

Chapter 4: Extracts of Drama - (A)

A Midsummer - Night's Dream

BRAINSTORMING - CHARACTERS [PAGE 172]

Brainstorming - Characters | Q 1. (i) | Page 172

Choose the odd one out :

Bottom, Moth, Mustardseed, Cobweb.

1. **Bottom**
2. Moth
3. Mustardseed
4. Cobweb

SOLUTION

Bottom, Moth, Mustardseed, Cobweb - **Bottom.**

Brainstorming - Characters | Q 1. (ii) | Page 172

Choose the odd one out :

Flute, Snug, Quince, Cobweb.

1. Flute
2. Snug
3. Quince
4. **Cobweb**

SOLUTION

Flute, Snug, Quince, Cobweb - **Cobweb.**

Brainstorming - Characters | Q 2 | Page 172

Match the columns :

A	B
(1) Theseus	(1) Robin Goodfellow
(2) Titania	(2) Queen of the Amazons
(3) Puck	(3) Duke of Athens
(4) Hippolyta	(4) Faeries
(5) Cobweb, Moth	(5) Queen of the Faeries

SOLUTION

A	B
(1) Theseus	(3) Duke of Athens
(2) Titania	(5) Queen of the Faeries
(3) Puck	(1) Robin Goodfellow
(4) Hippolyta	(2) Queen of the Amazons
(5) Cobweb, Moth	(4) Faeries

Brainstorming - Characters | Q 3 | Page 172

Draw a character sketch of Oberon as an enemy of his wife but a friend of the lovers.

SOLUTION

Oberon is the King of the magical land of the fairies. He is an authoritative figure, who wants all his subjects to obey him. According to him, no one else in the entire realm holds more power than him. When he sees his wife, Titania, being affectionate towards the Indian boy whom she is raising, he becomes jealous and wants Titania to give up the boy so that he can make the boy his servant. Titania's refusal to give up the boy leads to a fight between her and Oberon, which results in the confusion that forms a major part of Act III, Scene (ii).

At the beginning of Act III, Scene (ii), Oberon is seen wondering about the outcome of the plan he had devised, of pouring a love potion on his wife's eyelids, so that she falls in love with the first person she sees and he can take the Indian boy away from her. Even the fact that she falls in love with a donkey-headed man does not discourage him, rather, he finds it amusing. This shows Oberon's vengeful side as he is not willing to spare even his wife when she disobeys him. His need to assert his power makes him instruct Puck to get the love potion so that he can teach his wife a lesson. However, in the end, he removes Titania from under the spell, but by then he has already taken the Indian boy from her.

Though Oberon is unkind towards his wife, he also has a kind and loving side, which can be seen when he witnesses Demetrius' cold behaviour towards Helena in the forest. Unhappy about the way Helena is being treated by Demetrius, he decides to make Demetrius fall in love with Helena. He wants Helena's love to be requited, which makes his character a stark opposite of how it seemed to the audience so far.

Even when Oberon realises that Puck has made an error and poured the potion on the wrong man, he decides to set everything right. The actions were taken by him to ensure that the true lovers end up together prove that he is a romantic, who wants love to

triumph above all else. Oberon's actions throughout the play make him a complex character, who cannot be categorised as simply good or evil.

Brainstorming - Characters | Q 4 | Page 172

Comment on the loving pair of Lysander and Helena from the point of view of developing their character sketch.

SOLUTION

Lysander and Helena have been called a loving pair sarcastically, as neither of the two is actually in love with the other. Lysander declares that he loves Helena because he is under the spell of the potion, which makes Helena think that Lysander is mocking her. However, the fact that Lysander, under the influence of the potion, tells Helena that he loves her, does aid in the development of the character sketch of both, Helena and Lysander.

As Lysander tries to convince Helena that he loves her, Hermia enters the scene. This is where Helena's betrayal is brought to light. She tells Hermia that she has always kept all of Hermia's secrets except one. She told Demetrius about Hermia's plan to escape, which caused Demetrius to follow Hermia into the Woods and led Helena to follow Demetrius. Thus, Lysander's declaration of love for Helena leads to the rift between Hermia and Helena and brings out Helena's desperation for Demetrius' love through Helena's betrayal. On the other hand, Lysander, who was in love with Hermia, has now rejected her completely as he is under the spell of the potion. Lysander was deeply in love with Hermia, but the effect of the love potion was so strong that it made him hate Hermia just as much as he loved her before. His insults towards Hermia tell us about the strength of his feelings of love for Hermia before the love potion had been poured on his eyelids. This intensity of love was transformed into the intensity of hatred towards Hermia. However, even under the spell of the potion, he does not wish to harm Hermia. Thus, the character of Lysander truly embodies a lover who would have stayed true to his betrothed Hermia if a spell hadn't been cast on him. Hence, it is clear that the ironic pairing of Helena and Lysander highlights the fact that the characters would choose true love above everything else.

BRAINSTORMING - SETTING [PAGE 172]

Brainstorming - Setting | Q 1. (i) | Page 172

Correct the given sentence with justification.

The play is restricted to only a part of the woods.

SOLUTION

The play takes place in different parts of the Woods.

The scenes with Hermia, Helena, Lysander, and Demetrius take place in one part of the Woods, while that with Titania and Bottom takes place in another part and those with the group of workmen take place in a different part of the same Woods.

Brainstorming - Setting | Q 1. (ii) | Page 172

Correct the given sentence with justification.

Since there is a reference to the Indian boy, there are some scenes from India too.

SOLUTION

Though there is a reference to the Indian boy, there are no scenes from India. The King of the Fairies, Oberon, is fighting with the Queen of the Fairies, Titania, for the custody of the Indian boy. Though the Indian boy is mentioned, the play does not contain any scenes from India. This particular extract from the play takes place entirely in the Woods.

Brainstorming - Setting | Q 2 | Page 172

The characters are a part of the stage setting. How does this reflect when the characters of the play range from the Duke and the Indian boy to the faeries?

SOLUTION

The play, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', revolves around Athens, a city in ancient Greece. The Duke's palace inside the walls of the city and the Woods outside the walls of Athens are the two major backdrops. The city of Athens along with the Duke's palace symbolise law and order, whereas the Woods outside Athens is the magical and dream-like land of the fairies, which represents lawlessness and chaos. As Athens is governed by rules and regulations, the Duke is obligated to enforce the law and instruct Hermia to marry Demetrius. Hermia chooses to elope with Lysander into the Woods, so as to escape from the laws that bind her to marry a man of her father's choice. The Woods, for her, represent freedom from the law.

The drama unfolds in the Woods, where King of the fairies, Oberon, meddles into the lives of the four lovers and causes chaos in the process. The mystical qualities of the land and the mischievous aura of the setting is aptly conveyed through Oberon's and Puck's schemes – their usage of the magical love potion and the comical transformation of Bottom. Oberon's desire to have the Indian boy in his custody drives him into a jealous rage, where he decides to teach the Queen of the fairies, his wife, Titania, a lesson after she refuses to give up the boy.

The Indian boy represents the power struggle between Oberon and Titania. Though the Indian boy never appears on the scene, the land where he was born is mentioned in Act II. As Titania and Oberon argue over the custody of the Indian boy, Titania tells Oberon

how the boy belongs to her as the boy's mother was one of her devotees from India and how she used to spend time with this friend looking at the ships that sailed into the harbour.

Towards the end of the play, Egeus, Theseus, and Hippolyta venture into the Woods to search for the lovers, and as if influenced by the magical land, Theseus sees how Demetrius is happy with Helena and allows Hermia to marry Lysander. The presence of the Duke in the Woods does bring some order to its chaos. Order is finally restored when the lovers return to the lawful world of Athens with Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus.

Thus, the characters form a part of the stage setting and change as the setting changes. The setting is therefore versatile and apt as it perfectly complements the mood of the characters and happenings of the play.

Brainstorming - Setting | Q 3 | Page 172

What changes in the stage setting would you suggest.

SOLUTION

The play, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', was written in the 16th century by William Shakespeare. The play has been set in the city of Athens, a city in ancient Greece. However, a major part of the play takes place outside the walls of the forest, in a magical forest ruled by the fairies. As this play is around five centuries old, there are a few elements that need to be changed in order to suit the sensibilities of the contemporary audience. In the play, the city of Athens represents order while the natural forest of the fairies represents chaos. However, in the modern age, cities are representative of chaos, while nature represents order and balance. Therefore, the characters could leave the city to escape the chaos caused by external forces and find order and balance in nature. This change in the setting could appeal to the modern-day audience.

Brainstorming - Setting | Q 4 | Page 172

Comment on the versatility and the aptness of the stage settings, as per the requirement of the play "A Midsummer-Night's Dream!"

SOLUTION

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BRAINSTORMING - PLOT [PAGES 172 - 173]

Brainstorming - Plot | Q 1. (i) | Page 172

State whether the following statement is True or False:

Lysander and Demetrius fall in love with Helena as a result of the love potion.

1. **True**
2. False

SOLUTION

Lysander and Demetrius fall in love with Helena as a result of the love potion - **True.**

Brainstorming - Plot | Q 1. (ii) | Page 172

State whether the following statement is True or False:

Oberon transforms Bottom's head into that of an ass.

1. True
2. **False**

SOLUTION

Oberon transforms Bottom's head into that of an ass - **False.**

Brainstorming - Plot | Q 1. (iii) | Page 172

State whether the following statement is True or False:

Titania falls in love with an ass.

1. True
2. False

SOLUTION

Titania falls in love with an ass - True.

Brainstorming - Plot | Q 1. (iv) | Page 172

State whether the following statement is True or False:

Both Demetrius and Lysander fight for Hermia.

1. True
2. False

SOLUTION

Both Demetrius and Lysander fight for Hermia - False.

Brainstorming - Plot | Q 2. (i) | Page 173

Give reasons :

Oberon and Titania fight for the custody of the Indian boy because - Oberon wants

_____.

SOLUTION

Oberon and Titania fight for the custody of the Indian boy because - Oberon wants to make the Indian boy his attendant.

Brainstorming - Plot | Q 2. (ii) | Page 173

Give reasons :

Oberon and Titania fight for the custody of the Indian boy because - Titania wants

_____.

SOLUTION

Oberon and Titania fight for the custody of the Indian boy because - Titania wants to raise the boy because his mother had been a devotee of Titania and died during childbirth, obligated Titania to raise the child as her own.

Brainstorming - Plot | Q 3 | Page 173

The consequences of Oberon's jealousy for Titania are comic rather than tragic.

Comment.

SOLUTION

Oberon's jealousy for Titania stemmed from Titania giving all her attention to the Indian boy that she was raising. He was also jealous of the fact that the beautiful Indian boy was in Titania's custody instead of his own. However, what enraged him was Titania's refusal to give up the boy even when he ordered her to. Oberon's desire to teach Titania a lesson results in a series of events that are comic and chaotic.

He devises a plan to pour a love potion on his wife's eyelids so that she falls in love with

the first person she sees. Under the influence of the potion, Titania, the Queen of the fairies, falls in love with Bottom, whose face has been transformed by Puck into that of an ass. This juxtaposition of the characters of Titania and Bottom makes their interactions comic.

While Oberon was hatching the plan to teach Titania a lesson, he sees Demetrius entering the Woods followed by Helena. On seeing Demetrius' cold behaviour towards Helena, Oberon decides to make Demetrius fall in love with Helena. Thus, Oberon asks Puck to pour the love potion on the Athenian, Demetrius. However, Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius and pours the love potion on his eyelids. This makes Lysander fall in love with Helena as she is the first person he sees after waking up.

In the meantime, Oberon realises that Puck has used the potion on the wrong person, which has led Hermia to be separated from her true love, Lysander, and Demetrius is not in love with Helena as Oberon had planned. The confusion intensifies when Oberon pours the potion on a sleeping Demetrius and Helena enters the scene with Lysander still trying to convince her of his love. As soon as Demetrius wakes up, he falls in love with Helena and begins praising her beauty.

This makes Helena think that Lysander and Demetrius are trying to mock her by falsely claiming that they love her. This chaotic situation is extended when Hermia enters the scene. Helena blames Hermia for conspiring in the mockery and Hermia accuses Helena of stealing Lysander from her.

These consequences are funny because at first, both the men were interested in Hermia, but the potion has now made them fall in love with Helena. Hermia is shocked to hear Lysander profess his love for Helena. And Helena is frustrated with Demetrius and Lysander because she thinks they are mocking her.

The absurdity of the two men fighting over a woman they don't really love, the quarrel between the two women over their misunderstandings as well as the love between a Queen and an ass make the consequences comic and not tragic because Oberon sets everything straight.

Brainstorming - Plot | Q 4 | Page 173

There were some reasons why Theseus was initially against but later gave consent for the marriage of Helena with Lysander. Explain.

SOLUTION

According to the ancient law of Athens, it was mandatory for a girl to marry the man that her father would choose for her. Therefore, when Egeus brought his daughter, Hermia, before Duke Theseus, Hermia was reminded of the ancient Athenian law and asked to marry the man of her father's choice. However, when Hermia refused to obey this law, Theseus gave her three options – one was to marry Demetrius, the man chosen by Egeus for her, the second was to become a nun and the third was to suffer a death sentence. Unwilling to choose from the three options, Hermia elopes with Lysander, the man she loves. Towards the end of the play, when Theseus sees the love between

Helena and Demetrius, he decides not to make Hermia choose from the three options that he had initially given her. Instead, he allows Hermia to marry Lysander.

BRAINSTORMING - FORM [PAGE 173]

Brainstorming - Form | Q 1 | Page 173

Select the correct options :

A Midsummer-Night's Dream is a _____.

- a. poetic drama
- b. comedy of errors
- c. a comedy based on fantasy
- d. a character play
- e. a revenge tragedy
- f. belongs to realm of dreams

SOLUTION

A Midsummer-Night's Dream is a:

- poetic drama
- comedy of errors
- a comedy based on fantasy
- belongs to the realm of dreams.

Brainstorming - Form | Q 2 | Page 173

Find 2/4 expressions of humour from the extract.

SOLUTION

Some expressions of humour from the extract are as follows:

- i. An ass's noll I fixed on his head.
- ii. And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
- iii. Sever themselves, and madly sweep the sky, So, at his sight, away from his
fellows fly;
- iv. Then will two at once woo one;
That must need to be sport alone:
And those things do best please me
That befall preposterously.
- v. Away, you Ethiop!
- vi. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!
- vii. Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus, of hind'ring knot-grass made;
You bead, you acorn.
- viii. Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray:
My legs are longer though, to run away.

Brainstorming - Form | Q 3 | Page 173

"A Midsummer-Night's Dream" is one of the best examples of Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors. Comment.

SOLUTION

Comedy of Errors refers to a series of ridiculous events that are a result of either mistaken identities or the mistakes made by foolish people. William Shakespeare is known for his witty writing that skillfully combines all the elements of comedy. The play, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is no exception to this. Act III, Scene (ii), of this play focuses on Puck mistaking Demetrius for Lysander and pouring the love potion on him instead of Demetrius. This instance of mistaken identity is a comedy of error as it creates trouble for all four humans in the woods - Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia. The second comedy of error is the Queen of fairies, Titania, falling in love with an ass, Bottom. As Puck had transformed Bottom's head into that of an ass, it was absurd that the Queen of fairies fell in love with him. This, however, happened when Titania was under the influence of the love potion that Oberon had poured on her to teach her a lesson. Puck's erroneous judgment, Lysander's declaration of love to Helena and his rejection of his true love, Hermia, Demetrius' claim of being in love with Helena, Helena's assumption that both the men are trying to mock her, her accusation of Hermia and Hermia's misinterpretation that Helena stole Lysander from her, the fight between Lysander and Demetrius as well as that between Helena and Hermia, the workmen being scared after looking at Bottom because he had a donkey's head and Titania falling in love with Bottom - are all a result of the comedy of errors that are caused due to Oberon's and Puck's interference, thus making 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' a Comedy of Errors.

BRAINSTORMING - THEME [PAGE 173]

Brainstorming - Theme | Q 1 | Page 173

Shakespeare is acknowledged as the greatest writer because he understood human nature better than anyone else. Explain the statement in the context of the play.

SOLUTION

Through the play, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', William Shakespeare has depicted the various facets of human nature through the characters of the play. He has displayed

how people can be silly in love and how easy it is to confuse physical attraction with love. He even shows how jealousy can drive someone to do something ridiculous. The character of Oberon is driven by jealousy and administers the love potion on Titania. Oberon chooses vengeance over love. The character of Hermia chooses to elope with Lysander, her true love, instead of following the Athenian law of marrying Demetrius, the man her father chose for her. She chooses love over following the Athenian law. The character of Helena betrays her friend, Hermia, by telling Demetrius about Hermia's plan of eloping with Lysander.

She chooses love over a long-standing friendship. Even her choice of following Demetrius into the forest shows she let her feelings for Demetrius overpower her a better sense of judgment. The character of Demetrius, who was in love with Helena before, leaves her for Hermia. He chooses physical attraction over love. The character of Lysander, though under the influence of the love potion, pursues Helena and leaves his betrothed Hermia. Even the Queen of fairies, Titania, falls in love with Bottom, whose face had been turned to that of an ass.

The nature of all the characters in this play is driven by one dominant emotion. Shakespeare's keen observation of human psychology is evident through his characters. Whether it is the star-crossed lovers, the contrasting pair of the Fairy Queen and the ass, or the all-consuming jealousy of the fairy king, Shakespeare aptly demonstrates the feelings of two people who are attracted to each other. By giving the four lovers similar traits, he unifies them under the idea of blind love and thus brilliantly conveys the predictable nature of love. He even illustrates the powerful emotion of jealousy and, in a comic manner, its unfortunate consequences. His deep insight into these emotions, which might seem silly to someone who doesn't feel them, makes him the greatest writer who understood human nature better than anyone else.

Brainstorming - Theme | Q 2 | Page 173

Prove with the theme of the play/extract that the deeper human emotion which profoundly interested Shakespeare was jealousy.

SOLUTION

Jealousy is an emotion that comes in the form of sadness, anger, or resentment caused by the desire for something that someone else has. A person's actions are then driven by it. Jealousy is one of the major themes of the play 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Between Helena, Demetrius, Hermia, Lysander as well as the fairies, jealousy is a very dominant emotion. The two main characters that Shakespeare uses to display this emotion are, Oberon and Helena.

At the beginning of the play, in Act I, Helena is seen to be jealous of Hermia, because Demetrius has left her and now loves her friend, Hermia. Helena's desire for Demetrius' love turns her into a desperate woman with low self-esteem. She follows Demetrius into the woods, begging him to take her back and pleading with him even when he is cruel to her. Her jealousy caused by her desire for Demetrius' love culminates into her jealousy of Hermia's beauty.

This makes Helena resent Hermia and accuse her of conspiring with Lysander and Demetrius to mock her. Even Hermia feels jealous of Helena when both, Lysander and Demetrius profess their love for Helena. She makes her jealousy apparent through these lines - Now I perceive that she hath made compare / Between our statures; she hath urged her height.

Lysander's rejection of Hermia lowered her self-esteem and she became angry with Helena to the point where she threatened to physically harm Helena. Thus, the jealousy of Helena towards Hermia due to Demetrius and that of Hermia towards Helena due to Lysander caused fury and conflict between the four characters. The King of the fairies, Oberon's jealousy is the driving force of the play. Oberon was jealous of Titania because she possessed the Indian boy that he desired.

Moreover, he was also jealous of the Indian boy because Titania showered all her attention to the boy giving rise to Oberon's envy. Titania's refusal to give up the boy fuelled his jealousy to the point where he decided to teach her a lesson. The entire drama that unfolds in the woods is a result of Oberon's jealousy towards Titania. Thus, it can be seen that jealousy affects, in a direct or indirect manner, all the major characters of the play. As Shakespeare illustrates jealousy as the most powerful and unpredictable of emotions parallelly through Helena, Hermia, and Oberon, it can be said that the deeper human emotion that profoundly interested Shakespeare was jealousy.

BRAINSTORMING - LANGUAGE [PAGE 173]

Brainstorming - Language | Q 1 | Page 173

Interpret the following lines in simple English.

Puck: I'll follow you.

Bottom: The Finch, the sparrow.

SOLUTION

After Puck has transformed Bottom's head into that of an ass, he himself too takes the form of various beasts in order to scare the workmen who were rehearsing the play. Puck threatens to follow them wherever they go. The dialogue 'The Finch, the sparrow' is actually part of a song that Bottom sings after Puck transforms his head into that of an ass. Bottom, who thinks his friends are pretending in order to scare him, decides to show he isn't frightened by singing the above song.

Brainstorming - Language | Q 2.1 | Page 173

Comment on the literary device, used in the following line:

Titania: Be kind and courteous to this gentleman....

SOLUTION

- a. **Personification** – Bottom, who has the head of an ass is personified by being called a 'gentleman'.

- b. **Tautology** – The words 'kind' and 'courteous' having the same meaning are placed in the same line.

Brainstorming - Language | Q 2.2 | Page 173

Comment on the literary device, used in the following line:

Titania: Come wait upon him: lead him to my bower.

SOLUTION

- a. **Personification** – Bottom, who has the head of an ass, has been personified with the use of the pronoun 'him'.
- b. **Repetition** – The word 'him' has been used twice in the same line.

Brainstorming - Language | Q 3 | Page 173

Shakespeare's poetry has come to be valued for its own sake on the stage. Comment with reference to the play 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.'

SOLUTION

William Shakespeare is known as the greatest playwright of all time. Known for his coherence and witty wordplay, Shakespeare's writings have a deep impact on its readers even today. Whether it is comedy or tragedy, Shakespeare knows how to skilfully weave the words together, so as to evoke just the right kind of emotion.

In the case of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', Shakespeare has used the blank verse, a style of writing that was relatively new back in his time. In fact, most of Shakespeare's plays fall into the blank verse pattern. In this play, however, he uses different constructions for different characters. For example, the interactions between Bottom and the other workmen are presented in a rustic and simple manner while the conversation between Oberon and Titania is complex and full of magical references, so as to give their dialogues the mystical quality of the land of the fairies.

Shakespeare uses rhyming couplets for the verse of the four lovers - Helena, Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius, for their passionate declarations and emotional outburst. An example of this is -

"You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;
For you love Hermia; this you know I know:
And here, with all goodwill, with all my heart,

In Hermia's love I yield you up to my part:
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love, and will do till my death."

Shakespeare also uses rhyming couplets for most of the conversation between the fairies. However, these couplets have a light and casual tone to make them stand apart from the verse of the lovers. An example of this is -

"Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand,
And the youth mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

On the other hand, the language between Bottom and the other workmen is just like prose, without any meter or rhyme.

Even the interactions between Bottom and Titania are in stark contrast with each other. Titania expresses her emotions like a beautiful verse, while Bottom responds with his thoughts in simple prose. This contrasts the sophistication of the Fairy Queen's world with the crudeness of the commoner, i.e., Bottom. Apart from the beautiful language, Shakespeare also makes use of various literary devices to enhance the experience of the readers. His use of nature and animal imagery to maintain the continuity of the forest atmosphere as well as to communicate the various actions, sounds, and emotions in a scene helps the reader understand the scene better.

Shakespeare's expertise in creating a rich blend of varied patterns for multiple characters and combining them with the use of a range of literary devices is testimony to his skills as a writer whose poetry has come to be valued for its own sake on the stage.