

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Sample Analytical Paper Topics

TOPIC #1

It is only in the last few decades that the position of women in society has been reexamined. From reading Shakespeare's plays, we have some information about their negative treatment in the 1500s and 1600s. What, precisely, was this negative treatment of women to which we no longer adhere?

Outline

- I. Thesis Statement: *In A Midsummer Night's Dream, William Shakespeare demonstrates the negative treatment women received from society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.*
- II. **Owned by Father**
 - A. Father has the right to choose daughter's husband.
 - B. Failure of daughter to comply with father's choice will lead to either death or banishment to a nunnery.
- III. **Unable to Choose Husband**
 - A. See II.
 - B. Hermia faces death or banishment by eloping with Lysander.
 - C. Hippolyta won in battle by Theseus.
- IV. **Friendships Dependent upon Mate**
 - A. Hermia hates Helena because Lysander loves Helena.
 - B. Helena wants to be like Hermia because Demetrius loves Hermia.
- V. **Hypocrisy in Sexual Values**
 - A. Hermia asks Lysander not to sleep so close to her in the wood since they are not yet married although they are in the act of eloping.
 - B. Although married, Oberon and Titania freely have affairs.

TOPIC #2

People are commonly referred to as "ass" when they behave poorly or stupidly. How has William Shakespeare exemplified such behavior by having Robin Goodfellow (Puck) replace Nick Bottom's head with that of the animal, an ass?

Outline:

- I. Thesis Statement: *In A Midsummer Night's Dream, William Shakespeare demonstrates the appropriateness of certain animal labels to describe human behavior—to wit, Bottom's having an ass's head.*

II. The Qualities of Bottom's Character Which are Similar to Those of the Animal, An Ass

- A. Stubbornness as he refuses to allow his friends to see his fear at being alone in the haunted wood.
- B. Casual awareness of his sexuality when Titania courts him.
- C. Coarse hair of which he complains to the fairies without realizing he possesses an ass's head.

III. Bottom's Denial of his Feelings

- A. Refuses to join his friends when they flee the haunted wood for fear they will know he realizes (or thinks he realizes) they are making a jest of him.
- B. Whistles for courage rather than admit his fear when he finds himself in the haunted wood alone.
- C. Thinks his experience was a dream while probably feeling it was real.

IV. Lack of Examination of New Situations

- A. Blindly accepts the role of Titania's lover.
- B. After being freed of Puck's spell, doesn't question why his body no longer has the lightness of a fairy's.

V. Mocks Others

- A. Refers to a cobweb's ability to staunch the flow of blood from a cut when introduced to Cobweb.
- B. Asks Peaseblossom to remember him to his vegetable family members when introduced to him.
- C. Refers to mustard's ability to burn the mouth when introduced to Mustardseed.
- D. Uses this mockery to pay tribute to the fairies' attributes.

VI. Takes Advantage of Others

- A. Tells Mustardseed and Peaseblossom to scratch his face.
- B. Sends Cobweb on a quest to find a particular kind of bee with a particular kind of honey on a particular flower and to bring the honey-bag back to him unbroken.

TOPIC #3

In life, people will often experience trials and tribulations before they eventually arrive at their destination—be it with their career, relationship, or family. While Egeus and Hermia do not appear reconciled at the end of the play, each of the lovers are united or reunited with their true loves.

Outline

- I.** Thesis Statement: *The characters in William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream are successful, after many trials and tribulations, in acquiring their desired relationships.*

II. Hermia and Lysander

- A. Must go to Athens with Egeus for Duke Theseus' decision.
- B. Demetrius competes with Lysander for Hermia's hand in marriage and has Egeus' approval.
- C. Hermia and Lysander decide to defy the law and elope.
- D. Their elopement is aborted.
- E. Lysander is temporarily charmed into loving Helena.
- F. Hermia accuses Helena of "stealing" Lysander's love.

III. Helena and Demetrius

- A. Demetrius at one time loved Helena, but later left her.
- B. Demetrius is in love with Hermia and has her father's approval.
- C. Helena is temporarily loved by Lysander when he is under the spell of the love juice.
- D. Hermia accuses Helena of "stealing" Lysander's love.

IV. Hippolyta and Theseus

- A. Theseus is the Duke of Athens.
- B. Hippolyta is the Queen of the Amazons.
- C. Theseus captured her in battle.

V. Titania and Oberon

- A. Each has extra-marital affairs.
- B. Titania refuses to relinquish the changeling she's brought with her from India.
- C. Oberon places a spell on his wife.
- D. Titania falls in love with an ass-headed human, Bottom.

TOPIC #4

Friendship has a way of lasting despite misunderstandings, arguments, different opinions, and time. William Shakespeare demonstrates this via the ebb and flow of the four lovers' relationships in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Outline

- I. Thesis Statement: *In A Midsummer Night's Dream, William Shakespeare demonstrates the enduring quality of friendship.*

II. Helena and Hermia

- A. Harmony as childhood friends and when Hermia tells Helena of her elopement so that Helena will be reassured that Hermia will no longer be available for Demetrius to marry.
- B. Conflict in that Demetrius first loves Helena, then Hermia, then Helena again and also when Lysander is charmed into loving Helena.
- C. Reconciliation when each is united with her proper love.

III. Lysander and Demetrius

- A. No initial contact nor feeling about each other.
- B. Conflict in that both want to marry Hermia but Demetrius has Egeus' approval to marry Hermia while Lysander has her love. Lysander plans to elope with Hermia. Both men jilt Hermia, loving Helena, while under the love-juice's spell, which prompts them to plan a duel to win Helena's hand.
- C. Reconciliation when reunited with their chosen lovers.

IV. Demetrius and Hermia

- A. Harmony when Demetrius had previously been wooing Hermia's childhood friend, Helena.
- B. Conflict in that Demetrius plans to marry Hermia (with her father's approval) while she plans to elope with Lysander. Also conflict that he jilted Helena to woo Hermia.
- C. Reconciliation, with the love juice's help, when Demetrius falls in love with Helena again.

V. Lysander and Helena

- A. Harmony when Lysander plans to elope with Helena's closest friend, Hermia, which would no longer allow Demetrius to marry Hermia.
- B. Conflict when Lysander temporarily falls in love with Helena while under the love juice's spell and, again, when Lysander calls Helena nasty names during her argument with Hermia.
- C. Reconciliation when Lysander is reunited with Hermia and Helena with Demetrius.