

A Midsummer Night's Dream

A text from the University of Texas UTOPIA "Shakespeare Kids" website, created by the UT Shakespeare at Winedale Outreach program; for more information, visit this "knowledge gateway" site at <http://utopia.utexas.edu>.

This text has been edited slightly for students in grades 5-8.

SCENE TWO (ACT 1, SCENE 2)

Setting: An area in Athens.

Enter the craftsmen: Quince, Bottom the Weaver, Snug the Joiner, Starveling the Tailor, Snout the Tinker, and Flute the Bellows-mender.

QUINCE:

Is all our company here?

BOTTOM:

You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

QUINCE:

Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding-day at night.

BOTTOM:

First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

QUINCE:

Marry, our play is, "The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby."

BOTTOM:

A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

QUINCE:

Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

BOTTOM:

Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

QUINCE:

You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

BOTTOM:

What is Pyramus? A lover, or a tyrant?

QUINCE:

A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

BOTTOM:

That will ask some tears in the true performing of
it: if I do it, let the audience look to their
eyes; I will move storms: I will condole in some measure.

To the rest – Yet my chief humor is for a tyrant. I could play ‘Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in,
to make all split:

*The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates;
And Phibbus’ car
Shall shine from far
And make and mar
The foolish Fates.*

This was lofty! Now name the rest of the players.

This is Hercules’ vein, a tyrant’s vein; a lover is
more condoling.

QUINCE:

Francis Flute, the bellows-mende

FLUTE:

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE:

Flute, you must take Thisby on you.

FLUTE:

What is Thisby? A wandering knight?

QUINCE:

It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

FLUTE:

Nay, faith, let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming.

QUINCE:

That's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

BOTTOM:

An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too, I'll speak in a monstrous little voice. 'Thisne, Thisne;' 'Ah, Pyramus, lover dear! thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!'

QUINCE:

No, no; you must play Pyramus: and, Flute, you Thisby.

BOTTOM:

Well, proceed.

QUINCE:

Robin Starveling, the tailor.

STARVELING:

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE:

Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother.
Tom Snout, the tinker.

SNOUT:

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE:

You, Pyramus' father; myself, Thisby's father;
Snug the joiner, you the lion's part; and I
hope here is a play fitted.

SNUG:

Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it
be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

QUINCE:

You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

BOTTOM:

Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will
do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar,
that I will make the duke say 'Let him roar again,
let him roar again!'

QUINCE:

An you should do it too terribly, you would fright
the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek;
and that were enough to hang us all.

ALL:

That would hang us, every mother's son.

BOTTOM:

I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the
ladies out of their wits, they would have no more
discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate my

voice so that I will roar you as gently as any
sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any
nightingale.

QUINCE:

You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a
sweet-faced man; a proper man, as one shall see in a
summer's day; a most lovely gentleman-like man:
therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

BOTTOM:

Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best
to play it in?

QUINCE:

Why, what you will. Masters, here
are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request
you, and desire you, to con them by tomorrow night;
and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the
town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse, for if
we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with
company, and our devices known. I pray you, fail me not.

BOTTOM:

We will meet; and there we may rehearse most
obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect: adieu!

QUINCE:

At the duke's oak we meet.

BOTTOM:

Enough; hold, or cut bow-strings.

Exeunt