particularly if you have time to make this assignment into a longer story/scene); SL.4 & SL.6 (have the class listen to and evaluate the structure and clarity of the story/scenes); L.1 & L.2 (a strong command on language structure will provide context clues for the newly invented words; understanding of prefixes and suffixes also important!); L.4, L.5, L.6 (more pair and share evaluation)



ACTIVITIES

After Workshop 3: COLLAGE SONNETS

Today your class learned about sonnet structure; they also created a collage (a “mood board”) to get a visual idea of the play, and compiled a list of ideas/themes/elements from that collage. Ask students to choose five-ten words from the list and use them to write a sonnet – on their own, in small groups, or as a class.

Remind them that a sonnet must have:

- 14 lines
- ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme scheme
- 5 iambs (unstressed STRESSED) for a total of 10 syllables in each line

Blueprint Strand 2: Developing Theatre Literacy

Common Core Strands: R.9 (compare the sonnets written students to Shakespeare’s MIDSUMMER – how did these different authors explore similar themes?); W.5 & W.5 (particularly if you have time to revisit/edit); SL.2 (reference the “mood board”); SL.3 (pair and share: have students evaluate each other’s work); SL.5 (again, if you revisit this/turn it into a larger project); L.1, L.2, L.3 (the sonnet as a poetic form; knowing the rules of the English language and when/how to break them for effect in poetry)

After Workshop 4: ROLE ON THE WALL

Your students are rehearsing their scenes now—this activity will help them develop their characters!

Split students into groups based on the role they are playing (all the Oberons together, all the Pucks together, etc.) Pass out giant pieces of paper and have one student in the group lay down on the paper while another traces his or her outline. (Note that this activity can also be done independently on regular sheets of paper—simply have the student trace the outline of their own hand.)

Ask the groups to write things that their character thinks/feels/says about himself or herself on the INSIDE of the outline; they should write things other characters think/feel/say about their character on the OUTSIDE. Encourage groups to search through the text of MIDSUMMER for actual quotes!

When groups are finished brainstorming, hang your “role on the wall” and whip around to each group to allow them to share their findings. What did they learn about their character? How will they incorporate this knowledge into their scene presentations? How might actors benefit from this exercise?

Blueprint Strand 1: Theatre Making: Playwriting

Common Core Strands: R.1 (pulling specific quotes from the text); R.2 & R.3 (look at the relationship between two or more characters and the themes that emerge); R.4, R.5, R.6 (for a broader look at the play that can begin with this activity; potential reflection questions/essay topics to approach through the lens of this activity); W.9 (again with specific quotes); SL.1 (if working in groups or pair/share); SL.3 (determine context and a character’s tone before citing evidence); SL.4 (present to class); L.3, L.4, L.5 (when searching the text for evidence)



ACTIVITIES

After Workshop 5: COMPARED TO WHOM?

Use your knowledge of the characters in the play to analyze the relationship and status of each character.

Print out pieces of paper with character names on them or have students make the papers.

THE COURT

Theseus
Hippolyta
Egeus

THE LOVERS

Hermia
Lysander
Demetrius

THE FAIRIES

Oberon
Titania
Puck

RUDE MECHS

Bottom
Quince

Pass out the names to twelve students. Have them arrange themselves (in character) in order from youngest character to oldest; who knows the most about love in the play to who knows the least; highest status to lowest status; most honest to least honest; most loyal to least loyal, etc. Encourage discussion: does the class agree with the placement? If not, why not? You can alternate the participating group of students, and take category suggestions from the class.

Blueprint Strand 3: Making Connections

Common Core Strands: R.3 (how individuals interact); R.6 (points of view); W.1 (have students write about the experience afterwards); W.9 (use quotes from the text to support choices the class made); SL.1 & SL.3 (discuss as a class)



SOURCES

Teaching Shakespeare

by Rex Gibson

Shakespeare for Dummies

by John Doyle (CSC Artistic Director) and Ray Lischner

The Friendly Shakespeare

by Norrie Epstein

The Genius of Shakespeare

by Jonathan Bate

Brush Up Your Shakespeare!

by Michael Macrone

Essential Shakespeare Handbook

by Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding

William Shakespeare and The Globe

written and illustrated by Alikei

Eye Witness Shakespeare

written by Peter Crisp, photographed by Steve Teague

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Classic Stage Company (CSC) is the award-winning Off-Broadway theater committed to reimagining the classical repertory for contemporary audiences. Founded in 1967, CSC uses works of the past as a way to engage in the issues of today. Highly respected and widely regarded as a major force in American theater, it has become the home to New York's finest established and emerging artists, the place where they gather to grapple with the great works of the world's repertory.



The National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest presents *Shakespeare in American Communities*. CSC is one of 40 professional theater companies selected to participate in bringing the finest productions of Shakespeare to middle- and high-school students in communities across the United States. This is the twelfth year of this national program, the largest tour of Shakespeare in American history.



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classicstage.org