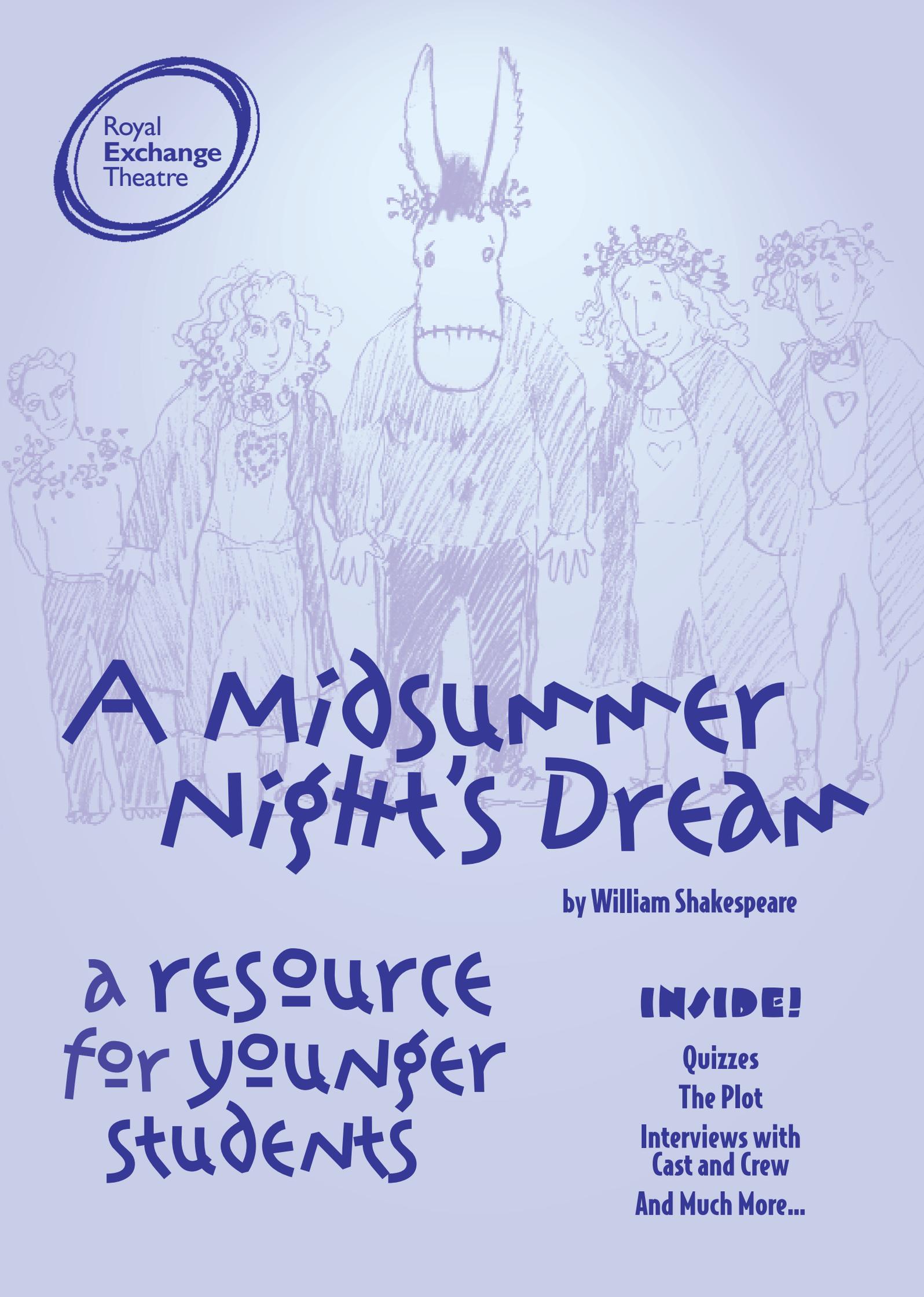




Royal
Exchange
Theatre



A Midsummer
Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare

a resource
for younger
students

INSIDE!

Quizzes

The Plot

Interviews with
Cast and Crew

And Much More...

HELP... I'VE LOST THE PLOT!

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?
... it was fashionable to have rotten teeth in Elizabethan times, because it meant that you could afford to eat lots of sugar?

WHY NOT...?

- Try to piece together the story of the play from the clues given here. In no more than 90 seconds, tell a partner the plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from beginning to end.
- Choose 3 of these letters and turn them into short scenes that you can act out or mime.
- Make a one minute improvisation of the whole story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*!

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?
..Shakespeare probably wrote during the day to avoid having to spend money on expensive candles?

William Shakespeare has been receiving a lot of letters asking for his help. He hasn't got time to answer them all - he's decided instead to put all his friend's problems into a new play he's writing. It's called *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Can you help him out by writing replies to some of these letters?

Dear Agony Aunt,

In four days time I am to marry a wonderful man called Theseus, but the quarrels of some young people have cast a shadow over the whole thing. I am very worried about the wedding being spoiled. What can I do?

Hippolyta

Dear Agony Aunt,

My daughter Hermia never does what I tell her to. I am sick of it! I want her to marry Demetrius, but she wants to marry Lysander. I spoke about it with the Duke Theseus, and he gave her a choice. Either she can marry Demetrius or I'll have to send her to a nunnery, or have her killed, for her cheekiness. Am I being fair?

Egeus

Dear Agony Aunt,

Me and my mates are doing a play. We have to perform it for the Duke and his new wife at their wedding. I'm a bit scared that we'll frighten all the ladies because I play a lion. What if the Duke gets really cross? What shall I do about it?

Snug the Joiner

Dear Agony Aunt,

I have a problem. I am in love with this boy Demetrius, but he hates me and fancies my best friend Hermia. In Athens, where I live, everyone thinks that I'm as pretty as she is, so why does everyone fancy her? Lysander and Hermia are going to run off to the woods and get married. I think that if I tell Demetrius, he might love me back. Do you agree?

Helena

Dear Agony Aunt,

Recently I was turned into a donkey by a mischievous fairy. While I was in this state the Fairy Queen fell in love with me. Now she realises her mistake and has gone back to her husband Oberon. I feel a fool. Please help me.

Nick Bottom, the Weaver

Dear Agony Aunt,

I am in love with Helena. She is beautiful and lovely in all ways, but for some reason she thinks that I am making fun of her. What can I do about it?

Demetrius

Dear Auntie,

I made a bit of a mistake at work. My boss gave me some instructions to put magic love juice in the eyes of an Athenian youth called Demetrius who was roaming through the woods. I got it a little bit wrong and put the juice in the eyes of the wrong youth Lysander. When he woke up he fell in love with Helena. The trouble is that he was already in love with Hermia and they are supposed to be getting married - now he can't stand the sight of her. My boss is really angry. So you see, I'm in a bit of a pickle. Help!

Puck

Dear Agony Aunt,

A terrible thing has happened. My boyfriend Lysander has stopped loving me and has fallen in love with my best friend Helena. At the same time Demetrius, who was madly in love with me, now says he loves Helena too. They nearly had a fight over her. I am very confused and upset.

Hermia

Then see if you can piece together the story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - it's all here!

FACT FILES

Meet some of the actors and some of the many people who've put *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on stage...

We asked them these questions:

- What is your star sign?
- What is your favourite food?
- What is your favourite play?
- What is your favourite television programme?
- What's your favourite thing about the Royal Exchange Theatre?

And this is what they said...

WHY NOT...?

- ❓ Have you ever wondered how many people are involved in getting a play up and running? This is a very small selection of the people who worked on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. For example, there are actually 3 stage managers working on the show. They each have different jobs to do. Can you think what some of their jobs are?
- ❓ Why not try writing a list of some of the different jobs that people do in the theatre. Remember theatres are very big buildings with all sorts of things going on in them. To check your answers you could look in our Royal Exchange *Behind the Scenes* publication.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?
...the ceiling of Shakespeare's stages was called "The Heavens"

DIRECTOR

Lucy Bailey

- Libra
- Spinach
- Whatever you're working on at the time - definitely *A Midsummer Night's Dream* right now
- I don't have a favourite television programme
- The theatre itself - it's a fantastic space

COMPOSER

Luke Stoneham

- Pisces
- Bangers and Mash
- *The Dream Play* by August Strindberg
- I don't even have a television; I don't like it.
- The sound system in the theatre - it's amazing!

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

...Shakespeare was only 17 or 18 when he married. His wife, Anne Hathaway, was 26.

PHILOSTRATE

Frankie Mwangi

- Capricorn
- Ugari - it's an African dish made from maize and is a bit like semolina
- Abyssinia
- Tom and Jerry
- The theatre module itself. It is amazing. I couldn't believe it when I first saw it. I was wondering where the theatre was - it's like an egg in a womb.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?
... Elizabeth I was Queen when Shakespeare was born?

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

... people were very smelly during Elizabethan times because they very rarely had a bath. Can you imagine how stinky it would have been to go to a crowded theatre with loads of smelly people who haven't washed for months?

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Ivy Wilmott

- Virgo
- Fried Eggs and Mushroom Sandwiches with cheese and mayonnaise (In fact, anything with mayonnaise)
- *The Lion King*
- *SM:TV Live* (When Ant and Dec were on it)
- Computerised Key Fobs for getting through all the doors

COSTUME SUPERVISOR

Ginnie O'Brien

- Sagittarius (most of the people in wardrobe are fire signs!)
- Vegan food
- *Wozza Albert* by Percy Mtwa, Mbogeni Ngema, Barney Simon
- *Footballers Wives*
- The space in the theatre/ The light in the domes

SOUND DESIGNER

Steve Brown

- Gemini
- English Breakfast
- *Les Blancs* by Lorraine Hansberry
- *Match of the Day*
- The People who work here

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

...Shakespeare was famous in his own lifetime as well as now. He is largely considered the best playwright ever!

Hippolyta

Theseus



PUCK

Robin Laing

- Aquarius
- White Pudding/ Deep fried mars bars in batter
- *Eliza's House* by Brendan Murray
- *The League of Gentlemen*
- Friendliness and a feeling of family

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

...the Globe Theatre where most of Shakespeare's plays were performed burned down in 1613?

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

...that Shakespeare had three children called Susanna, Hamnet and Judith?

Four Worlds!

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there are lots of characters. They can be divided into four 'worlds' or groups of very different kinds.

The fairies are very important characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The way that a director interprets them can shape what the production will be like.

In this production at the Royal Exchange the fairies are played by older adults. They are very wise and are the keepers of the forest.

In our minds we might think of fairies as creatures that dance at the bottom of the garden, or as friendly beings who leave money under our pillows for teeth... but this isn't the whole truth! Fairies can also be seen as supernatural creatures who are scary or mischievous, with dangerous and exciting magic powers.

Over the years, different productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* have presented the fairies in very different ways. They can be played by boys, girls, women or men. In this production Puck is played by a man, but many other productions have had a female Puck.

These are the fairies:

PUCK (or Robin Goodfellow) Oberon's Attendant

OBERON king of the fairies

TITANIA queen of the fairies

PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, MUSTARDSEED

Titania's fairy attendants

A FAIRY in Titania's Service

Throughout the play the lovers do a kind of a dance - falling in and out of love with each other. This map might help you to remember what's going on:

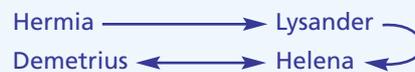
ACT1



ACT2



ACT3



ACT4



ACT5

these characters marry each other in a joint ceremony with Theseus and Hippolyta



WHY NOT...?

Have a class discussion about what you think fairies are. Maybe you think that they are non-human spirits; a way of bringing on stage a world of fantasy and imagination or perhaps they signify magical and spiritual forces in human lives. Maybe they are even figments of the character's imaginations. You decide.

In groups of four discuss the existence of fairies - do you believe in the supernatural or do you think that it's a load of old nonsense. It might be fun to argue the opposite of what you really believe and see if you can convince the rest of the group that you are right. Try improvising a scene of people leaving the theatre being interviewed about what they thought of the play - pretend that some of them believe in fairies and some of them don't. Does this make a difference to their attitudes about the production?

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?
...Shakespeare wrote 39 plays?

WHY NOT...?

- Act out a television news report where several of the characters from the play are interviewed about their strange experiences in the wood.
- Imagine the fuss that the modern media would make over so many grand weddings and strange goings on. Imagine that you are a journalist for a magazine like *Heat* or *Now*. Create a gossip column based on the events of the play. Try to imagine what kind of background details a journalist would be interested in? Use quotes from the play. If you like, you could even do drawings.



The Court

The play begins and ends in the Court of Duke Theseus who is about to be married to Hippolyta. The Court represents order and the daytime world in the play (whereas the woods represent disorder, night-time and a dream world). This is where the Duke and his wife-to-be will live and where the lovers are eventually married.

These are the people of the Court:

HIPPOLYTA queen of the Amazons, engaged to Theseus

THESEUS duke of Athens, engaged to Hippolyta

EGEUS father of Hermia

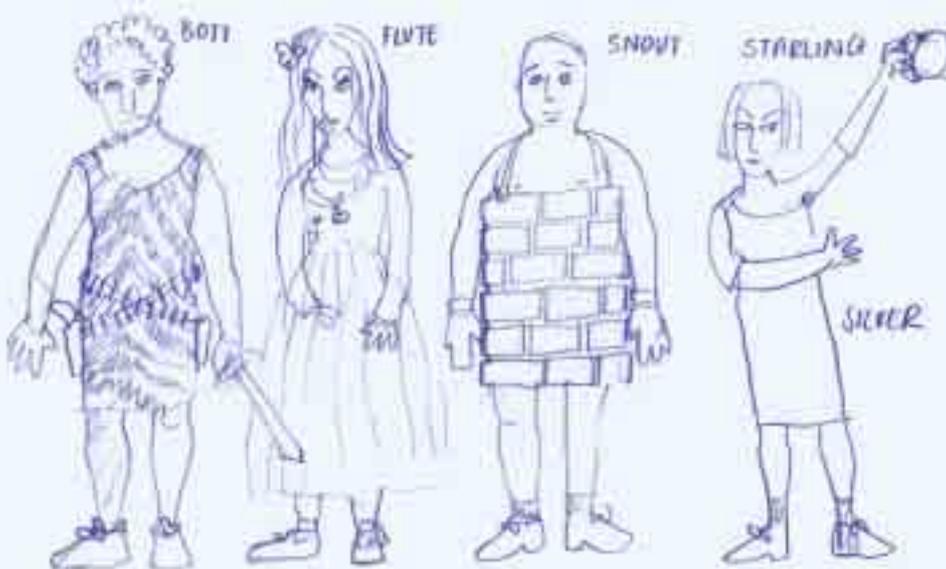
PHILOSTRATE Master of Revels at the Athenian Court

WHY NOT...?

🔍 Four days before Theseus and Hippolyta are due to be married, the Duke tells Hermia that if she does not marry Demetrius, she will be sentenced to death or sent to a nunnery for the rest of her life. Why do you think he makes this decision? How do you think it effects the happy couple's feelings towards their wedding?

🔍 Why not try "hot-seating" the characters to find out how they feel? To do this one member of the group is a character from the play. The rest of the group asks them questions about their life, aspirations, family etc. The character must answer truthfully from the play as far as they know and make up what they don't. Encourage the character on the "hot seat" to answer spontaneously and not to think too much.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?
...most people in Elizabethan times went to see plays in the afternoon?



The Mechanicals

The Mechanicals are a group of workmen who are putting on a play called *The Most Lamentable Comedy and Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe* (or *Pyramus and Thisbe* for short)

These are the Mechanicals:

NICK BOTTOM a weaver who plays Pyramus

PETER QUINCE a carpenter who speaks the Prologue

FRANCIS FLUTE a bellows-mender who plays Thisbe

TOM SNOOT a tinker who plays Wall

ROBIN STARVELING a tailor who plays Moonshine

SNUG a joiner who plays Lion

WHY NOT...?

🔍 Mind map one of the characters. Write the character name in the middle of a large piece of paper. Write around their name everything that comes to mind about the character and their actions. Bottom might be an interesting character to explore.



wordsearch

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?
 ...boys and men played all the parts in Shakespeare's plays in Elizabethan times?

A	P	L	H	K	R	B	O	T	T	O	M	G	B	T	D	V	N	M	O
H	K	Y	O	D	J	H	X	G	V	M	L	U	O	W	A	D	O	F	W
T	H	E	S	E	U	S	A	N	D	H	I	P	P	O	L	Y	T	A	I
E	W	Q	A	S	D	F	G	H	J	K	L	M	N	B	V	C	T	Z	L
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Z	X	C	V	B	U	S	D	F	G	H	E	H	J	K	D	F	C	S	I
G	H	J	F	N	S	D	F	G	H	J	R	S	D	F	P	U	C	K	A
S	D	F	E	G	H	S	E	V	E	N	M	X	C	V	B	N	H	Y	M
C	D	E	V	F	R	B	G	T	D	F	I	S	S	D	F	G	T	V	S
D	F	E	G	H	G	T	Y	U	J	F	A	D	F	G	H	J	D	F	H
O	O	I	G	I	H	J	Y	Y	F	R	D	C	V	B	N	H	Y	G	A
S	D	R	R	E	E	E	C	D	F	G	H	J	U	K	J	H	Y	G	K
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N	B	H	J	U	K	I	L	K	G	F	R	E	T	F	G	D	S	S	E
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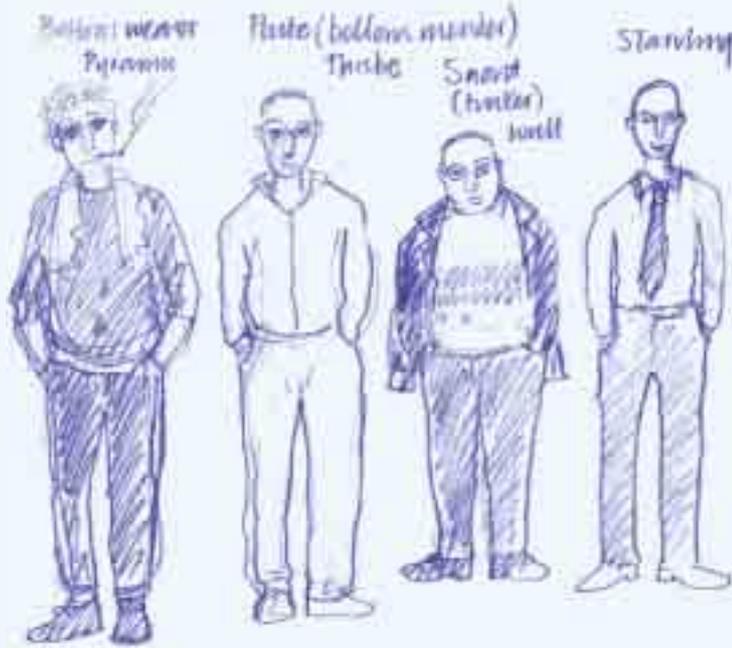
Find the answers to these clues and questions hidden in this word-search.

- This character is turned into a half-ass!
- At the beginning of the play, Demetrius is in love with her.
- Who is the king of the Fairies?
- What is the name of the play that the mechanicals perform?
- He plays the wall.
- Who marries Hermia at the end of the play?
- This character is also known as Robin Goodfellow.
- At the beginning of the play, they are preparing to get married.
- What is the name of Hermia's father?
- Who wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?
- Most of Shakespeare's plays were first performed in a theatre called The --- --?
- In which month is midsummer night?
- What is the name of the director of this production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?
- How many sides does the Royal Exchange Theatre have? (clue: it's like a 50p piece)
- Before the theatre was built, what was bought and sold in the Royal Exchange building?

ANSWERS ON BACK PAGE.

THE DESIGN

The interpretation of the play in this production is very modern. This means that the set and costumes, designed by Rae Smith, are extremely young and lively. The lovers costumes are based on film and pop stars' clothes; Puck is dressed like an Eco-warrior...



WHY NOT...?

- Try to think how you would dress five characters from the play. What do their costumes look like, and what does this say about their personality? A good trick is to think what colour a character most reminds you of - this colour could then form the basis of your design. Remember, you might decide that your characters will wear Elizabethan costume, or you might make it very modern. It's totally up to you.
- Think about different kinds of woods and forests. Do you find them scary or do you think they're nice places? Try drawing a picture of how you would design the forest for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Is it light or dark; are the trees close together or far apart; are there plants on the ground... etc. If you're not very keen on drawing you could find pictures in magazines and newspapers showing the colours you'd like and so on. Not all designers are good at drawing and some of them use this method to explain how they'd like their design to look.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

... nowadays books and plays are copyrighted? This means that nobody is allowed to pinch the ideas or the story of a play. In Elizabethan times there was no such thing as copyright, and William Shakespeare would often steal ideas (and sometimes even whole plays) from other writers and would put them in his own words?

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

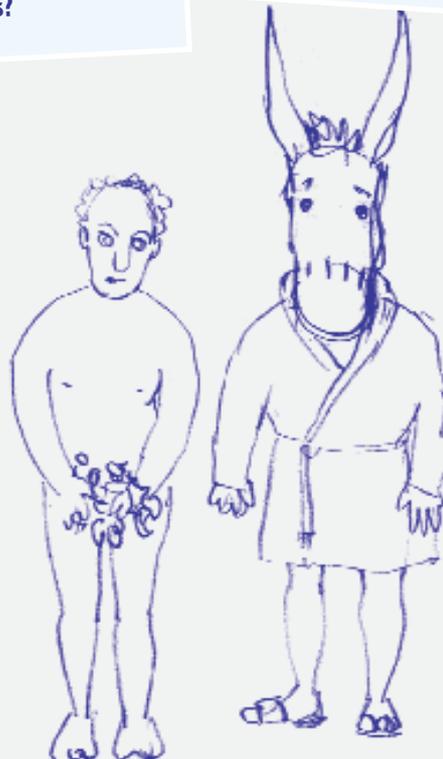
...there were no dictionaries like the ones we have today in Shakespeare's times?

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

... William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564 and died in 1616?

WHY NOT...?

- In a group try to write down as many of Shakespeare's plays as you can think of?
- Discuss what you think it would have been like living in Elizabethan times. Write a list of differences and similarities between then and the present day.



This production of A Midsummer Night's Dream is designed by Rae Smith. Rae's notes, scrapbooks and sketches appear throughout this pack and are reproduced with her kind permission.

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Royal Exchange Theatre
Written and researched by Exchange Education,
Royal Exchange Theatre,
St Ann's Square,
Manchester M2 7DH
Tel: 0161 615 6720/1
Box Office: 0161 833 9833