

A Midsummer Night's Dream – all roles can be played by actors of any gender

The 'Lovers':

LYSANDER, a young courtier, in love with Hermia (*lead role*)

DEMETRIUS, a young courtier, in love with Hermia (*lead role*)

HERMIA, Daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander (*lead role*)

HELENA, in love with Demetrius (*lead role*)

The Fairies:

OBERON, King of the Fairies (*lead role*)

TITANIA, Queen of the Fairies (*lead role*)

PUCK, or Robin Goodfellow, serves Oberon (*lead role*)

PEASE-BLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, MUSTARD-SEED, fairies who serve Titania (*ensemble roles*)

Other **Fairies** attending on their King and Queen (*ensemble role*)

The Court of Athens:

THESEUS, Duke of Athens (*supporting role*)

HIPPOLYTA, Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus (*supporting role*)

EGEUS, Father to Hermia (*cameo role*)

PHILOSTRATE, Master of the Revels to Theseus (*cameo role*)

The 'Mechanicals' (workmen and amateur actors):

QUINCE, a Carpenter (*lead role*)

SNUG, a Joiner (*cameo role*)

BOTTOM, a Weaver (*lead role*)

FLUTE, a Bellows-mender (*supporting role*)

SNOUT, a Tinker (*cameo role*)

STARVELING, a Tailor (*cameo role*)

See the 'Detailed Character Descriptions' below for more in depth analysis on each character.

Lead, Supporting, Character or Ensemble roles roughly depict the size of part, from largest to smallest.

A Midsummer Night's Dream – Detailed Character Descriptions

The Lovers

Lysander is a young gentleman in the court. He is in love with Hermia and she with him. Unfortunately, Hermia's father, Egeus, wants her to marry Demetrius. Lysander and Hermia decide to run away together but they are followed by Demetrius and Helena. Whilst there, Lysander has a magic spell put on him which makes him accidentally fall in love with Helena. The spell is eventually lifted and by the end of the play he and Hermia have married each other.

Facts we learn about Lysander at the start of the play:

- He is equally ranked to Demetrius but Egeus has chosen Demetrius to marry his daughter Hermia.
- He has an aunt who lives outside of Athens. She considers him her heir.
- Lysander and Hermia love each other.

Demetrius is a young gentleman in the court, who used to be in a relationship with Helena. He is now in love with Hermia and has her father's blessing to marry her. He follows Hermia into the forest when he learns from Helena that she has run away with Lysander. While in the forest he has a magic spell put on him that makes him fall in love with Helena. At the end of the play he recognises that he has loved Helena all along and they get married.

Facts we learn about Demetrius at the start of the play:

- He has been engaged to Helena in the past.
- He is favoured by Egeus over his rival Lysander.
- He is angry at Helena for following him and loving him despite how badly he treats her.

Hermia is a young woman in Athens and Egeus' daughter. She is in love with Lysander but unfortunately Egeus wants her to marry Demetrius. Egeus invokes an ancient law that states he can choose his daughter's husband or she will be put to death. The Duke Theseus upholds the law and condemns Hermia to death. She and Lysander decide to elope to escape the judgement. In the woods they are chased by Demetrius and Helena, Hermia's best friend. Whilst there Lysander and Demetrius fall under a magic spell that makes them both fall in love with Helena. A huge argument ensues before more magic is used to work out all the problems. At the end of the play Theseus overrules Egeus, with Hermia and Lysander marrying.

Facts we learn about Hermia at the start of the play:

- She believes she has the right to choose her own husband.
- She stands up for herself against all the odds and defies her father to run away with Lysander.
- Hermia and Helena have grown up together as best friends.

Helena is a young woman in Athens. She is in love with Demetrius but he is not in love with her. Instead, he loves her best friend Hermia. As a way of convincing Demetrius to love her, Helena tells him about Hermia's plan to run away with Lysander and together they go into the forest to find her. While there, Lysander and Demetrius fall under a magic spell that makes them both fall in love with Helena. She is confused, enraged and upset by this turn of events, eventually falling out with Hermia. By the end of the play, Demetrius falls in love with her and they get married.

Facts we learn about Helena at the start of the play:

- She is desperate for Demetrius' love and would follow him anywhere.
- She betrays her best friend's secret to make Demetrius happy.
- She is well-regarded throughout Athens as being Hermia's equal.

The Fairies

Oberon is the King of the Fairies. At the start of the play we find him arguing with Titania, the Queen of the Fairies because she refuses to give him a changeling boy that he wants for himself. As revenge for refusing him, he decides to play a trick on her. He asks his servant, Puck, to find a magic flower which, when the juice of it is put in someone's eyes when they are asleep, makes them fall in love with the first living thing they see when they awake. While he's waiting he overhears Demetrius and Helena arguing and decides to help her by using the juice on Demetrius. He puts some juice in Titania's eye and she falls in love with Bottom while he has an ass' head. By the end of the play Oberon has undone all the magic and made peace with Titania. Finally, he and Titania bless the marriages of the Theseus and Hippolyta and the other lovers.

Facts we learn about Oberon at the start of the play:

- Oberon is angry that Titania has refused him the changeling boy he wants for himself.
- Oberon has been arguing with Titania for a long time.
- Oberon is jealous that Titania is giving the changeling boy more attention than him.

Titania is the Queen of the Fairies. At the start of the play we find her having an argument with Oberon. She refuses to give him a changeling boy that she has promised to look after. She leaves Oberon's company with her fairies. She tells them to sing her a lullaby to help her sleep. While she is asleep, Oberon puts a magic love potion from a flower in her eyes. When she wakes up, she sees Bottom with an ass' head and immediately falls in love with him. She showers him with gifts and makes her fairies tend on him. While in this state, Oberon convinces her to give him the changeling boy. At the end of the play the magic is reversed and she is repulsed by Bottom's appearance. Finally, she and Oberon bless the marriages of Theseus and Hippolyta, and the other lovers.

Facts we learn about Titania at the start of the play:

- She wants to end the argument with Oberon as it's having a negative effect on the natural world.
- She promised the changeling boy's mother that she would look after him.
- She is served by a number of fairies and has her own 'bower' where she sleeps in the forest.

Puck is Oberon's servant. At the start of the play we find him showing off to another fairy about the mischievous tricks he's played on humans. Oberon asks him to find a magic flower, the juice of which is used on the eyes of a sleeping person to make them fall in love with the first living thing they see when they wake up. Oberon then asks him to put some of the juice in Demetrius' eyes but he puts it in Lysander's by mistake which causes all kinds of problems. He then transforms Bottom's head into an ass's head. Using magic he overcasts the night and fixes all the issues. At the end of the play he talks directly to the audience in the epilogue.

Facts we learn about Puck at the start of the play:

- He is mischievous and likes playing tricks on humans.
- He is loyal to Oberon.
- He is capable of great magic of his own.

Peaseblossom, **Cobweb**, **Moth**, **Mustardseed** are Titania's fairies.

Other Fairies attending on their King and Queen

The Court of Athens

Theseus is the Duke of Athens. At the start of the play we find him talking to Hippolyta, his fiancée, about their upcoming marriage. He is soon interrupted by Egeus and has to make a judgement about Hermia's behaviour. At the end of the play he overrules Egeus and allows the lovers to get married at the same time as him and Hippolyta.

Facts we learn about Theseus at the start of the play:

- He has conquered Hippolyta's Army and she is the 'prize' for the defeat.
- He wishes to make up for the injuries he has inflicted upon her.
- He has a constitutional role to play when upholding the law and has to weigh this up against his own feelings when making the judgement of Hermia.

Hippolyta is the queen of the Amazons and Theseus' bride. The Amazons are a powerful tribe led by fearsome women warriors, and as their queen, Hippolyta represents a threat to the patriarchal society of Athens. When we first meet Hippolyta, the Amazons have been defeated by Theseus, and the play begins with the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta, an event that represents the victory of "order" (patriarchal society) over "chaos" (the Amazons). However, that sense of order is immediately challenged by Hermia's subsequent disobedience to her father.

Egeus is a courtier in Athens. His daughter Hermia is in love with Lysander, a gentleman of the court, but he wants her to marry Demetrius. He asks the Duke's permission for his daughter to either marry Demetrius or be put to her death – as is decreed in an old law. By the end of the play he still wants Hermia to marry Demetrius but he is overruled by Duke Theseus.

Facts we learn about Egeus at the start of the play:

- He is determined for Hermia to marry Demetrius.
- He is willing to sacrifice his daughter rather than listen to her views.
- He is well-regarded by the Duke.

Philostrate is Theseus' Master of Revels, he arranges the selection of performances for Theseus' wedding. He tries to dissuade the wedding party from choosing *Pyramus and Thisbe* but is overruled by Theseus.

The Mechanicals

The group of workmen includes Peter Quince, Nick Bottom, Francis Flute, Robin Starveling, Tom Snout, and Snug. They rehearse the play *Pyramus and Thisbe* in the woods outside Athens, hoping to perform it for the king's upcoming wedding. At the end of the play, they give the performance, but they are so foolish and their performance so absurd that the tragedy ends up coming off as a comedy.

Peter Quince is a carpenter and the director of the group of actors who perform *Pyramus and Thisbe*, which he has written for the celebration following Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding.

Snug is a joiner, he plays the lion in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Nick Bottom is a weaver in Athens who has ambitions to be an actor. At the start of the play we see Bottom trying to convince Peter Quince that he should play all the characters in the play to celebrate the Duke's wedding. During one of the rehearsals he is magically transformed into an ass, and in this state Titania, Queen of the Fairies, falls in love with him. By the end of the play he is turned back into a human and able to perform the part of *Pyramus* in the play.

Facts we learn about Nick Bottom at the start of the play:

- He has a very high opinion of his capabilities as an actor.
- He wants to play all the parts in the play.
- He wants to take control of the rehearsals.

Francis Flute is a bellows-mender, Flute plays the role of *Thisbe*. He is displeased to be given a woman's role because he wants to let his beard grow, but Quince assures him that he can play the part in a mask.

Tom Snout is a tinker and plays the role of Wall in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Robin Starveling is a tailor, he represents Moonshine in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.