

‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’

By

William Shakespeare

OXFORD SCHOOL SHAKESPEARE

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

'A Midsummer Night's Dream'

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Shakespeare's Early Life

Shakespeare is the most famous and popular writer in the English language. People have read, studied and enjoyed his plays for over 400 years. You might already know some of them: he wrote 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Hamlet', and 'Othello', as well as many others. His plays are funny, scary, sad and exciting, and many people praise Shakespeare for his original and imaginative stories and characters. But Shakespeare was actually a bit of a thief! He took many of his ideas from the stories he studied when he was at school. Clearly he was paying attention in lessons!

This term, you are going to study one of Shakespeare's funniest plays. It's called *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Before we start to read it and act it out, we are going to learn a bit about Shakespeare's life and education, so we can find out what gave him the idea to write this play.



A scene from 'Romeo and Juliet', one of Shakespeare's most famous plays.



Shakespeare's father made gloves which rich people would pay a lot of money for.

Shakespeare's birth and early childhood

No one knows the exact date Shakespeare was born as birth records weren't kept that long ago. However, we think he was born on 23 April 1564. That's over 450 years ago! It's also nearly 250 years before Charles Dickens was born. William Shakespeare's father was John Shakespeare, a glove maker, and his mother was Mary Arden, who was the daughter of an affluent landowning farmer.



He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, a town in the middle of England about 22 miles away from Birmingham. When Shakespeare was born in

1564, the ruler in charge of England was Queen Elizabeth I. Because of this, we call this time in history the Elizabethan era.

*Elizabeth I who
ruled England
during the
Elizabethan era.*

Shakespeare's education

Like his birth, there are no records of exactly where Shakespeare went to school. However, we think he probably went to a grammar school called the King's New School in Stratford-upon-Avon. The school is still open today and continues to call itself 'Shakespeare's School'.

In Elizabethan England, grammar schools were very strict, and students had to work hard. The school day would usually start at six in the morning and continue to five in the evening! During the winter, school days were shorter, but they still ran from seven to four. They had to go to school six days a week, so students spent around 2,000 hours a year at school. That's twice the amount of time students spend at school today! Next lesson we will find out what Shakespeare learnt at school.



Warwickshire, the county Shakespeare grew up in.



King's New School, the grammar school Shakespeare attended.

Shakespeare's Education

What did Shakespeare learn at school?

We know that Shakespeare went to a grammar school where students studied for very long hours. They studied a lot of Maths, including arithmetic, algebra and geometry and they had an extensive religious education.



Shakespeare would also have learnt a lot about ancient Greece and Rome when he was at school. The ancient Greeks and Romans lived about two thousand years before Shakespeare was even born. The Elizabethans really admired the ancient Greeks and Romans, even though they lived such a long time ago. The Elizabethans made their children learn about the ancient Greeks and Romans in school.



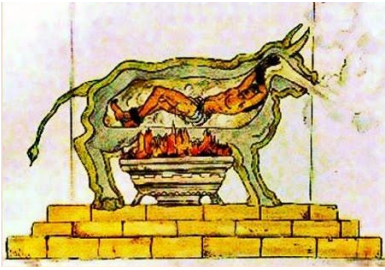
Theseus battling the minotaur in a famous myth from ancient Greece.

The ancient Greeks and Romans were famous for lots of things. They had lots of great writers who wrote wonderful stories. The stories that they wrote about are not always true. They are myths. Myths are ancient stories about magical and fantastical events. Greek and Roman myths are still popular today. Lots of them have been turned into films. For example, you might have seen the films *Hercules*, *Troy*, *300*, *Clash of the Titans*, *Immortals* or *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*. All of these films are based on Greek and Roman myths.

As well as important writers, they had clever mathematicians who made important discoveries. They had amazing artists who made striking pots. These pots often show everyday people creating things as a pastime. They thought that education was very important. In ancient Greece, men would regularly meet in grand buildings to discuss Philosophy.



A part of a painting which shows the famous mathematician, Pythagoras, writing down his theories.



Women were generally not educated and were expected to obey men. Society was very ordered and there were very harsh punishments for people who broke the rules. They put some criminals in a bronze statue of a bull and light a fire underneath the statue so that the person burned to death!

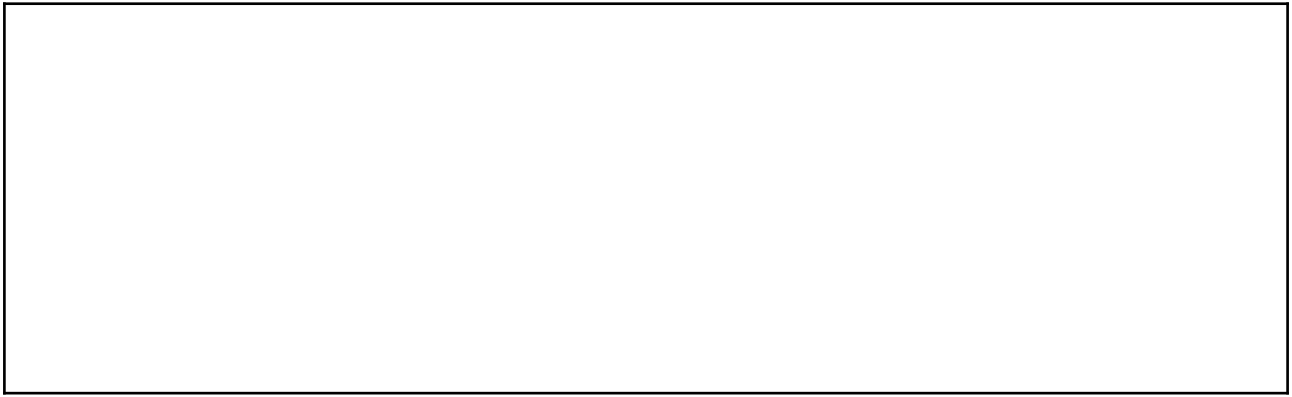
The bronze bull used to burn people to death.

Shakespeare must have paid attention when he was at school, because he was influenced by the writers of ancient Greece and Rome. Some of Shakespeare's plays are about *real things* that happened in ancient Greece and Rome and some of his plays are about *myths* from Greece and Rome.

His play 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is set in one of the most famous ancient Greek cities called Athens. It was known all around the world for its wealth and grand buildings. The people who lived in Athens were called 'Athenians'. When we read the play, you will be able to see how Shakespeare presents Athenians and their culture.



Ancient Athens

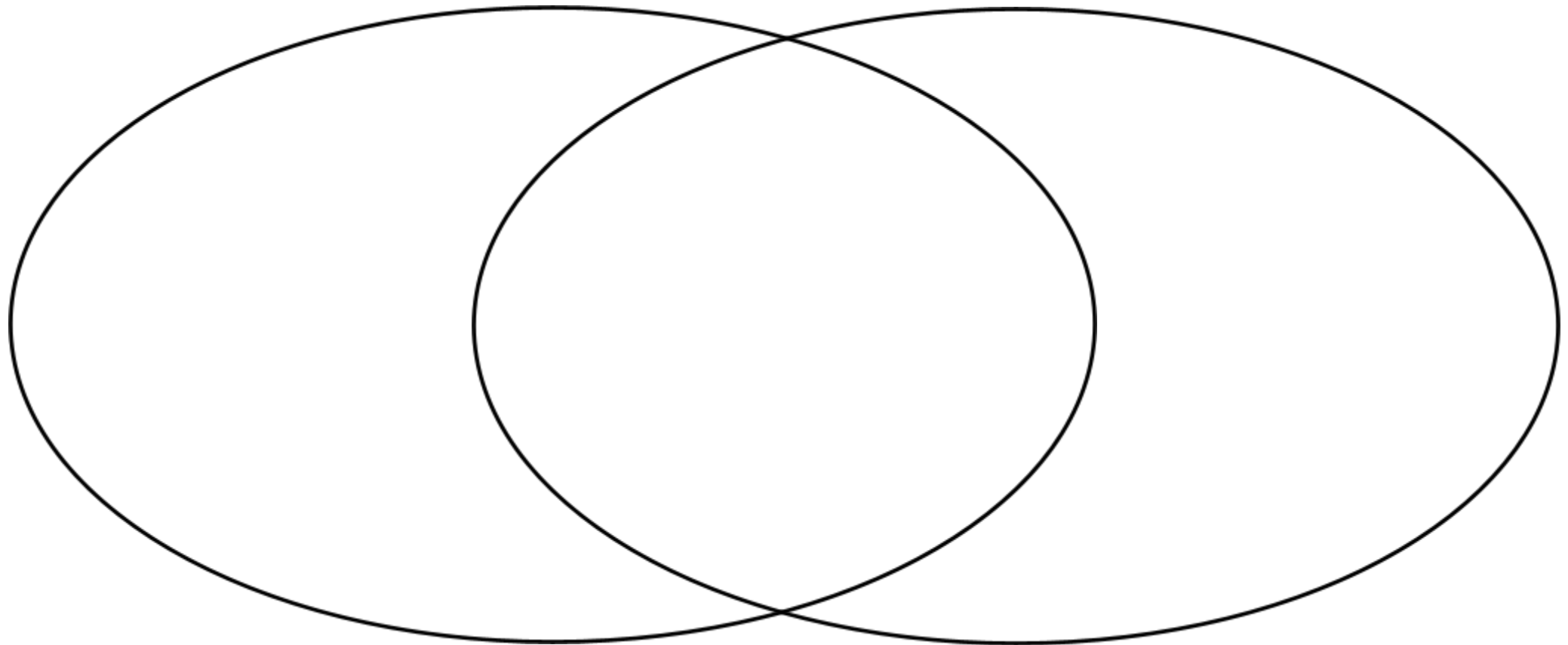


What are the similarities and differences between plays and novels?

Plays

Both plays and novels

Novels



Written for readers	Contain speech and prose	Divided into chapters	Can be set anywhere
Written for actors to speak aloud	Can contain a number of characters	Give stage directions	Contain a list of characters and locations at the start

Divided into acts and scenes	Only contain speech	Can be any length	Can be set in any time period
About two to four hours long	What other similarities and differences can you think of?		

Egeus's Complaint: Act 1, Scene 1, Lines 22 – 45

1. How is Egeus feeling?	EGEUS Full of vexation come I, with complaint		vexation – anger, frustration
2. Who is he complaining about?	Against my child, my daughter Hermia.		
3. Which man does he like?	Stand forth Demetrius!– My noble lord, This man hath my consent to marry her.	25	consent – permission
4. Which man does he not like?	Stand forth, Lysander!– And, my gracious duke, This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child.		Bewitched – put a spell on; Bosom – heart
	Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes, And interchanged love-tokens with my child.		Thou – you; hast – have; rhymes – love poetry
	Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung With feigning voice verses of feigning love, And stolen the impression of her fantasy,	30	interchanged – swapped feigning voice – a voice pretending to be honest
5. What has Lysander done?	With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits, Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats – messengers Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth; With cunning hast thou filched my daughter's heart, Turned her obedience, which is due to me, To stubborn harshness.	35	bracelets...sweetmeats – gifts Lysander has given Hermia to fool her into loving him prevailment – persuasion; unhardened – inexperienced filched – stolen due – owed

6. What should his daughter do?	<p style="text-align: center;">And, my gracious duke,</p> <p>Be it so she will not here, before your grace, Consent to marry with Demetrius,</p>	40	<p>Be it so – if; before – in front of Consent – agree</p>
7. What does he want to happen to her if she doesn't do what he wants?	<p>I beg the ancient privilege of Athens; As she is mine, I may dispose of her; Which shall be either to this gentleman Or to her death, according to our law Immediately provided in that case.</p>	45	<p>ancient privilege – the traditional law of Athens dispose – get rid of</p>

Act 2, Scene 1: Oberon and Titania meet in the magical forest

OBERON: Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania!

Ill met – an unlucky meeting

TITANIA: What, jealous Oberon? Fairies, skip hence.

jealous – envious

I have forsworn his bed and company.

forsworn – refused

OBERON: Why should Titania cross her Oberon?

cross – disobey;

I do but beg a little changeling boy

but – only; **little changeling boy** – a small child Titania has adopted

to be my henchman.

henchman – helper

TITANIA: Set your heart at rest.

The fairy land buys not the child of me.

buys not – does not buy; **of** – from

OBERON: Give me that boy.

TITANIA: Not for thy fairy kingdom.

thy – your

Fairies, away.

Exit Titania and her train.

train – followers, entourage

OBERON: Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove

Thou – you; **shalt** – will; **grove** – forest

Till I torment thee for this injury.

torment – torture, hurt

Using quotations

Have these students used quotations in a good way or a bad way?

1	Point	Lysander's love for Helena is intense.	
	Quotation	This can be seen when he says 'And run through fire would I for thy sweet sake!'	
	Good quotation		Bad quotation

2	Point	Lysander's love for Helena is intense.	
	Quotation	This is demonstrated when Lysander says, 'Not Hermia, but Helena I love.'	
	Good		Bad

3	Point	Lysander's love for Helena is intense.	
	Quotation	This can be seen when he says, 'Transparent Helena, nature shows art that through thy bosom makes me see thy heart. Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word is that vile name to perish on my sword!'	
	Good		Bad

4	Point	Now that Lysander loves Helena, he thinks Hermia is like a raven and Helena is a dove.	
	Quotation	This is demonstrated when Lysander says, 'Who will not change a raven for a dove?'	
	Good		Bad

5	Point	When Lysander falls in love with Helena, she assumes that he is making fun of her.	
	Quotation	This is evident when she says 'wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?'	
	Good		Bad

Quotation Hunter: A Midsummer Night's Dream

What's happening in the play at this point?	
Who is talking?	
Who are they talking to?	
Quotation (make sure you copy it exactly!)	
Notes on the quotation	

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