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❁ ACT 1 ❁

PRE-GRAMMAR | Preparation

Prepare to think about the play and its Central One Idea by drawing upon my prior knowledge, experience, or interests.

1. Why do people choose to get married? Are there ever any considerations other than love? Think about different time periods and cultures when composing your answer.
2. Drawing from either your own experience or research, describe how parts are cast in a play. Do actors ever receive two or more parts? Why would they?

GRAMMAR | Presentation

Discover essential facts, elements, and features of the play through the Reading Notes, Words to Be Defined, and Comprehension Questions.

READING NOTES

Act 1, Scene 1

1. **Theseus** - In Greek mythology, the founder and king of Athens. According to legend, he slayed the Minotaur and found his way through the Labyrinth with the help of Ariadne. Legends are told about him in various sources Shakespeare would have had access to, including Plutarch's *Parallel Lives of the Greeks and Romans* (The Life of Theseus) and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (The Knight's Tale).
2. **Hippolyta** - In Greek mythology, the queen of the Amazons. She and the Amazons were conquered by Theseus before her marriage to Theseus. While some versions of legend state that she was kidnapped by Theseus, Shakespeare's play suggests a more consensual relationship. Theseus says, "*Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,*" hinting that Hippolyta was attracted to her conqueror (1.1.16).

3. **Then let us teach our trial patience,/Because it is a customary cross** (1.1.152-153) - Bearing one's cross patiently is a reference to Matthew 16:24 in which Jesus says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."
4. **gentle** (1.1.161) - noble, honorable
5. **translated** (1.1.191) - transformed
6. **The more I hate, the more he follows me./The more I love, the more he hateth me.** (1.1.198-199) - These two lines are almost direct inversions of lines from Golding's translation of Ovid's "Pyramus and Thisbe," which Shakespeare would have read and of which the tradesmen in the play are performing an adaptation. Ovid writes of Pyramus and Thisbe, "The closer they supprest/The fire of love, the fiercer still it raged in their breast."

Act 1, Scene 2

7. **Pyramus and Thisbe** - A myth originally told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* about two lovers who are forbidden from seeing each other by their parents. After talking to each other through a crack in a wall, they decide to meet at Ninus' tomb. Thisbe arrives first, only to discover a lion already there. She runs away but leaves part of her cloak, which is drenched with blood from the lion's earlier kill. Pyramus then arrives and sees the cloak. Thinking Thisbe dead, he kills himself. Thisbe returns and, seeing Pyramus dead, kills herself. According to Ovid, their blood is the reason mulberries are so dark. This myth is performed by the tradesmen. It also happens to be one of the sources for Shakespeare's most famous tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*.
8. **You were best to call them generally, man by man,/according to the scrip.** (1.2.2-3) - Bottom literally refers to the script that the tradesmen are using for their play, but this line could also be a sly jest by Shakespeare at the stage directions at the beginning of Act 1, Scene 2.

WORDS TO BE DEFINED

Definitions Bank

bestows affection or attention excessively	lively
bravely	renounce; reject
decreases in size or extent; dwindles	repulsively; offensively
judgment	rule; order
	widow who has inherited money from her husband

1. This old moon **wanes!** *v.* (1.1.4)
2. She lingers my desires,/ Like to a step-dame or a **dowager**, *n.* (1.1.4-5)
3. Awake the **pert** and nimble spirit of mirth; *adj.* (1.1.13)
4. Either to die the death, or to **abjure**/ For ever the society of men. *v.* (1.1.65-66)
5. and she, sweet lady, **dotes**,/ Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry, *v.* (1.1.108-109)
6. It stands as an **edict** in destiny. *n.* (1.1.151)
7. A lover that kills himself, most **gallant**, for love. *adv.* (1.2.19)
8. if you should fright the ladies out of/ their wits they would have no more **discretion** but to/ hang us; *n.* (1.2.68-70)
9. there we may rehearse most/ **obscenely** and courageously. *adv.* (1.2.93-94)



Read Act 1, marking the text according to the method taught in "How to Mark a Book."

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Act 1, Scene 1

1. What have Theseus and Hippolyta planned at the beginning of the play?
2. Of what does Egeus accuse Lysander? How does Hermia respond?
3. What is the ultimatum that Theseus gives to Hermia?
4. How does Lysander defend himself against Egeus' accusations?
5. Why do Lysander and Hermia flee to the woods?
6. What does Helena decide after hearing about Lysander and Hermia's departure?

Act 1, Scene 2

7. Who belong to the tradesmen's acting company? What play are they performing?
8. What roles does Bottom want to play? What roles does Quince assign?
9. Describe Bottom's character in Scene 2.

LOGIC | Dialectic

*Reason with the facts, elements, and features of the play;
sort, arrange, compare, and connect ideas – and begin
to uncover and determine the Central One Idea.*

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

May be verbally discussed or answered in written form in your Literature Notebook.

1. Reread lines 1-11 of Act 1, Scene 1. What object do both Theseus and Hippolyta **personify**? What could this personified object **symbolize**? How does its personification amplify its symbolism?
2. "*Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;/Four nights will quickly dream away the time ...*" (1.1.7-8)
How does the progression from day to night and their relationship to dreams frame the rest of the play?
3. Egeus claims that Lysander has "*bewitch'd*" Hermia (1.1.27). How well does he support this claim? Does Lysander's supposed "*bewitchment*" of Hermia show that magic actually exists in Athens as well as the forest? How or how not?
4. Contrast Hermia's defense of Lysander with Lysander's defense of himself. Why are the two so different?
5. As Hermia and Lysander lament how their love is being thwarted, Lysander calls love "*swift as a shadow, short as any dream*" (1.1.144). What does the grammatical **parallelism** of these **similes** accomplish? What solution do Hermia and Lysander reach for their lament?
6. "*Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,/And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind.*" (1.1.234-235)
Summarize Helena's comments on the nature of love. Does she mean something as simple as "love is blind?" Compare her comments to those of Hermia.
7. Why do the tradesmen fear that the ladies will shriek at the lion in the play? What does their fear reveal about how they view the audience's imagination?
8. How is the tradesmen's choice to meet in the forest analogous to Hermia and Lysander's choice to flee to the forest?

RHETORIC | Expression

*Express in your own words the Central
One Idea with supporting points.*

RHETORICAL EXPRESSION:

To be answered in your Literature Notebook in preparation for your essay.

1. In a paragraph, **summarize** Act 1.
2. Write the **Central One Idea** of Act 1 in a precise, eloquent sentence.
3. List three or four points that **support** your determination of the Central One Idea.
4. Write a **lead** (1-2 sentences) that grabs the reader's attention—such as a *quote, question, startling fact or statistic, scenario, piece of dialogue*, etc.
5. Write an **amplification/importance** (1-2 sentences) that explains why your thesis is important in a larger or more universal sense.

◆ **Central Quote:** Choose a quote from anywhere in Act 1 that you think best embodies the Central One Idea and copy it down.

① **Write the Central One Idea as expressed by the teacher.**

ESSAY OPTION

Choose a topic below and respond with a 2-5 paragraph essay that includes an Introduction with a clear thesis; a Body with organized, logical, and specific support of the thesis; and a Conclusion with an amplification of the thesis/support.

The essay should feature appropriate tone, voice, and point of view; correct grammar, usage, and mechanics; a variety of sentence structures enhanced by subordination and parallelism; a balance of general and specific detail; and enhanced rhetorical effect through transition words, appropriate diction, strong verbs, descriptive adjectives, and other rhetorical devices. Your essay should also be written legibly, with good cursive penmanship.

Note: Some of these prompts tend toward a shorter essay, and some toward a longer. Check with your teacher to see what length he or she suggests. Both short essays (1 page) and long essays (2-4 pages) are useful and helpful, depending on the intent and purpose.

1. Write an essay in which you analyze one of the characters as they are revealed and characterized thus far in Act 1: Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, Quince, or Bottom.
2. Write an essay in which you track the imagery of the moon or of day and night in Act 1 and explain the significance.
3. Write an essay in which you contrast the nature of love as described by Hermia and Helena with the nature of love detailed in Scripture. (Examine passages such as 1 Corinthians 13 and 1 John 4.)
4. Write an essay in which you analyze how the tradesmen expect to interact with their audience and compare this analysis to how you believe Shakespeare wants his audience to interact with his play.
5. [Central One Idea] Use the Central One Idea of Act 1 as your thesis, and support it with some evidence from your reading of Act 1.
6. [Open] Write an essay in which you analyze an aspect of Act 1 that is of import to you, such as a particular theme, character, setting, element of plot, dialogue, symbol, or other literary or rhetorical motif.
7. [Teacher] Essay prompt.