

Little, but Fierce:

Allusions in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

1. Question & Research Task

Have you ever been on the outside of an inside joke? It's a bit awkward, not fully "getting it," but understanding enough to know that you're missing something. In literature, often these "inside jokes" come in the form of allusions. **An allusion is a direct or indirect reference to a person, place, thing, or idea of historical, cultural, literary, or political significance.** The most common types of allusions in literature are **mythological, historical, biblical, or literary.**

You've likely read or seen these allusions before, but without an understanding of what they reference, it's impossible to gain the full meaning of the story. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* includes many allusions. In order to better understand the play—to be in on Shakespeare's "inside joke"—you will need to examine many of these.

In this Slam Dunk, you will conduct brief, focused research to respond to the inquiry question:

How do authors reuse and reinvent old stories?

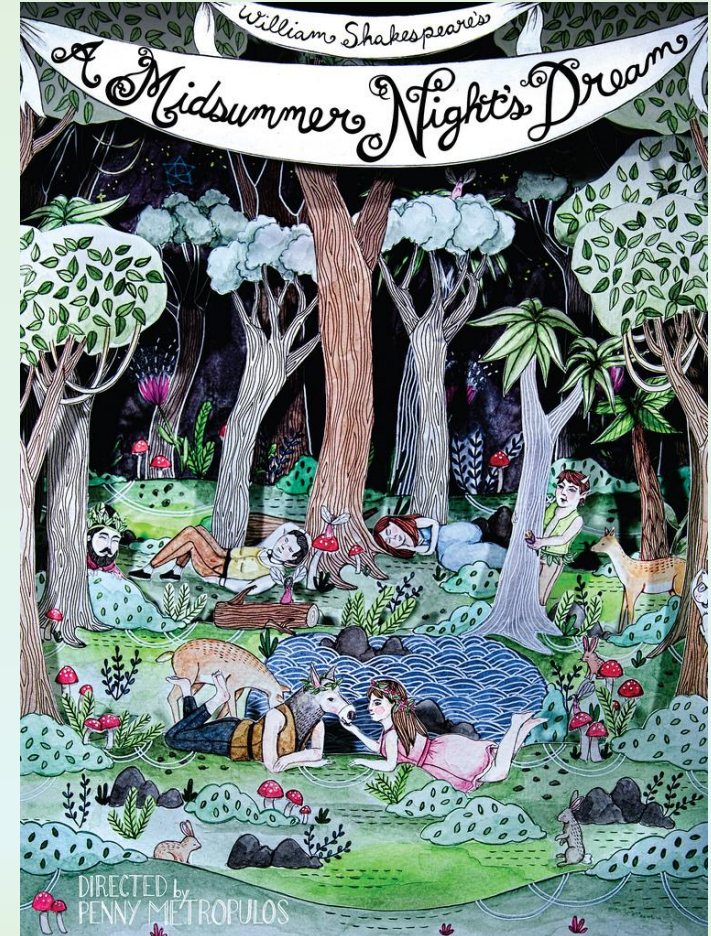


Image Source: Flickr

2. Information Sources

In a small group, you will research one of these allusions in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

You will use the resources to gather information on these allusions in order to complete the assessment on slide 4.

When required, see your teacher/librarian for login information.



Theseus & Hippolyta	Helen of Troy	Pyramus & Thisbe	Cupid/Eros	The Titans
Theseus Theseus Hippolyta Plutarch’s Life of Theseus Knight’s Tale summary	Helen of Troy Helen of Troy	Pyramus & Thisbe , (Shmoop) Pyramus & Thisbe	Eros (Cupid) Cupid of Courtship Story of Cupid & Psyche	Titans The Titans (website) The Titans (website) Titans & Titanesses

3. Student Activity

To help you sort through the resources, use your [Cornell Notes sheet](#) to gather the main idea of the allusion and summarize its story or key points and components. You will use these notes in order to create a presentation for your class on this allusion, to help bring your classmates to understand the play.



In the video linked above, Spark Notes provides a brief explanation of the plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Image Source: You Tube

4. Assessment Activity

How do authors reuse and reinvent old stories?

Create a skit or an interview to distill the important aspects of this story or character.

Using what you currently know about the play, consider how this might connect to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Prepare to share your story/character with the class and **address your answer to the inquiry question**, either explicitly or within your skit/interview.

You can write your skit or interview using pen & paper or using Google tools.

Your teacher will use [this rubric](#) to assess your presentation.



Video: The Reduced Shakespeare company performs all of Shakespeare's 16 comedies as one 3-minute skit.

Image Source: YouTube

5. Enrichment Activities

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[Ovid's Metamorphoses](#)

[Allusions to Mythological, Classical & Traditional Texts](#)

[Common Biblical Allusions](#)

Create a text message conversation between two people that includes at least 5 allusions to the works listed above. You can create a digital conversation using notes on Jamboard, pen and paper, or another tool suggested by your teacher.

6. Teacher Resources

Learning Standards Alignment

Content Learning Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.9

Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new.

[Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy](#)

Reading: 1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Writing: 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

[AASL Standards Framework for Learners](#) Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.

Think: Learners display curiosity and initiative by:

I.A.2 Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.

Create: Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes:

I.B.1 Using evidence to investigate questions. I.B.3 Generating products that illustrate learning.

Share: Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes:

I.C.1 Interacting with content presented by others.

Grow: Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by:

I.D.2 Engaging in sustained inquiry.

[P21 Framework: 21st Century Student Outcomes](#)

3. Information, Media & Technology Skills: Information Literacy: Access information efficiently and effectively; Use information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand.

ICT Literacy: Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information.

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Grade 8 ELA Advanced Academics

Objective: Students will conduct brief, focused research in order to synthesize their research into a skit or interview.

Time Frame: Two 80-minute or three 40-minute class periods

Differentiation strategies for this lesson:

- Have students use learning supports provided in BCPS Digital Content found in the [Apps Portal](#). Refer to [Digital Content Snapshot/Support pages](#) as needed.

Notes to the teacher:

- Collaborate with your school library media specialist to plan and implement this lesson.
- Provide students with login information as needed to authenticate BCPS Digital Content. Login information is available on the **BCPS Digital Content** page found via the [Apps Portal](#)