

# MIDSUMMER

An interaction unit introducing young learners to the world of William Shakespeare

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# OVERVIEW

MIDSUMMER can supplement a unit in World History, Ancient Greece or mythology. The unit follows a 10-day schedule with 45 to 60 minutes of instructional time per day. Activities include reading the play, cross curricular-activities (in drama, language arts, social studies, math and art), and the planning of the unit's culminating activity—an Elizabethan Festival and Feast. An optional presentation of the play requires more days for rehearsal if time allows.

**The Play** MIDSUMMER begins with students reading the *Pyramus and Thisbe* sequence from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The play has been simplified to a fourth- or fifth-grade reading level, however, there is enough of the original text that students will experience the beauty of Shakespeare's language. Since this is a theatrical, performance-based approach to teaching a Shakespeare play, students will actually stand and move as they read the play aloud, stopping for discussion questions and improvisations. The questions serve as a quick check for comprehension; the improvisations relate the play to real life situations.

**The Activities** Although the post-play writing and craft activities follow a schedule which has been field tested at the fourth- and fifth-grade level, feel free to adapt these activities to your particular needs and time limits. ACTIVITIES 1 and 2 (language arts) include descriptive paragraphs, poetry and character illustrations. These activities will enhance students' knowledge of the elements of literature and reinforce writing skills. ACTIVITIES 3, 4, 5 and 6 (social studies) incorporate rap music, crafts and pantomime to explore Shakespeare's life and times. Participating in the rap will strengthen students' speaking skills and improve self confidence. The craft activities enable students to express their creativity and display their work. The mime activity enhances self esteem and engages students' imaginations as they create their own pantomimes. Finally, ACTIVITY 7 (math) reinforces graphing and arithmetic skills.

**Elizabethan Festival and Feast** The Setup Directions detail the organization and planning of an optional Elizabethan Festival and Feast. Every MIDSUMMER activity produces a creation or a performance that can be used as a visual display or entertainment at the festival. If plans for the festival are announced early in the schedule, anticipation generates excitement and students become even more enthusiastic as they participate in the planning. Students will also experience a sense of teamwork and responsibility as they volunteer to provide food for the feast and practice their presentations for the festival. Should you decide not to include the entire festival on the last day, alternate daily plans are included under Simplifying the Unit: Eliminate the Feast.

*This is a sample chart. Alter it as desired.*

## UNIT TIME CHART

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
<p>Introduce Shakespeare, setting</p> <p>Begin script reading</p>	<p>Finish script reading</p> <p>ACTIVITY 1 (Part 1) Character Study: Descriptive Paragraph</p>	<p>ACTIVITY 1 (Part 1) Character Study: Descriptive Paragraph</p> <p>Invitations: ELIZABETHAN FESTIVAL AND FEAST</p> <p>MAKING COSTUMES</p> <p>ACTIVITY 1 (Part 2) Character Study: Descriptive Poem</p>	<p>ACTIVITY 1 (Parts 1 &amp; 2) Character Study: Descriptive Paragraph and Descriptive Poem</p> <p>ACTIVITY 2 Character Illustrations</p>	<p>ACTIVITY 3 (Parts 1 &amp; 2) Life and Times of Will Shakespeare: Outline and Rap</p>
DAY 6	DAY 7	DAY 8	DAYS 9 TO 11	DAY 12
<p>Rap rehearsal</p> <p>ACTIVITY 4 (Parts 1 &amp; 2) Making a Coat of Arms</p> <p>ACTIVITY 5 Making a Mask</p>	<p>Finish ACTIVITIES 4, 5 Making a Coat of Arms and a Mask</p> <p>Festival planning</p> <p>Rap rehearsal</p> <p>SCRIPT FOR COURT JESTER</p> <p>ACTIVITY 6 Mime Occupations</p> <p>CHALLENGE PROJECT Let's talk Elizabethan (optional)</p>	<p>Rehearsal for Festival</p> <p>ACTIVITY 7 Graphing Ages</p> <p>CHALLENGE PROJECT Let's talk Elizabethan (optional)</p> <p>CHALLENGE PROJECT Break the Code (optional)</p>	<p>PLACE CARDS</p> <p>Dress Rehearsal for Festival</p> <p>OPTIONAL ACTIVITY Greensleeves</p> <p>CHALLENGE PROJECT Let's talk Elizabethan (optional)</p>	<p>Elizabethan Festival and Feast</p>

# DAY 1 DIRECTIONS

## DAY 1

### Introduction

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Generate exciting anticipation about a Shakespeare play and activities on this first day, and students' enthusiasm will last to the end of the unit.

### Materials

Student Guides (*PYRAMUS AND THISBE* script)—class set

**Note:** Before class begins, place a map of Greece and/or a globe at the front of the room. Have a portrait or bust of William Shakespeare at the front of the class. Write the following on the chalkboard:

**Time:** 500 B.C.

**Place:** In the woods near Athens, Greece

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### Procedure

1. Distribute Student Guides and ask,

“How many of you have heard the name William Shakespeare? Does anyone know the name of a Shakespearean play?”

2. Some students are familiar with his name and the play *Romeo and Juliet*. Talk briefly about Shakespeare's life 400 years ago and his importance to the literary world. Before students begin their “Shakespeareance,” read the Student Guides Introduction:

Get ready to have a Shakespeareance! You are about to experience one of William Shakespeare's funniest plays, entitled *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In this play, a group of fairies, elves and humans are rehearsing a play of their own called *Pyramus and Thisbe* (pronounced Peer-a-mus and Thiz-bee). In MIDSUMMER, you will become actors as you participate in a dramatic reading of *Pyramus and Thisbe*. You will then begin completing projects that take you back to Shakespeare's time— England in the late 1500s, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. You will practice a Shakespeare Rap, create Coats of Arms or Elizabethan Masks, write poetry and perform mimes. Your creations and performances will be applauded at your classroom's Elizabethan Festival and Feast. Dressed as Elizabethan ladies and gentlemen, you will dine on fine fare that you will help prepare. And now, as Shakespeare may have said,

“Let us tarry no longer.  
The play is about to begin!”

## DAY 1 DIRECTIONS

3. On the map of Greece, have a student find the city of Athens. Tell the class that this is where the story of the play takes place. Then have a student find the country of Greece and the city of Athens on the globe. Next choose another student to locate the country of England and the city of London. Note the distance between the two countries. Explain that Shakespeare wrote most of his plays from London, England. As far as anyone knows, he never left the country. Ask,

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“How could Shakespeare know about ancient Greece?”

Explain that the ancient languages of Greek and Latin were taught in the grammar school Shakespeare attended. He would have read many works written originally by Greek and Latin authors, including some of the stories from mythology we still tell today. Ask,



“Can anyone name a story from a Greek or Roman myth?”

Pandora, Hercules or Pegasus, the winged horse may be mentioned. Explain that the Ancient Greeks believed in strange flying creatures, elves, fairies and gods and goddesses who could change their shapes. Shakespeare referred to many of these creatures in his plays. In Shakespeare’s England some people may have also believed that fairies really existed.

4. Point out that *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is actually a play within a play. It has fairies and elves and a group of humans who are rehearsing their own version of another Greek story *Pyramus and Thisbe*. The names of the characters in this adaptation are very easy to pronounce. Direct students to the CAST OF CHARACTERS page in the Student Guides. Pronounce each name and have students repeat the names in unison.

# DAY 1 DIRECTIONS

8. Following are the questions that appear throughout the script, and their answers:

## SCENE 1 PART 1

1. Describe Puck and his friends. How tall are they?  
How are they dressed?  
(Accept all answers that could describe the fairies.)
2. Where does the play take place?  
*The play takes place in Athens.*

## SCENE 1 PART 2

1. Who directs the play?  
*Quince*
2. What is a bellows?  
*A bellows fans a fire by creating wind. (You may wish to illustrate this.)*
3. Who wants to play all the parts?  
*Nick Bottom*

## SCENE 2 PART 1

1. Who is the director of the play?  
*Peter Quince*
2. Why doesn't Flute want to play Thisbe?  
*Thisbe is a girl's part, and Flute has a beard growing.*
3. a) What is funny about Nick Bottom?  
*He wants to play all the parts.*  
b) How many parts does he want to play?  
*Three*  
c) Do you know anyone like Bottom?

# DAY 1 DIRECTIONS

## SCENE 2 PART 2

1. Even though Quince is the director of the play, Bottom seems to have all the answers. What does this tell you about him?  
*He is a leader. He is impatient, creative and a know-it-all.*  
(Accept all reasonable responses.)
2. a) How does Bottom solve the problem of the killing?  
*Bottom will give a prologue and say that he is not really Pyramus and will not really die.*  
b) of the lion?  
*Snug will say he is not really a lion, but Snug, the joiner.*  
c) of the wall?  
*Starveling will pretend he is a wall.*
3. What will the men do to create a moon?  
*A lantern will represent the moon.*
4. What is a trick Puck plays on Bottom?  
*Puck puts magic juice in Bottom's eyes and turns him into a jackass.*
5. How do Bottom's friends react to his appearance?  
*They scream and run away.*

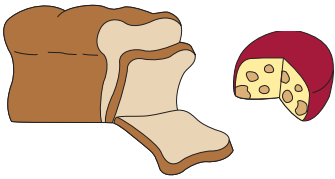
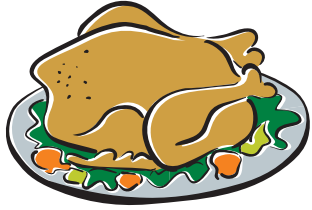
## SCENE 3

1. Tell the story of *Pyramus and Thisbe* as played by Bottom and his friends.  
*Pyramus and Thisbe talk through the chink in the wall and agree to meet at Ninus' Tomb. Thisbe gets there first. The lion chases her, and she drops her scarf and runs off. Pyramus finds the scarf and thinks she is dead. He kills himself. Thisbe returns and finds Pyramus dead. She then kills herself.*
2. What is funny about the players' performance?  
(Accept all reasonable answers.)

# DAY 3 DIRECTIONS

## DAY 3

### Descriptive Poem



**Note:** Prior to class list the following food items needed for the Feast on the board, leaving enough space to write students' names after each item. Leave this list on the board for the duration of the unit to serve as a daily reminder to the students.

whole cold baked chicken	melon
red and green grapes	figs (dried)
loaves of uncut bread	hard boiled eggs
sliced oranges	olives
apples	red or white grape juice
pears	apple juice
nuts	cheese

### Materials

1. Student Guides (*PYRAMUS AND THISBE* script)—*class set*
2. ACTIVITY 1 (Part 1) Character Study: Descriptive Paragraph—*class set*
3. AN ELIZABETHAN FESTIVAL AND FEAST—*class set + extras*
4. FOOD FOR A FEAST—*class set*
5. MAKING COSTUMES—*class set*
6. ACTIVITY 1 (PART 2) Character Study: Descriptive Poem—*class set*

### Procedure

1. Hand out the scripts and any work that needs finishing from ACTIVITY 1 (Part 1) Descriptive Paragraphs. Allow about 10 minutes for last minute changes and to cut the bottoms off the final copies. Collect and grade as you would any English assignment.
2. Begin planning for the Festival and Feast if you have determined to include this culminating event. Introduce students to the idea of a festival when they will wear costumes and eat Elizabethan-style. Explain that they will provide entertainment by reading the paragraphs and poems that they write during the unit, and that a court jester will be master of ceremonies.
3. Distribute copies of the AN ELIZABETHAN FESTIVAL AND FEAST invitation blanks. On the board write the date, time and place, and have the students fill in the blanks on their invitations. Students may choose to decorate the back of the invitation if they have some time later in the day.



*Volunteers can make extra invitations for extra credit. They can be sent to administrators, staff members and even the local newspaper. News coverage is good PR!*



# ACTIVITY 1 (PART 1)

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## Character Study: Descriptive Paragraph—Rough Draft

**Instructions** Choose one character that you like from *Pyramus and Thisbe*. In the Rough Draft space, write a one paragraph description of the character. Include his/her size, hair and clothing. Include a sentence or two describing the character’s behavior. Remember to have a good topic sentence and a good conclusion. Be sure to use complete sentences.

Character: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Character Study: Descriptive Paragraph—Final Draft

**Instructions** Revise and correct your work, and write your final copy below. Write the name of the character on the line that says “Character.” Write your name on the line that says “by.” Cut the paper on the dotted line and give the Final Draft to your teacher.

Character: \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

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