



Exploring Junior Cycle Texts

A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare

A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare is a drama included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts commencing Junior Cycle in 2025, 2026, and 2027 and presenting for examination in 2028, 2029, and 2030).

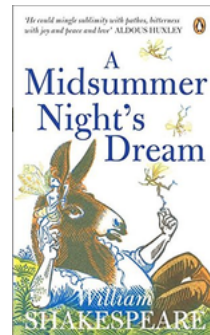


Image courtesy of
Penguin

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* covers themes which could be considered sensitive and controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



Scan the QR code or click here to
access a Getting Started with Guide
for this Text

Before you read... (Teacher Guidance)

1. Vocabulary Predictions

Provide students with the following words from the extract without context:

adamant - spaniel - fawn - spurn - entice - modesty.

Pair students and have them guess the meaning of each word from sound alone. Then, instruct them to write a one-sentence “prediction sentence” using each word. Discuss as a class what students have come up with. Clear up any misunderstandings and allow students to note down the correct meanings. Encourage students to guess what this extract might be about based on the words from the extract.

2. Walking Debate

Provide students with stimulus questions for a debate which relate to the extract. Such as:

If someone tells you they don't love you, you should keep pursuing them. - You can convince someone to love you through loyalty. - Strong emotions excuse bad decisions. - When someone loves you more than you love them, it can feel uncomfortable.

3. Imagine Inference

Provide students with images from the scene and discuss what they can infer about the characters, plot, atmosphere etc.



Images courtesy of *The BBC*



Image courtesy of *The Royal Shakespeare Company*





Extract

In this extract from Act 2 Scene 1, Helena is desperately in love with Demetrius, but he no longer returns her feelings. She has followed him into the enchanted forest at night, hoping to win him back, while he is searching for Hermia, the woman he loves.

Enter Demetrius, Helena following him.

DEMETRIUS

I love thee not; therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll stay; the other stayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stol'n unto this wood,
And here am I, and wood within this wood
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

HELENA

You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant!
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel. Leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

DEMETRIUS

Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair?
Or rather do I not in plainest truth
Tell you I do not, nor I cannot love you?

HELENA

And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel, and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me I will fawn on you.
Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave
(Unworthy as I am) to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love
(And yet a place of high respect with me)
Than to be used as you use your dog?

DEMETRIUS

Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit,
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

HELENA

And I am sick when I look not on you.

DEMETRIUS

You do impeach your modesty too much
To leave the city and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not



Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidance)

These prompts are designed to support close reading and personal response. They may be used orally or in writing, individually or in groups.

1. Language Analysis

Ask students to choose two metaphors or comparisons Helena uses and explain what she literally means, what she is suggesting emotionally and what this reveals about her character. Students could write an analytical paragraph answering the question: *What impression is given of Helena in this scene?*

2. Power Dynamics

As a class, discuss who holds the power in the scene. Encourage students to use textual evidence to support their ideas. Students could write a personal response outlining their thoughts about the characters and their interactions.

3. Recreate the Scene

Guide students in a discussion about how else this sort of conflict might be shown. Task students to re-write the scene in another context, keeping the same conflict and characterisation where possible. This could be done as a script, a story board, a piece of prose etc.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

These activities extend engagement with the extract and invite creative and personal responses. Use individually, in pairs, or in groups.

1. Personal Response

Provide students with the question below and have them write a detailed, personal response. *Do you feel more sympathy for Helena or Demetrius in this extract?* Explain your opinion with detailed reference to the text.

2. Staging the scene

Encourage students to imagine they are directing a performance of this scene. Have them describe how they would instruct the actors playing Helena and Demetrius to use body language, voice, and movement to show their emotions and relationship. They should refer to specific lines to justify their decisions.

3. Internal Monologue

Have students write the inner thoughts of either Helena or Demetrius during this moment. Guide them to reveal what the characters are really thinking but not saying. They should use the text to guide their emotions.

4. Shakespeare's Motivation

Ask students if they think Shakespeare is presenting love as foolish, painful, or admirable in this extract? Have them write their opinion and support it with detailed reference to language, tone, and character behaviour.