

2 A Midsummer Night's Dream, Briefly  
A “Shortened Shakespeare” by Lee Karvonen

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, Briefly

---

ESTABLISHING THE RHYTHM

To find the proper rhythm for this piece, first read-aloud and clap through the sections as you go. Each underlined word or word part falls directly on a beat. As you read, clap on each underlined word, keeping the rhythm steady. Be careful not to read too fast!

This is a rehearsal technique and readers will not clap throughout these sections during performance. After you have established the beat, it is time to start interpreting, experimenting, and having fun with the words by varying tempo, volume, inflection, and expression. Be careful not to allow the development of a “sing-song” delivery while rehearsing and performing this script.

STAGING

This script may be staged as either a Readers Theater Reading or as a Traditional Play:

If you are staging it as RT, hang signs around each characters neck telling the audience the name of that character. (THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, NICK BOTTOM, MOTH, COBWEB, etc.) Since most RT productions do not involve much stage movement, ask some of the characters who have smaller parts to hold up large signs at the proper moments to inform the audience which stage movements are happening at the time. (EGEUS, HERMIS, LYSANDER, AND DEMETRIUS ENTER, - TITANIA EXITS, - TITANIA SLEEPS AND THE FAIRIES STEAL AWAY, etc.).

NOTE: If you are staging the piece as Traditional Theater, simply block your actors as you normally would, and follow the stage directions below.

CAST of 22

THESEUS, DUKE OF ATHENS	HIPPOLYTA, QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS
EGEUS, FATHER OF HERMIA	HERMIA, IN LOVE WITH LYSANDER
LYSANDER, IN LOVE WITH HERMIA	DEMETRIUS, IN LOVE WITH HERMIA
HELENA, IN LOVE WITH DEMETRIUS	PHILOSTRATE, MASTER OF REVELS
NICK BOTTOM, WEAVER	PETER QUINCE, CARPENTER
FRANCIS FLUTE, BELLOWS-MENDER	TOM SNOUT, TINKER
ROBIN STARVELING, TAILOR	SNUG, JOINER
OBERON, KING OF THE FAIRIES	TITANIA, QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES
ROBIN GOODFELLOW, aka PUCK	PEASEBLOSSOM, A FAIRY
MUSTARDSEED, A FAIRY	COBWEB, A FAIRY
MOTH, ANOTHER FAIRY	A FAIRY

SETTING: ATHENS AND A NEARBY FOREST  
SCENE 1 - PALACE OF THE DUKE OF ATHENS

3 A Midsummer Night's Dream, Briefly  
A "Shortened Shakespeare" by Lee Karvonen

THESEUS: FOUR MORE DAYS UNTIL WE WED; TIME IT IS A-CREEPING.  
IF EXCITEMENT DOES NOT START, I WILL SPEND THEM SLEEPING.

HIPPOLYTA: TIME WILL FLY RIGHT BY, MY LORD, SUN AND MOON WILL SCAMPER,  
SO YOU CAN RELAX, MY LORD, AND JUST HELP ME PAMPER.

THESEUS: PHILOSTRATE, SHAKE THINGS UP; GET ATHENIANS STIRRING  
'CAUSE WE NEED SOME PARTY TIME AND ENTERTAINMENT WHIRLING.  
BEAT THE BUSHES, FIND SOME PLAYS, ORDER MERRIMENT.  
HIPPO, THOUGH I HURT YOU FIRST, SOON YOU WILL BE SENT.

(sings) "YOU-OU-OU SEND ME! OH, YOU-OU-OU SEND ME!"

(Egeus, Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius enter.)

EGEUS: OH, MY LORD, I HAVE A PROB! MY DAUGHTER WON'T OBEY!  
I WANT HER TO MARRY DEMETRIUS! SHE SAYS THAT'S NOT OKAY!

THESEUS: HEY, HERMIA, LISTEN TO YOUR DAD! HE WANTS THE BEST FOR YOU!  
IF YOU DO NOT DO WHAT HE SAYS, I MAY JUST EXECUTE YOU.

HERMIA: BUT I LOVE LYSANDER, AND LIKEWISE HE LOVES ME!  
HE'S JUST AS GOOD AS DEM-E IS, SO WHY CAN'T I HAVE HE?

EGEUS: BUT I PROMISED HER TO DEM-E, LYSANDER ISN'T RIGHT!  
I MEAN, HE IS A GENTLEMAN, BUT DEM-E AND I ARE TIGHT!

DEMETRIUS: NO DUH, SHERLOCK! ... I MEAN, NO DUH, MY LORD!  
IF I DO NOT GET HERMIA, MAN, WILL I BE BORED!

4 A Midsummer Night's Dream, Briefly  
A "Shortened Shakespeare" by Lee Karvonen

LYSANDER: I LOVE HER MORE THAN YOU DO, MAN! AND SHE'S THE GIRL FOR ME!  
SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST DROP OUT, AND LET THE LADY BE!

THESEUS: YOUR FATHER'S WORD IS LAW, YOUNG LADY, AND HIS WILL BE DONE.  
MARRY DEM-E, OR YOU DIE, OR ELSE BECOME A NUN.  
IT'S SORT OF YOUR DECISION, THOUGH IT'S NOT AND MUST COME SOON.  
YOU MUST DECIDE, MARRY, NUN, OR DIE, BEFORE THE NEXT NEW MOON.  
COME HIPPO, WE WILL SEE THE SIGHTS AS SOON AS FIRST I SAY  
A WORD OR TWO TO DEM-E AND EGEUS RIGHT AWAY.  
(Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and Demetrius exit.)

LYSANDER: OH, HERMIA, HERMIA, WHAT WILL WE DO? YOUR LOVE I MUST HAVE!

HERMIA: I KNOW, I KNOW, LYSANDER! THIS WOUND MUST HAVE SOME SALVE!

LYSANDER: MEET ME IN THE WOODS TONIGHT, NO, TOMORROW NIGHT, I MEAN  
AND WE'LL LEAVE ATHENS FAR BEHIND AND START OUR OWN NEW  
SCENE.

HERMIA: OH, I WILL MEET YOU THERE, MY LOVE! AND WE WILL STEAL AWAY  
AND IF NO THINGS WILL GO AMISS, WE'RE IN A DIFFERENT PLAY.

(Helena enters.)

HELENA: OH, HERMIA, YOU'RE HAPPY 'CAUSE THERE'RE TWO IN LOVE WITH YOU.  
I ONLY WANT DEMETRIUS; TO ME, HE WON'T SAY BOO!

HERMIA: TOMORROW NIGHT WE'RE OUT OF HERE. IN THE FOREST WE WILL MEET  
THEN LY AND I WILL SAY GOODBYE TO ATHENS; 'T WILL BE SWEET!

5 A Midsummer Night's Dream, Briefly  
A "Shortened Shakespeare" by Lee Karvonen

LYSANDER: YES, HELENA, WE'RE OUT OF HERE. WE HOPE YOU HAVE A LIFE.  
BUT MEANWHILE SOMEWHERE OUT OF TOWN, I WILL TAKE A WIFE.

(Lysander and Hermia exit.)

HELENA: I TRULY DO NOT WISH THEM ILL, BUT I WISH ME GOOD.  
I WILL TELL DEMETRIUS, THEY'RE MEETING IN THE WOOD.  
I WILL FOLLOW AFTER HIM; PERHAPS HE WILL REJECT HER.  
AT LEAST I WILL BE BY HIS SIDE, THOUGH NOT POLITICALLY CORRECTER!

SCENE 2 - PETER QUINCE'S COTTAGE (All the workers are there.)

QUINCE: IS EVERYBODY IN HERE NOW? IS EVERYBODY MET?  
I'D LIKE TO GET US STARTED NOW. IS EVERYBODY SET?

BOTTOM: TELL US ALL WHAT ROLES WE'LL PLAY; I HOPE THAT MINE IS GREAT  
OR WHY DID I SHOW UP ON TIME; I SHOULDA JUST BEEN LATE.

QUINCE: OUR PLAY'S A KINDA COMEDY, ALTHOUGH IT'S TRAGIC TOO,  
'BOUT PYRAMUS AND THISBY, LOVERS WHO ARE BLUE.  
IT SEEMS THAT THEY ARE DEEP IN LOVE, BUT THERE IS A SNAG.  
THEIR FAMILIES HATE EACH OTHER, AND THAT IS QUITE A DRAG.

BOTTOM: OKAY, OKAY, SO THAT'S THE PLAY, BUT, TELL ME, WHAT'S MY PART?  
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT IT IS; I'LL PLAY IT WITH GREAT HEART.

QUINCE: BOTTOM, YOU ARE PYRAMUS; YOU KILL YOURSELF FOR LOVE.

6 A Midsummer Night's Dream, Briefly  
A "Shortened Shakespeare" by Lee Karvonen

BOTTOM: THAT WILL CALL FOR MANY TEARS; THAT'S WHAT I'M THINKING OF -  
THAT I WILL PLAY IT OH, SO WELL; I'LL MAKE IT ALL MY OWN,  
AND I WILL PLAY IT SO SO SAD, I'LL GET TEARS FROM A STONE!

QUINCE: FRANCIS FLUTE, YOU'LL THISBY BE, AND YOU LOVE PYRAMUS.

FLUTE: A LADY! I'VE A BEARD IN TRAINING!

QUINCE: DON'T MAKE SUCH A FUSS!  
YOU CAN WEAR A MASK AND YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR VOICE.

FLUTE: OKAY, THEN, I WILL DO THE PART, BUT I WILL NOT REJOICE.

BOTTOM: NO, NO, QUINCE! I'LL THISBY BE! I CAN DO A WOMAN'S VOICE!

QUINCE: FORGET IT, BOTTOM. YOU'RE PYRAMUS! CASTING IS MY CHOICE!  
COME HERE, ROBIN STARVELING. YOU ARE THISBY'S MOTHER.

STARVELING: I GUESS I ALSO CANNOT CHOOSE TO MAYBE PLAY ANOTHER?

QUINCE: HOW RIGHT YOU ARE! TOM SNOUT! YOU WILL BE PYRAMUS' FATHER.  
I'LL BE DAD TO THISBY. SNUG, THE LION

SNUG: THAT'S NO BOTHER!

BOTTOM: O, LET ME BE THE LION, PLEASE! I CAN ROAR NOT SWEETLY.

QUINCE: AND SCARE THE WOMEN HALF TO DEATH SO THEY WILL HANG US  
NEATLY?

7 A Midsummer Night's Dream, Briefly  
A "Shortened Shakespeare" by Lee Karvonen

BOTTOM: THEN I WILL ROAR SO SOFTLY, THEY'LL THINK I AM A DOVE  
AND I'LL BE SO ADORABLE, THE GIRLS'LL CALL ME "LOVE".

QUINCE: I SAID YOU'RE PLAYING PYRAMUS, AND PYRAMUS YOU'LL PLAY!  
NOW CAN WE START REHEARSING THIS BEFORE WE'RE HERE ALL DAY?

BOTTOM: NO PROBLEM, QUINCE. YOU GOT IT. DO NOT GET ALL WEIRD.  
SO, TELL ME NOW, DIRECTOR, WHAT COLOUR IS MY BEARD?

QUINCE: ANY COLOUR THAT YOU'D LIKE. ABSOLUTELY ANY ONE AT ALL.  
NOW, EVERYBODY HAS HIS PART. WE HAVE NO TIME TO STALL,  
SO GO HOME AND LEARN YOUR PARTS BECAUSE WE MUST BE GOOD.  
TOMORROW NIGHT WE WILL REHEARSE IN THE LOCAL WOOD.  
THERE NO ONE COMES TO INTERRUPT, OR SPY ON WHAT WE DO.  
BY OURSELVES WILL WE REHEARSE; ALMOST TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE!

BOTTOM: WE'LL REHEARSE SO WELL THAT WE WILL KNOW OUR PARTS BY HEART,  
SO HAUL YOUR BUTTS RIGHT OUT OF HERE, SO WE CAN MAKE A START!

SCENE 3 - THE PALACE WOOD, NEAR ATHENS, THE NEXT NIGHT

(Puck and another fairy are talking.)

PUCK: WE HAVE A LITTLE PROBLEM HERE; THE KING AND QUEEN ARE MAD.  
THEY'RE FIGHTING OVER SOME POOR KID WHO LOST HIS MOM AND DAD.  
TITANIA HAS HIM NOW, YOU SEE, AND HE ATTENDS TO SHE,  
BUT OBERON, HE WANTS HIM TOO, TO BE LIKE A SON TO HE.  
SO NEITHER IS ON SPEAKING TERMS, THAT IS, FOR PLEASANTRIES,  
UNTIL ONE OF THEM CHANGES MIND, IN OTHER WORDS, AGREES.

8 A Midsummer Night's Dream, Briefly  
A "Shortened Shakespeare" by Lee Karvonen

FAIRY: `SO WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN? WILL WE HAVE A FAIRY WAR?

PUCK: EVENTUALLY THEY'LL SORT IT OUT. YOU KNOW, HONOUR, OBEY, ADORE.

FAIRY: HEY, HERE COMES SOMEBODY! TITANIA AND OBERON.

PUCK: DO NOT WORRY, I'LL STAY HERE. YOU JUST RUN ALONG.

(Titania and Oberon enter from opposite sides and confront each other.)

OBERON: SO, IT IS TITANIA! GIVE THAT BOY TO ME!

TITANIA: NOT A CHANCE, BIG OBERON! I WON'T SET HIM FREE!

OBERON: DON'T START WITH ME, TITANIA! I WILL GET MY WAY!

TITANIA: YOU AND, OH, WHOSE ARMY? YOU DON'T SCARE ME, EH?

OBERON: YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T MESS WITH ME! REMEMBER, I'M THE KING!

TITANIA: OH, BE STILL MY HEART! BRING IT ON, BABY! BRING!

OBERON: I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE CROSSING ME! REMEMBER, YOU'RE MY WIFE!

TITANIA: REMEMBER, YOU'RE MY HUSBAND! SO, DARLING, GET A LIFE!

OBERON: SO, YOU'RE JUST GOING TO HANG IN THESE WOODS! HOW LONG, MAY  
ONE KNOW?

AND WILL YOU TELL ME NOW, BECAUSE I REALLY HAVE TO GO?

9 A Midsummer Night's Dream, Briefly  
A "Shortened Shakespeare" by Lee Karvonen

TITANIA: TILL AFTER THESEUS' WEDDING DAY. I'LL BE THAT LONG, AT LEAST -  
BUT, FOR NOW, I'M LEAVING YOU! YOU REALLY ARE A BEAST!

(Titania exits.)

OBERON: (shouts) GO AHEAD! SEE IF I CARE! (to self) YOU MISERABLE, LITTLE RAT!  
WELL, PUCK, MY MAN, YOU HEARD HER. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?

PUCK: SHE'S CRUISIN' FOR A BRUISIN'; I'D SAY THAT'S FOR SURE,  
BUT I BET MY MASTER HAS THE PERFECT CURE.

OBERON: YOU MUST BE PSYCHIC, PUCK, MY MAN, I HAVE THE PERFECT PLAN  
AND FOR THIS NICE PERFECTION, YOU'LL GIVE ME A HAND.  
THERE IS A PLANT THAT HAS SOME JUICE THAT REALLY ISN'T FAIR.  
DROP SOME JUICE UPON HER EYES AND THEN SHE'LL REALLY CARE  
FOR THE CREATURE SHE FIRST SEES WHEN SHE FIRST AWAKES.  
BOY OH BOY, I AM SO SMART! I REALLY TAKE THE CAKE!  
AND YOU'LL BE SURE SHE SEES SOMEONE THAT'S UGLIER THAN SIN  
AND SHE NEVER WILL SUSPECT THAT SHE'S BEEN TAKEN IN!

PUCK: MASTER, YOU ARE BRILLIANT! I'LL GO GET THAT HERB.

(Puck exits.)

OBERON: IT WON'T DO A BIT OF GOOD TO HANG OUT THE "DON'T DISTURB".

(Demetrius and Helena enter.)

DEMETRIUS: HIT THE ROAD, HELENA! YOU KNOW I DON'T LOVE YOU!  
YOU'RE REALLY GETTING ON MY NERVES! WHY WON'T YOU SKIDDOO?