

A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare

This “seeded” edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* includes “seeds” of information about vocabulary, factual references, and phrasing that may have been easily understood by William Shakespeare’s contemporaries in the middle of the 17th century. In the 21st Century, however, some of these words and phrases are not so clearly understood and could make comprehension of the text difficult. Additionally, words and phrases can have multiple meanings. Therefore, “seeds” of explanation and meaning are included here to focus the reader on Shakespeare’s contextual meaning in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This contextual meaning is found in parentheses and brackets as noted in the key that follows.

KEY:

Vocabulary words are in **bold**, and the meaning is in (parentheses):

i.e. “Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall **behold** (see) the night
Of our **solemnities** (wedding night).”

Factual references are in **bold italics** and the meaning is in (parentheses):

i.e. From Athens is her house **remote** (far away) **seven leagues** (over 21 miles)... And by that fire which burn'd the **Carthage queen** (Dido, who killed herself)...”,

Challenging phrases or sentence/s are underlined and the meaning is in [brackets]:

i.e. Helen, to you our minds we will unfold [plan we will tell]... Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet [Sharing our secrets]... As you on him, Demetrius dote on [show love to] you... Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste [sends you nowhere fast]...”

Reading Seeded Literature

- Get ready to **connect** information you already know to a little new information the author wants you to learn.
- In the beginning, it **will take more time** to read seeded literature because word meanings and other kinds of information are added to what the author has written.

BUT...

- You will know more as you read.
- **You do not have to stop reading to look for information in a dictionary or on the internet, because it is right there where you are reading.**
- You will be thinking more as you read.
- You will be remembering more as you read.
- You will be able to answer “Why” and “How” questions more easily.
- As you read more and more seeded literature, **you will see that you are reading more quickly.** There will be less to read, because **you will teach yourself how to skip over information that you have already learned.**

ACT I

SCENE I. Athens. The palace of THESEUS.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants [Helpers]

THESEUS

Now, **fair** (beautiful) *Hippolyta* (Queen of an army of strong women/*Amazons*), our **nuptial** (wedding) hour
Draws on apace [Is coming]; four happy days bring in
Another moon: but, O, **methinks** (I think), how slow
This old moon **wanes** [gets smaller]! she lingers my desires [keeps me from getting what I want],
Like to a step-dame or a dowager [an old rich woman]
Long withering out [takes a long time to die] a young man revenue [keeping the money in her will, from the son who wants
it] .

HIPPOLYTA

Four days will quickly steep themselves in [turn into] night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall **behold** (see) the night
Of our **solemnities** (wedding night).

THESEUS

Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth [Get the young people ready] to **merriments** (party);
Awake the **pert** (lively) and **nimble** (quick) **spirit** (feelings) of **mirth** (happiness);
Turn (Send) **melancholy** (sadness) **forth** (off) to funerals;
The pale companion [sad friend] is not for our **pomp** (partying).

Exit PHILOSTRATE

Hippolyta (Queen of an army of strong women/*Amazons*), I would thee [won your love] with my sword,
And won **thy** (your) love, doing thee injuries [beating you in battle];

But I will **wed** (marry) **thee** (you) in another **key** (way),
With **pomp** (celebrations), with **triumph** (feelings of winning) and with **reveling** (partying).

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS

EGEUS

Happy be **Theseus** (cousin of Hercules and Duke/Leader of Athens), our **renowned** (famous) duke!

THESEUS

Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with **thee** (you)?

EGEUS

Full of **vexation** (anger) come I, with complaint

Against my child, my daughter Hermia.

Stand forth [Come forward], Demetrius. My noble lord,

This man **hath** (has) my **consent** (OK) to marry her.

Stand forth [Come forward], Lysander: and my **gracious** (kind) duke,

This man **hath** (has) **bewitch'd** (tricked) the **bosom** (heart in the breast) of my child;

Thou (You), **thou** (you), Lysander, **thou** (you) **hast** (have) given her **rhymes** (poems),

And interchanged love-tokens with my child [given each other gifts of love]:

Thou (You) **hast** (have) by moonlight at her window sung,

With **feigning** (fake) voice verses [words] of **feigning** (fake) love,

And **stolen** (changed) the **impression** (idea) of her fantasy

With **bracelets** (cut curls) of **thy** (your) hair, rings, **gawds** (colorful stones), **conceits** (lies),

Knack (Little toys), **trifles** (little things), **nosegay** (flowers), **sweetmeats** (candy), messengers

Of strong prevailment in [things that get the attention of] unharden'd youth [a young girl]:

With **cunning** (sneaky tricks) **hast** (have) **thou** (you) **filch'd** (stolen) my daughter's heart,

Turn'd her **obedience** (listening to me), which is due to me,

To stubborn **harshness** (mean words): and, my **gracious** (kind) duke,

Be it so she will not here before your grace [you]

Consent (Agree) to marry with Demetrius,

I **beg** (ask) the ancient privilege of [for the old right of law in Athens],

As (Since) she is mine, I may **dispose** (get rid) of her:
Which shall be either to this gentleman [marry this man]
Or to her death [have her killed], according to [which] our law
Immediately provided in that case [says I can do].

THESEUS

What say you, Hermia? be advised [know] fair maid:
To you your father should be as a god;
One that composed your beauties [made you], **yea** (yes), and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax [under his control]
By him **imprinted** (created and taught) and within his power
To leave the figure [take care of you] or disfigure it [ruin you].
Demetrius is a **worthy** (good) gentleman.

HERMIA

So is Lysander.

THESEUS

In himself he is;
But in this **kind** (situation), wanting your father's voice [your father is against him],
The other must be held the [seen as] **worthier** (better).

HERMIA

I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

THESEUS

Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

HERMIA

I do **entreat** [beg] your grace [you] to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold,