

A Midsummer Night's Dream Essay Prompts

When we finish reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, you will be expected to write an essay answering one of the following prompts. Before we read, review these prompts and decide which ones you are interested in answering. Your essay will be scored using the Standard Writing Rubric. You are expected to write AT LEAST a 5 paragraph essay. The essay is part of your final for the semester.. **Please note:** because the essay is part of your final exam, I will not accept any late essays.

1. Love is portrayed many different ways throughout the play. Define love. How does the play support or undermine that definition? Is anyone truly in love by the end of the play? (Be sure that you do not limit your possibilities to just romantic love. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* showcases love between friends, love between parents and children, and love between authority and servants.)
2. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* takes place in Athens and in the forest. Compare and contrast the two places and explain how the setting drastically influences the play's events. What significance do forests have in other literary works you're familiar with? What about urban settings? What rules and values apply in the different settings? Why is the story set in ancient Greece—would it have been as effective in contemporary England? Obvious analysis such as, "Oberon and Puck would not be in the city so none of the events would have happened," will receive no points. Instead, make an argument about how the setting contributes to a theme.
3. Often the characters in the woods struggle to differentiate reality from dreams. Part of this confusion might be because there is the Athenian world, the fairy world, and a world in between. Which one of these worlds seems more real? Consider how magic plays a part in this confusion, but also consider why their reality might seem dreamlike. Don't forget to mention the significance of the title. (Free note: Solipsism is the theory that there is no one version of reality. Think about incorporating this idea into your essay.)
4. Consider the foolishness and absurd occurrences that transpire throughout the whole play. The lovers are foolish, the fairies are foolish, and the actors are foolish. Consider why these three groups are foolish to the audience and why they are foolish to other characters.
5. Theseus is constantly portrayed as the most practical and level headed character in the play, and he criticizes lovers, madmen, and poets for having too much imagination. Still, the bulk of the play is about lovers, the play is made by a poet, and all the action is pretty much madness. Is this Shakespeare claiming that imagination is actually a critical part of life? In light of imagination's central role in the play, is Theseus a great and noble figure, or is the joke really on him?

As we read, if you discover an essay topic you would prefer to write on, please come and talk to me before you begin collecting evidence and writing.

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Category	Above Standard	Meets Standard	Nears Standard	Below Standard	No Evidence
Thesis Statement (20 points)	Student demonstrates a thoughtful thesis statement that names the topic of the essay and outlines the main points while attempting to demonstrate creative development.	Student demonstrates a standard thesis statement that addresses the topic and outlines the main points.	Student demonstrates a weak thesis statement that does not name the topic OR does not preview what will be discussed.	Student demonstrates an opinion statement rather than a thesis statement.	No thesis.
Organization & Transitions (15 points)	Student establishes a summative and engaging topic sentence for each body paragraph and maintains logical links between each idea.	Student establishes a summative topic sentence for each body paragraph and mostly maintains logical links between each idea.	Student attempts to establish summative topic sentence for each body paragraph but does not maintain logical links between each idea.	Student has only a few topic sentences and does not maintain logical links between ideas	No evidence.
Introduction & Conclusion (10 points)	Student creates an introduction that engages the audience's while previewing important and relevant material; the conclusion properly summarizes the paper while still engaging the reader..	Student creates an introduction that previews important and relevant material; the conclusion summarizes the paper but does not endeavor to engage the reader.	Student creates an introduction that only contains the thesis statement; the conclusion summarizes the paper in one sentence.	Student is missing either an introduction or a conclusion. The present paragraph is weak and does not accomplish its function.	There is no intro and conclusion
Evidence & Examples (20 points)	Student introduces and develops relevant, details which give the reader important and thoughtful information.	Student uses relevant details which give the reader general and predictable information.	Student uses details that are predictable, obvious, and, at times, irrelevant.	Student uses insufficient details.	No evidence or examples given.
Sentence Structure & Mechanics (15 points)	Accurate phrasing, varied sentence structure, and a few (3-5) mechanical mistakes create an accessible paper to read.	At times awkward phrasing, similar sentence structure, and several (6-8) mechanical mistakes create an uninviting paper to read.	Sentences lack structure and appear incomplete or rambling and there are more than 9 mechanical mistakes which obscures readability.	Writing is difficult to read because there are more mistakes than correct sentences, punctuation usages, and spelling.	No evidence.
Language (10 points)	Student uses academic vocabulary that is specific, concise, and accurate.	Student uses some academic vocabulary that is specific, concise, or accurate.	Student uses minimal academic vocabulary, but it is often not specific, concise, or accurate.	Student uses slang and cliches which give the paper a chatty tone.	Fails to use an academic tone or language..
Critical Thinking (10 points)	Overall position is clear and developed. Topic is interesting, significant, and is engaging from several angles.	Overall position is clear with a sense of developed ideas. Topic is interesting and significant, but not deeply explored in needed areas	Overall position is evident but often too simplistic. Topic is also simplistic and one-dimensional.	Overall position is indeterminable and simply relates the research without evidence of further thought or interaction.	No evidence.