

4.3 (A) A Midsummer-Night's Dream

Brain Storming

Characters

(1) Choose the odd one out :

(i) Bottom, Moth, Mustardseed, Cobweb

Ans. Bottom. (Bottom is a weaver; the rest are fairies.)

(ii) Flute, Snug, Quince, Cobweb

Ans. Cobweb. (Cobweb is a fairy; the others are workers.)

(2) Match the Column:

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

Ans. 1. Theseus - Duke of Athens

2. Titania – Queen of the Faeries

3. Puck - Robin Goodfellow

4. Hippolyta - Queen of the Amazons

5. Cobweb, Moth – Faeries

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

Ans. Do it your own

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

Ans. Lysander, a young man of Athens, is in love with Hermia. However, he cannot marry her because her father, Egeus, wants her to marry Demetrius, and, according to Athenian law, the father has the right to decide who his daughter

marries. Lysander and Hermia cannot live without each other. And decide to run away to the forest and marry. However, due to Puck's interference, Lysander falls in love with Helena when they are in the woods. When this happens, he wants to break off his relationship with Hermia and repeatedly insults her, showing that love is stronger than loyalty.

Hermia is Egeus's daughter, a young woman of Athens. She is madly in love with Lysander. When she realizes that Egeus wants her to marry Demetrius, and she will be punished if she does not, she persuades Lysander to run away with her to the woods. They plan to marry there. Hermia is a strong-minded young woman, out to get her love, even though this may mean rebelling against her father and the laws of Athens. When she feels that Demetrius may have killed Lysander, she too wishes to be killed. When they are in the woods, due to Puck's mistake, Lysander falls in love with Helena. This leads to his neglect and humiliation of Hermia, which shocks her. She cannot understand or believe this, and quarrels with her childhood friend Helena, accusing her of stealing Lysander's love. She feels inferior because she is short and Helena is tall.

Setting

(1) Correct the given sentences with justification.

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

Ans. The play is spread over a portion of the woods, as the four lovers wander everywhere; Oberon and Puck too are in a different part of the woods.

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

Ans. No, there are no scenes from India.

(2) 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?

Ans. 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream' is set in ancient Athens and the wood just outside it, which Shakespeare changes into a magic place with fairies. In Athens, there is strict law and order. Duke Theseus is the law, and Hermia is going to be punished for going against her father and wishing to marry Lysander. In the woods, there is chaos, and efforts are made to unite the lovers, with no thought about law and order. There is a fairy king Oberon and a fairy queen Titania. There is the mischievous Puck. Oberon exercises his magical power over the young lovers with the power of the love potion, and they fall in and out of love. They also remember the events in the wood as dreams, something unreal. The wood is apt as a setting because it is a magical, lush and unrealistic place, not the realistic world of humans, where there is strict law and order. The humans wander into it and become part of a magical world where everything ends well.

(3) What changes in the stage setting would you suggest?

Ans. There is magic, love potions, fairies, dreams and chaos in the plot. The woods are an extremely suitable setting to show all this. Hence no change is necessary.

(4) Comment on the versatility and the aptness of the stage settings, as per the requirement of the play 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

Ans. 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream' is set in ancient Athens and the wood just outside it, which Shakespeare changes into a magic place with fairies. In Athens, there is strict law and order. Duke Theseus is the law, and Hermia is going to be punished for going against her father and wishing to marry Lysander. In the woods, there is chaos, and efforts are made to unite the lovers, with no thought about law and order. There is a fairy king Oberon and a fairy queen Titania. There is the mischievous Puck. Oberon exercises his magical power over the young lovers with the power of the love potion, and they fall in and out of love. They also remember the events in the wood as dreams, something unreal. The wood is apt as a setting because it is a magical, lush and unrealistic place, not the realistic world of humans, where there is strict law and order. The humans wander into it and become part of a magical world where everything ends well.

Plot

(1) State whether the following statements are True or False:

(i) Lysander and Demetrius fall in love with Helena as a result of the Love potion.

Ans. True

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

Ans. False

(iii) Titania falls in love with an ass.

Ans. False

(iv) Both Demetrius and Lysander fight for Hermia.

Ans. False

(2) give reasons:

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

(i) Oberon wants

Ans. Oberon wants to make him his own, as he wishes the boy to become a part of his court.

He is also jealous of the attention Titania gives the boy.

(ii) Titania wants

Ans. Titania wants to look after the boy as she had promised his mother that she would do so.

(3) The consequences of Oberon's jealousy for Titania are comic rather than tragic. Comment.

Ans. Oberon is jealous of Titania's love for the Indian boy. Hence, he orders his servant, Puck, to fetch a magical flower, and anoint Titania's eyes with the love potion. This would make her fall in love with the person she saw immediately on waking up. This happens to be Bottom, whom Puck has given an ass's head. This makes the situation comic. Titania is so much in love with Bottom, with the ass's head, that she gives up the Indian boy to Oberon. Oberon eventually feels guilty about this and reverses the magic, preventing the situation from turning tragic. The whole incident is humorous and ends happily.

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

Ans. Hermia wants to marry Lysander, but her father Egeus wants her to marry Demetrius. Theseus, as the Duke of Athens, is a powerful character and represents the law. He has the power to decide when there is a disagreement. Hence Egeus takes Hermia to him, for according to Athenian law, the father has the right to decide who his daughter marries. Hence, following the law and Egeus's wishes. Theseus was against Hermia's marriage to Lysander. Later on, the Duke relents when he sees the love between Helena and Demetrius, and happily allows Hermia to marry Lysander.

Plot

(1) Select the correct

A Midsummer - Night's Dream is

(a) a poetic drama

(b) a comedy of errors

(c) a comedy based on fantasy

(d) a character play

(e) a revenge tragedy

(f) belongs to realm of dreams.

Ans. A Midsummer Night's Dream is

- (a) a poetic drama
- (b) a comedy of errors
- (c) a comedy based on fantasy
- (f) belongs to realm of dreams.

(2) Find 2/4 expressions of humour from the extract.

Ans. (1) 'My mistress with a monster is in love.'

(2) 'An ass's nose I fixed on his head'.

(3) Jack shall have his Jill.

(4) Yet but three? Come one more; Two of both kinds makes up four

(5) Cupid is a knavish lad, Thus to make poor females mad.

(3) 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is one of the best examples of Shakespeare's comedy of errors. Comment.

Ans. The phrase 'a comedy of errors' is often used to describe a situation that is so full of mistakes and problems that it seems funny. However, everything is put right in the end and everyone is happy. 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is an excellent example of a Shakespearean comedy of errors. In the play, Titania falls in love with a human with an ass's head. The play's central couples are Hermia, Lysander, Helena and Demetrius. Hermia and Lysander love each other. Helena is pursuing Demetrius but Demetrius wants Hermia. Thus, before entering the forest, both men are in love with Hermia. After entering the forest, due to Puck's error in identifying Demetrius, both men fall in love Helena, reversing the relationships that existed at the start of the play. But by the next morning, the confusion has been resolved and the couples are for the first time happily balanced. The play ends in multiple marriages.

The play has all the ingredients needed for success-love, jealousy, magic, dreams, literary devices, amusing dialogues, and poetry which can be put to music. Thus, Puck's mischievous deeds, his errors, the funny actions of those putting up the play for Duke Theseus and the magic of the woods make 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream' one of the best examples of a Shakespearean Comedy of Errors.

Theme

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

play.

Ans. Shakespeare understood human nature very well, better than anyone else. Oberon loved Titania very much, but he was so jealous of her love for the Indian child that he devises a plan to get the boy from her. After the deed is done, he is satisfied and releases her from the spell. At the same time, he is sympathetic where the lovers are concerned, and finally brings their love story to a happy end. Shakespeare also understands and portrays Egeus's fatherly feelings of wishing to arrange a husband for his daughter.

Hermia is shown to be a fierce girl who rebels against her father's wishes and runs off with her beloved Lysander into the forest. However, she cannot keep her secret within herself, and tells her friend Helena about her flight. Helena, in turn, to get into Demetrius's good books, tells her of the plan. Demetrius, who loves Hermia, follows the pair into the woods. Helena follows him. Due to Puck's mistake, both men fall in love with Helena. Though Helena and Hermia are childhood friends, the jealousy that Hermia shows is natural, and has been well depicted. It also shows Hermia's inferiority complex about her stature. It shows that love is mightier than loyalty and friendship. Thus, Shakespeare has fully understood human emotions like love, jealousy, loyalty, kindness, possessiveness, inferiority complex, etc.

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

Ans. 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.

Language

(1) Interpret the following lines in simple English.

Puck: I'll follow you.

Ans. Puck says that he would follow him/her

Bottom: The Finch, the sparrow.

Ans. Bottom sings about the finch and the sparrow.

(2) Comment on the literary device, used in the following lines:

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

Ans. Tautology

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

Ans. Imperative sentence

(3) 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.'

Ans. In 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', along with normal prose, there are dazzling displays of poetry. The play is filled with symbols like the moon, the love potion, etc. There is fast-paced and witty dialogue, along with double meanings. Shakespeare has also used a lot of figurative language which makes it interesting and beautiful. He has used a lot of imagery, that speaks to the readers' sense of sight and smell. It helps the readers to mentally create a vivid picture of the happenings in the forest, right from picturing Bottom with the ass's head to the men searching blindly for each other in the fog. In many places, Shakespeare has used blank verse, with no specific rhyme scheme. There is use of figures of speech like simile, metaphor, personification, irony, etc. The use of these figures of speech make the play very beautiful and hence his poetry has come to be valued for its own sake on the stage.