

**Tapestry of Grace
Rhetoric Literature
Midsummer Night's Dream (Co-op 8)**

Poetics

- read p. 172-176 (Theater in the Renaissance & Dramatic Genres in Renaissance England)

-read p. 181 – 183 (Themes and Goals of Humanist Studies & Astrology, Magic, Mathematics and the Foundations of the Scientific Revolution)

-read p. 185 – 186 (Language Studies and the Rise of Vernacular Languages & View of History)

Pull your own short definitions for the following literary terms from your *Poetics* reading:

Comedy:

English History Play:

Tragedy:

Romance Play:

Masque:

Commedia dell'arte:

Also find definitions for the following:

Soliloquy:

Aside:

Tableau:

Shakespeare Scavenger Hunt – separate download on forum

Midsummer Night's Dream **(notes from Cummings Study Guide)**

Read Acts I & II for Co-op 8

Genre: Stage play in the form of a comedy

Composition & Publication: Shakespeare probably wrote the play between 1594 and 1596. It was published in 1600 and 1619 quarto editions and then in 1623 as part of the First Folio, the first authorized collection of Shakespeare's plays.

Sources: Shakespeare based parts of the play on *The Knight's Tale*, by Geoffrey Chaucer (1340?-1400). Chaucer's story has an entirely different plot, but the setting and two of the main characters—Theseus and Hippolyta—are the same. Other sources Shakespeare used include *The Golden Ass*, by Apuleius (2nd Century AD); *Life of Theseus*, by Plutarch (46?-120?); and possibly *King James the Fourth*, by Robert Greene (1560?-1592). *Pyramis and Thisby*, the play within the play, is based on passages in *Metamorphoses (Book IV)*, by Ovid (43 BC.-AD 17). The character Puck appeared as Robin Goodfellow in a 1593 play, *Terrors of the Night*, by Thomas Nashe (1567-1601). Edmund Spenser referred to a devilish sprite called *Pook* in *Epithalamium*.(1595), and Shakespeare may have adopted Pook and changed his name to Puck.

Setting: The action takes place in Athens and nearby woods during the age of myth in ancient Greece. However, the play has the atmosphere and lighthearted mood of a land of enchantment which could be anywhere. Although the characters reside in the environs of Athens, many of them speak and act like Elizabethan Englishmen. The time of the action is June 24. In Elizabethan England, Midsummer Day—the feast of Saint John the Baptist—fell on that date. It was a time of feasting and merriment. On Midsummer Night, fairies, hobgoblins and witches held their festival. To dream about Midsummer Night, therefore, was to dream about strange creatures and strange happenings—like those in the play.

Characters: refer to character list in your books – you may need to constantly refer to this in order to keep all the characters straight.

Shakespeare Project:

Make sure you are moving forward in your recitation assignment. Coordinate with group. Work on learning your lines, understanding the play and character, watching actors on YouTube.