

A Midsummer Night's Dream
By William Shakespeare
Questions on Act 3

Scene 1

1. What are the performers discussing in the beginning of the first scene of the play?
 - a) problems in the performance of the play
 - b) the coming wedding between Theseus and Hippolyta
 - c) the impossibility of writing an introduction to the play
 - d) the charm of love stories
 - e) the excitement that violence creates
2. The words "fowl," "odious," and "Ninny's" are all examples of
 - a) imaginative metaphors
 - b) alliterative words
 - c) malapropisms
 - d) words that show the stage fright of the actors
 - e) figures of speech that show the actors' imaginative use of language
3. Bottom interprets his fellow actors' response to his "translation" as ____
 - a) an insulting prank
 - b) evidence of his transformation
 - c) exaggerated fear
 - d) witchcraft
 - e) part of the play
4. Bottom's transformation was effected through the agency of ____?
 - a) Puck
 - b) the other actors
 - c) Theseus
 - d) Helen and Lysander
 - e) the love-in-idleness flower
5. With whom does Titania fall in love and why? What makes this love ridiculous? What does Shakespeare seem to say about "love" through this scene?
6. Bottom says some very profound and reasonable things in his humorous dialog with Titania. Write down two examples.

7. Who are the servants who attend Bottom? What is so humorous about the contrast between Bottom and these servants?

Scene 2

8. Find quotations from Hermia's and Demetrius's speeches to each other to show the extremity of their passions and write them down.
9. How does Hermia interpret Lysander's passion for her? How does she interpret Demetrius's passion for her?
10. What cross words pass between Hermia and Helena?
11. What does Oberon say regarding this mistake? What is Puck's response?

Topics for Writing and Discussion

1. The first scene is an interesting discussion of playacting. One of the primary principles of the theater and acting in general is to generate a "suspension of disbelief." The play must in some way appear to be real for the audience to engage in the fantasy created on stage. Bottom and the others, by their plans not to offend the court, are actually working contrary to this principle by uncloaking their drama and showing it for what it is: fantasy not reality.
2. The transformation of Bottom is just another of the metamorphoses mentioned in the play. Interestingly enough, Bottom's bodily transmutation is not upward but downward: he has become more bestial by becoming a donkey. (The donkey, of all farmyard animals, is perhaps one of the most lowly and humble.) How does this fit the themes already discussed about the play regarding the irrationality of passion? (See Bottom's statement regarding reason and love)