A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

GLOSSARY
**Our Nuptial Hour Draws on Apace**

p. 12: Theseus  
*(Act 1, Scene 1)*  
'The hour of our wedding swiftly approaches'

**Lingers**

p. 12: Theseus  
*(Act 1, Scene 1)*  
'delays'

**Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword and won thy love doing thee injuries**

p. 14: Theseus  
*(Act 1, Scene 1)*  
In Greek legend, Hippolyta was the Queen of the Amazons, defeated in battle by the hero Theseus (as the couple later remember, pp. 162–3)

**You can endure to live a Barren sister all your life**

p. 22: Theseus  
*(Act 1, Scene 1)*  
'You can bear to live out the rest of your days as a chaste nun'

**My Virgin Patent**

p. 23: Hermia  
*(Act 1, Scene 1)*  
'my entitlement to virginity'

**Protest Austerity and Single Life**

p. 23: Theseus  
*(Act 1, Scene 1)*  
'vow to lead the strictly cloistered life of a nun'

**Then let us teach our Trial Patience, because it is a customary cross, as due to love as...**

p. 29: Hermia  
*(Act 1, Scene 1)*  
'Let us therefore learn to patiently endure this test, since such painful tests are as common for lovers as...'

**And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind**

p. 37: Helena  
*(Act 1, Scene 1)*  
In Classical mythology, Cupid is the god of love, depicted as a winged and blindfold boy-archer, randomly firing his arrows into the hearts of lovers

**Scroll**

p. 39: Peter Quince  
*(Act 1, Scene 2)*  
'script', 'theatrical part'

**Treats on**

p. 39: Bottom  
*(Act 1, Scene 2)*  
'describes', 'concerns', 'dramatizes'
DO IT EXTENPORE
p. 44: Peter Quince
(Act 1, Scene 2)
'improvise'

WE SHALL BE DOGGED
WITH COMPANY, AND OUR
DEVICES KNOWN
p. 46: Peter Quince
(Act 1, Scene 2)
'We'll be surrounded and hassled
by all sorts of people, and
everyone will know the details of
our planned entertainment'

OBSCENEELY
p. 46: Bottom
(Act 1, Scene 2)
Bottom means to say that they
will rehearse in a most 'seemly'
(= decorous, appropriate,
graceful) manner – but manages
to say exactly the opposite

TAKE PAINS, BE PERFECT
p. 46: Bottom
(Act 1, Scene 2)
'Work hard [i.e. to memorize your
parts], and so be word-perfect'

THE MOST LAMENTABLE
COMEDY, AND MOST
CRUEL DEATH OF
PYRAMUS AND THISBE
p. 39: Peter Quince
(Act 1, Scene 2)
In Classical legend, Pyramus
and Thisbe are ill-fated lovers
who, forbidden by their parents
to meet, can only communicate
through a chink in the wall
dividing their two family homes.
But having planned to run away
together the following night,
Thisbe arrives too early at the
rendezvous, by the tomb of
Ninus, and is chased away by
a lion, losing her cloak as she
flees – which the lion nuzzles
with its bloody mouth before
loping away. When Pyramus
arrives, he sees Thisbe's torn and
bloody cloak, deduces that she
has been killed, and kills himself
in despair with his sword – when
Thisbe ventures back, and sees
what has happened, she kills
herself with the same sword. This
is the 'lamentable' (= sorrowful,
tragic) story which Peter Quince
has dramatized – and the one
thing it isn't is a 'comedy'! In fact,
Shakespeare had just finished
writing another play about 'star-
crossed' lovers with an almost
identical plot (although without
the lion): 'The Most Excellent and
Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo
and Juliet'

TRAIN
p. 48: Puck
(Act 2, Scene 1)
'retinue'

PELING
p. 54: Titania
(Act 2, Scene 1)
'paltry', 'petty'

CONTINENTS
p. 54: Titania
(Act 2, Scene 1)
'bounds', 'banks'

HOARY-HEADED
p. 55: Titania
(Act 2, Scene 1)
'tipped with white'
**Childing**  
*p. 55: Titania  
(Act 2, Scene 1)*  
'pregnant', 'fertile'

**Mazed**  
*p. 55: Titania  
(Act 2, Scene 1)*  
'bewildered', 'amazed', 'terrified'

**Changeling**  
*p. 56: Oberon  
(Act 2, Scene 1)*  
A child stolen by fairies (and replaced with a substitute)

**Votaress**  
*p. 57: Titania  
(Act 2, Scene 1)*  
A woman who has sworn religious vows

**Neptune’s Yellow Sands**  
*p. 57: Titania  
(Act 2, Scene 1)*  
The beaches of Neptune, the Roman god of the sea

**A Fair Vestal**  
*p. 62: Oberon  
(Act 2, Scene 1)*  
A beautiful woman vowed to chastity

**Now Purple with Love’s Wound**  
*p. 64: Oberon  
(Act 2, Scene 1)*  
The flower Oberon describes is the pansy, otherwise known as 'heart’s-ease' or 'love-in-idleness'

**Madly Dote Upon**  
*p. 64: Oberon  
(Act 2, Scene 1)*  
‘fall madly in love with’

**Adamant**  
*p. 67: Helena  
(Act 2, Scene 2)*  
'magnet'

**Impeach Your Modesty**  
*p. 69: Demetrius  
(Act 2, Scene 2)*  
‘scandalize your reputation’

**He Griffin**  
*p. 70: Helena  
(Act 2, Scene 2)*  
A fierce mythical beast with the upper half of an eagle and the hind parts of a lion

**Roundel**  
*p. 75: Titania  
(Act 2, Scene 1)*  
A dance in a circle
**Act Two**

**Quaint**
- p. 75: Titania
  - (Act 2, Scene 2)

**Churl**
- p. 82: Puck
  - (Act 2, Scene 2)
  - ‘base wretch’, ‘ignoble villain’

**Owe**
- p. 82: Puck
  - (Act 2, Scene 2)
  - ‘own’, ‘possess’

**Fond**
- p. 84: Helena
  - (Act 2, Scene 2)
  - ‘foolish’, ‘infatuated’

**A Raven for a Dove**
- p. 86: Lysander
  - (Act 2, Scene 2)
  - ‘a black and ugly bird for a fair and gentle one’

**Flout my Insufficiency**
- p. 87: Helena
  - (Act 2, Scene 2)
  - ‘insult me by parading my inadequacies’

**Act Three**

**Parlous**
- p. 91: Tom Snout
  - (Act 3, Scene 1)
  - ‘extremely hazardous’

**Dreadful**
- p. 93: Bottom
  - (Act 3, Scene 1)
  - ‘frightening’

**Wild-Fowl**
- p. 93: Bottom
  - (Act 3, Scene 1)
  - What Bottom means to say is that the lion is a wild beast — but a ‘fowl’, of course, is another word for ‘bird’

**Brake**
- p. 97: Peter Quince
  - (Act 3, Scene 1)
  - ‘forest-thicket’

**“Odious Savours Sweet—”**
- p. 99: Bottom
  - (Act 3, Scene 1)
  - Bottom (who has told his fellow actors to ‘be perfect’ in their parts) misremembers his own rôle as Pyramus, transforming ‘odorous savours sweet’ (= fragrant and sweet perfumes) into ‘odious’ (= contemptible) ones. Flute, as Thisbe, makes a similar mistake over the page when ‘Ninus’ tomb’ becomes ‘Ninny’s’ (= the idiot’s)
RUDE MECHANICALS  
*p. 110: Puck  
(Act 3, Scene 2)*

'unsophisticated workmen'

NOLE  
*p. 111: Puck  
(Act 3, Scene 2)*

'head'

MIMIC  
*p. 111: Puck  
(Act 3, Scene 2)*

'actor'

VENUS IN HER GLIMMERING SPHERE  
*p. 118: Demetrius  
(Act 3, Scene 2)*

Demetrius refers both to the planet Venus, glistening in the sky ('glimmering sphere') and to Venus the beautiful Roman goddess of love. (Compare with Oberon's 'Venus of the sky' on p. 124)

FANCY-SICK  
*p. 123: Oberon  
(Act 3, Scene 2)*

'lovelorn'

THE TARTAR’S BOW  
*p. 123: Puck  
(Act 3, Scene 2)*

i.e. the superior three-ply longbow used in the Oriental world

PREPOSTEROUSLY  
*p. 126: Puck  
(Act 3, Scene 2)*

'in a manner contrary to the natural order', therefore 'absurdly'

EYNE  
*p. 128: Demetrius  
(Act 3, Scene 2)*

An archaic form – appropriate to a lover’s worship – of the plural 'eyes'

CONGEALED  
*p. 129: Demetrius  
(Act 3, Scene 2)*

i.e. pure as frozen snow

PRESS  
*p. 133: Lysander  
(Act 3, Scene 2)*

'conscript', 'enlist', 'urge'
ETHIOPE
p. 138: Lysander
(Act 3, Scene 2)
Elizabethan conventions of
beauty praised fair complexions
over tanned ones, largely for
reasons of class (because to be
sunburnt implied agricultural
labour), so Lysander’s
description of Hermia (=African,
Moor) is designed as
an insult, as is his later cry,
‘Out, tawny Tartar!’ (= dusky-
skinned Oriental, p. 139). In fact,
Shakespeare himself seems to
have flouted these conventions
by loving a dark-skinned
beauty: the so-called Dark Lady
mentioned in his Sonnets. Hermia
is also extremely sensitive to
being called short (‘Are you
grown so high in his esteem
because I am so dwarfish and so
low? ... “Lower”! Hark, again!’),
at the same time wreaking her
revenge on the taller Helena by
calling her a ‘painted Maypole’
(pp. 140–41)

MINIMUS
p. 143: Lysander
(Act 3, Scene 2)
The tiniest of creatures [Latin]

CHEEK BY JOWL
p. 144: Demetrius
(Act 3, Scene 2)
‘in the closest proximity’
{already an old proverb when
Shakespeare was writing}

HIE
p. 145: Oberon
(Act 3, Scene 2)
‘hasten’, ‘travel with speed’

AURORA’S HARBINGER
p. 147: Puck
(Act 3, Scene 2)
The morning star, literally the
messenger of dawn [Aurora = the
Roman goddess of the morning]

DRAWN
p. 149: Puck
(Act 3, Scene 2)
i.e. having drawn a sword

LIGHTER-HEELED
p. 149: Lysander
(Act 3, Scene 2)
‘swifter of foot’

JACK SHALL HAVE JILL
p. 152: Puck
(Act 3, Scene 2)
As in the nursery rhyme (‘Jack
and Jill went up the hill...’), Jack
and Jill were proverbial partners
THE TONGS AND THE BONES
p. 153: Bottom
(Act 4, Scene 1)
Bottom refers to two lowly percussion instruments: 'tongs' were an early form of triangle, struck by a small hammer; 'bones' a sort of rattle

BOTTLE
p. 154: Bottom
(Act 4, Scene 1)
'bale', 'bundle'

EXPOSITION
p. 154: Bottom
(Act 4, Scene 1)
Bottom once again gets his words wrong, meaning to say 'disposition' (= inclination) instead of 'exposition' (= perilous exposure)

I WAS WITH HERCULES AND CADMUS ONCE, WHEN IN A WOOD OF CRETE THEY BAYED THE BEAR WITH HOUNDS OF SPARTA
p. 162: Hippolyta
(Act 4, Scene 1)
Like Hippolyta and Theseus themselves, Hercules and Cadmus were great heroes of Greek mythology; and the city of Sparta and island of Crete were both famous for the quality of their hunting-dogs – as the two lovers affectionately bicker about here. Theseus later likens his beloved hounds to the obedient ('crook-knee’d') and sweet-voiced bulls of Thessaly (p. 163)

OVERBEAR YOUR WILL
p. 170: Theseus
(Act 4, Scene 1)
'overrule your wishes'

THE EYE OF MAN HATH NOT HEARD...
p. 174: Bottom
(Act 4, Scene 1)
The main joke about Bottom's amazed speech on waking up is that he confuses the human sense with what it detects (eyes see, after all, they don't hear...). On the other hand, this bizarre confusion may also reflect the mystical experience he has undergone – there is a medical condition called 'synaesthesia', in which one's senses become muddled

TO DISCHARGE PYRAMUS
p. 175: Peter Quince
(Act 4, Scene 2)
'to perform the part of Pyramus'

IS PREFERRED
p. 176: Bottom
(Act 4, Scene 2)
'is favoured (before all others)', 'has won the competition'
AND GIVES TO AIRY NOTHING A LOCAL HABITATION AND A NAME
p. 178: Theseus
(Act 5, Scene 1)
‘and lends a recognizable
location and identity to the
insubstantial products of
inspiration’

“THE BATTLE WITH THE CENTAURS, TO BE SUNG BY AN ATHENIAN EUNUCH TO THE HARP” ...
“The riot of the tipsy bacchanals, tearing
the Thracian singer in their rage” ...
“The thrice three muses mourning for the
death of learning, late deceased in beggary”
pp. 181–2: Theseus
(Act 5, Scene 1)
None of these three plays, each
based on a Classical myth,
sound much fun to watch. The
first would have dramatized a
massacre in which Duke Theseus
himself had played a part; the
second would have shown the
poet-singer Orpheus being
torn to pieces; and the third –
apparently an allegorical piece
about the death of scholarship
– sounds like the most boring of
the lot

FOR NEVER ANYTHING CAN BE AMISS WHEN SIMPLICENESS AND DUTY TENDER IT
p. 187: Theseus
(Act 5, Scene 1)
‘Since nothing can ever be
misplaced in its intention when
those who present it are humble
and unsophisticated’

IN THE MODESTY OF FEARFUL DUTY I READ AS MUCH AS FROM THE RATTLING TONGUE OF SAUCY AND AUDACIOUS ELOQUENCE
p. 188: Theseus
(Act 5, Scene 1)
‘I can discern as much truth in
the faltering performance of
my humblest servants as I can
in the well-practised fluency of
seasoned flatterers’

MANTLE
p. 192: Peter Quince
(Act 5, Scene 1)
‘cloak’

BERGOMASK
p. 195: Theseus
(Act 5, Scene 1)
A kind of rustic dance

FROLIC
p. 198: Puck
(Act 5, Scene 1)
‘frisky’, ‘joyful’, ‘jubilant’

THE BLOTS OF NATURE’S HAND SHALL NOT IN THEIR ISSUE STAND
p. 201: Oberon
(Act 5, Scene 1)
‘Mother Nature will ensure
that their children will be born
healthy...’

PUCK
p. 204: Puck
(Act 5, Scene 1)
‘hobgoblin’

UNEARNED
p. 204: Puck
(Act 5, Scene 1)
‘undeserved’
NOW TO 'SCAPE THE SERPENT'S TONGUE
p. 204: Puck
(Act 5, Scene 1)
'now, at the end of our play, to avoid the snake-like hisses of your disapproval'

GIVE ME YOUR HANDS
p. 204: Puck
(Act 5, Scene 1)
i.e. by clapping your hands in applause

RESTORE AMENDS
p. 205: Puck
(Act 5, Scene 1)
'give satisfaction in return'