

Learn

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Marcia Williams retells *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, one of Shakespeare's plays. She includes some of the original language in this version.

The play is set in Athens, a long time ago where there are ancient rules. For example, a girl must marry the man her father chooses for her. This play is about two women, Hermia and Helena, and two men, Lysander and Demetrius. And in this *Midsummer Dream*, they meet elves, fairies and even a King and Queen along the way.

In the second extract, Hermia and Lysander have run away together as they want to get married. Helena has followed Demetrius. She loves him but he also loves Hermia. We also meet Oberon, the King, and a mischievous elf called Puck.

Watch *Strictly Come Dancing* dancer Kevin Clifton read an extract from the retelling of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and listen carefully to what happens.

Think about the following:

- What does one of the most ancient laws in Athens say?
- Who is Egeus?
- What does Egeus want Hermia to do?
- What does Theseus suggest?
- What do you think will happen?

Watch this video: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z43gp4j>

Now watch Kevin read another extract from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and think about the following:

- Does Demetrius like Helena?
- What does Oberon think about Helena and Demetrius?
- What does Oberon tell Puck to do?
- Does Puck do the right thing?

Tuesday

Practise

You may need paper and a pen or pencil for some of these activities.

Activity 1

Extract 1

The laws in ancient Athens were extremely harsh. One of the more outrageous laws decreed that a daughter must marry the man of her father's choice. If she chose to disobey her father, she risked having to live out her days in a nunnery - or, worse, forfeit her life.

You would think that fathers would let their daughters choose their own husbands, but some of them would not.

Take the grand Athenian gentleman Egeus, for example. ^{1.1.1}He was a tyrant, and he had ordered his pretty, dark-eyed daughter Hermia to marry a young noble called Demetrius.

Demetrius was young, good-looking and rich, and he loved Hermia - but Hermia did not love him. She loved his friend, Lysander, and Lysander loved her. The trouble was that Hermia's best friend, Helena, who was as tall and ungainly as Hermia was small and dainty, adored Demetrius with an all-consuming passion.

As a result of all of this, not one of them was happy.

Hermia was as stubborn as her father and would not agree to marry Demetrius, so Egeus brought her to the court of Theseus, Duke of Athens. Surely the duke could persuade her to change her mind?

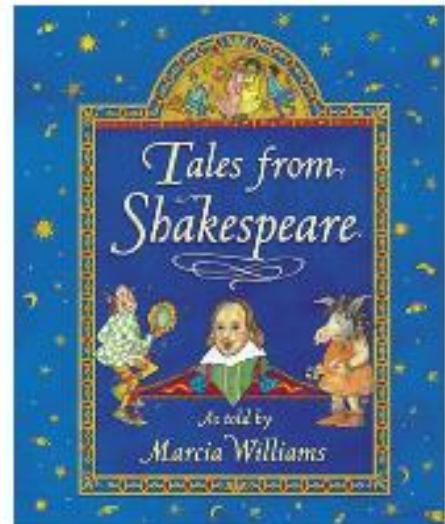
'Full of vexation come I, with complaint against my child,' grumbled Egeus.

'What say you, Hermia?' said the duke. 'Be advised, fair maid, your father should be as a god!'

'I would my father look'd but with my eyes!' said Hermia.

Theseus was about to get married himself, so he was inclined to be sympathetic towards Hermia. ^{1.1.5}He gave her four days to choose between love and duty.

'Take time to pause,' he gently advised her.



Author and illustrator Marcia Williams retells A Midsummer Night's Dream, bringing Shakespeare's play to life. Published by Walker Books.

1. Read or watch Extract 1 again.

Which events did you think were important? If you were going to tell somebody else about this extract, what would you tell them?

2. List 'The top eight things' that you think they would definitely need to know so that they will understand what is happening in this extract.

Top tip!

You might want to skim and scan the extract and make some notes to summarise the key points, then decide which to include in your top eight.

Wednesday

Extract 2

Now, as it happened, Demetrius and Helena passed close to where Oberon sat waiting for Puck's return. Oberon could not help overhearing what passed between the pair.

'I am sick when I do look on thee,' Demetrius shouted at Helena.

'And I am sick when I look not on you,' she sniffed.

Then off they went again, Demetrius chasing Hermia, and Helena chasing Demetrius!

Oberon was touched by Helena's devotion, which was so unlike his own queen's, and he decided that she should have Demetrius. So, when Puck returned, Oberon told him to wait until the couple slept and then anoint Demetrius's eyelids with the juice of the magic plant. Demetrius would then wake to see Helena, and love her for ever more.

'Thou shalt know the man by the Athenian garments he hath on,' Oberon said.

'Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so,' cried Puck, vanishing in an instant.

Meanwhile, Oberon had his own plan. He set out in search of his sleeping queen. When he found her, he squeezed the flower's magic juice upon her eyelids.

'What thou seest, when thou dost wake, do it for thy true-love take, be it ounce, or cat, or bear. Wake when some vile thing is near,' he whispered in Titania's ear. Then he vanished into the shadows to wait and watch.

Puck was also busy anointing a pair of eyes with the flower's juice.

'Weeds of Athens he doth wear: this is he, my master said,' he mused.

Only unfortunately it was the wrong 'he'! Puck had mistaken Lysander for Demetrius and had put the flower's juice on his eyes as he lay close to Hermia. And then, as luck would have it, Helena, still in pursuit of Demetrius, tripped over Lysander in the dark and woke him. So Lysander instantly forgot his love for Hermia and fell in love with Helena!



1. Read or watch Extract 2 again.

Oberon tells Puck to put the magic juice into the eyes of Demetrius. However, Puck makes a mistake and puts the juice in Lysander's eyes. This has terrible consequences as now Lysander loves Helena instead of Hermia.

Who do you blame for this? Is it Oberon's fault or Puck's fault? You may think that both characters are to blame as one told the other to do it?

2. Write a short paragraph in response to the following question:

'Who do you blame?'

You might want to record your evidence in a table, so you can refer to specific points when you answer the question.

Evidence That Shows That Oberon Is To Blame	Evidence That Shows That Puck Is To Blame
1.	
2.	
3.	

Thursday

Activity 3

1. Read or watch Extract 2 again. We know that Puck has made a terrible mistake by putting the magic juice in Lysander's eyes instead of Demetrius's.

However, Puck thinks that he has followed Oberon's instructions so he may be feeling happy with himself.



2. Write a short diary entry for Puck. Think about the following:

- What attitude do you think Puck will have?
- Will he be feeling proud of himself and happy to have caused some fun and mischief?
- Will he be glad he has done his job, but feel guilty that he is playing with somebody's feelings?

Or have you got another idea about how Puck will be feeling?

Top tip!

Remember to include a greeting and to finish your diary entry.

Write in the first person ('I', 'me', 'my') and use the past tense.

Friday

Now write!

Write an article for your school magazine or newsletter, persuading other children to take up a hobby. You can choose one of the hobbies in the text you have read, or a different hobby that you know about. You will need to:

- point out the fun things about the hobby
- say why the hobby is good for you (e.g. it keeps you fit, helps you make friends, etc.)
- explain what you need to take part in the hobby (e.g. any equipment, lessons, etc.)
- convince readers that this hobby is something they would love to do!

Look at this video for support with persuasion:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD9arWXIddM>