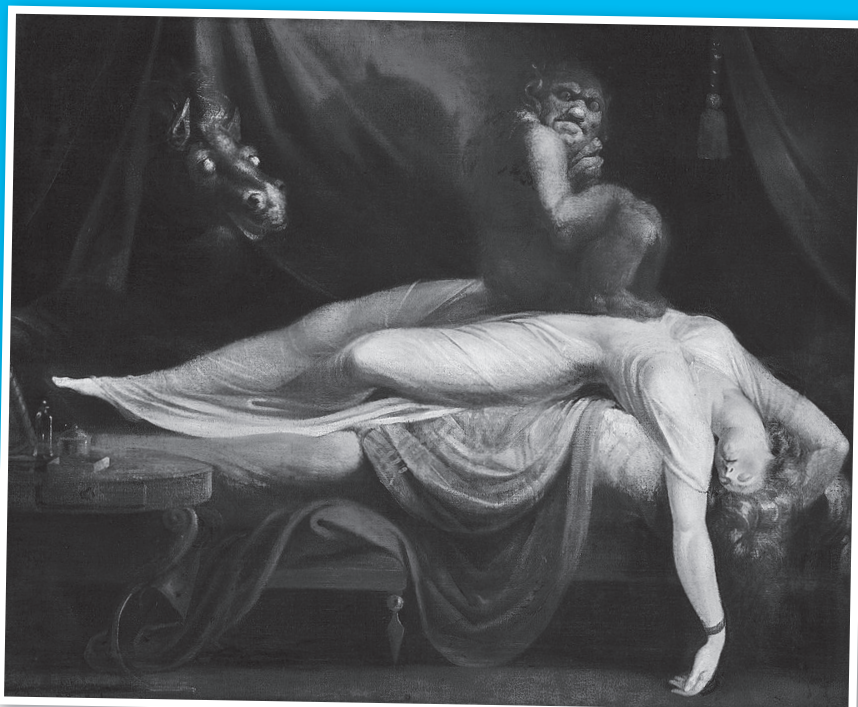


Imaginaires



The Nightmare (1781) by Henry Fuseli

Pistes [B.O.]

- ▶ L'étrange et le merveilleux, le fantastique, la science-fiction,
- ▶ L'absurde, l'onirisme, la folie, la métamorphose.

STARTING BLOCKS

Imagination is at the heart of the process of writing. Even when authors write their autobiographies, they never present the reader with an objective, full, unedited account of their own lives. They will always choose an angle, a point of view to allow them to turn their lives into works of art.

Naturally, some writers will choose to use their imagination to move away from realism in various ways. Some set the action of their works in a future in which science has an even more prominent role in our daily lives and are therefore categorized as **science fiction*** writers. Other writers decide to create a completely unreal setting for their works. Depending on the kind of atmosphere depicted and on the nature of the events recounted, the reader will be able to categorize the works as belonging to various genres such as the **Gothic***, the **fantastique***, **ghost stories***, **magic realism*** or **fantasy*** to name but a few. While many of these works deal with supernatural elements, approaches differ.

The **Gothic** novel mixes romanticism and horror and is always set in very dramatic settings, whereas the novel belonging to the **fantastique** will focus less on the intensity of the emotions conveyed and more on doubt and fear. In the latter, the narrator will often try to use reason to justify the supernatural events he is confronted with without succeeding in working them out until the very end of the book. It is also important to remember that the frontier between two genres can be blurred. While Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (See DOC 12) is a very good illustration of the Gothic, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (See DOC 13) can be linked both to the Gothic and to the *fantastique*, as we shall see.

Novels which can be associated with **magic realism** usually have a plot which might include fear, but differ from the *fantastique* by their logical ending. Last but not least, **fantasy*** literature can be distinguished from the rest by its total absence of fear. The most striking example is probably Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, (See DOC 6) in which Alice never fears for her life, even when the Queen threatens to have her head chopped off. In this book, the use of **nonsense*** constantly reminds the reader of the distance he should keep from what is written, just as in the **Theatre of the Absurd***, in which life is deprived of meaning and the characters seem bereft both of reason and purpose.

Finally, reading remains an exploration into the deepest recesses of the imagination, however realistic the setting may be. Readers will always shape things in very personal ways, give life to the characters they discover and whose stories unfold before their very eyes.

L'imagination créatrice et visionnaire

« Cet axe s'intéresse aux capacités de l'imaginaire à s'émanciper des règles du réel, que ce soit en inventant des mondes extraordinaires (*Alice in Wonderland* de Lewis Carroll, série *Game of Thrones* et ses inspirations shakespeariennes), en donnant forme à des visions oniriques (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* de Shakespeare, poésie visionnaire de Coleridge, oeuvres picturales de William Blake, de Henry Fuseli ou des préraphaélites, ou en repoussant les limites de la science (*Frankenstein* de Mary Shelley, romans d'Isaac Asimov, films comme *2001, A Space Odyssey* de Stanley Kubrick ou *Interstellar* de Christopher Nolan). »

Extrait du Conseil supérieur des programmes.

Corpus de documents étudiés

- ▶ DOC 1 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1596) by William Shakespeare
- ▶ DOC 2 "*The Ancient of Days*" (1794) by William Blake
- ▶ DOC 3 *Biographia Literaria* (1817) – 'Fancy and imagination'
by Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- ▶ DOC 4 *The Lady of Shalott* (1833) by Alfred Tennyson
- ▶ DOC 5 *Ophelia* (1851) by John Everett Millais
- ▶ DOC 6 *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) by Lewis Carroll
- ▶ DOC 7 *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) by L. Frank Baum
- ▶ DOC 8 *I, Robot* (1950) by Isaac Asimov
- ▶ DOC 9 *The Dumb Waiter* (1957) by Harold Pinter

A Midsummer Night's Dream (1594-95)

by William Shakespeare

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Watch the trailer of the 2016 BBC film adaptation by Russell T. Davies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that can be found at the following address: [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHwS3Yb5p4I>]



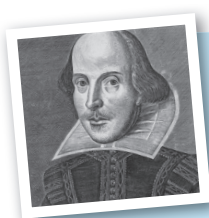
1. Observe the different scenes. Where and when does the scenes take place?
2. Now observe the characters. What can you infer about their identity? Is one character different from the others? If so, why?
3. Imagine what the plot of the story might be.

BACKGROUND

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a complex play staging two worlds – the world of the humans and the world of the fairies – and three sets of characters:

1. The play opens with Theseus and Hippolyta planning their wedding, which takes place in four days. Egeus enters with his daughter, Hermia, and her two suitors, Lysander and Demetrius. Hermia is in love with Lysander, but her father wants her to marry Demetrius. He declares that if Hermia won't marry Demetrius, she will die. Lysander and Hermia decide to escape. As for Helena, she is in love with Demetrius...
2. Peter Quince is directing a group of amateur actors to perform "Pyramus and Thisbe" for Theseus' wedding. Nick Bottom, a terrible actor, is given the lead role...
3. Fairy Queen Titania and Fairy King Oberon are arguing because Titania refuses to give Oberon custody of the Indian boy she is raising. Oberon sends Puck, his trouble-making jester, out to find a plant called love-in-idleness, the juice of which makes any person dote on the next creature he or she sees...

Watch the summary of the plot at the following address to learn more about the unfolding of the events in the rest of the play: [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1wMfOwIAZ8>]



William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was an English poet, playwright and actor. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon". His works consist of approximately 39 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses. Shakespeare produced most of his known works between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were primarily comedies and histories such as *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Richard III*. Until about 1608, he wrote mainly tragedies, among them *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. In the last phase of his life, he wrote tragicomedies (also known as romances) such as *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*.



Act II scene 1 – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-95) by William Shakespeare

The following scene stages the first reunion between Oberon and Titania after their relationship fell apart as the fairy queen refused to comply with Oberon's demand. Indeed, Oberon, who used to be Titania's lover, wants to obtain the Indian boy she has adopted.

Enter, from one side, OBERON, with his train; from the other, TITANIA, with hers

OBERON

Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania!

TITANIA

What, jealous Oberon! Fairies, skip hence.

5 I have **forsworn** his bed and company.

OBERON

Tarry, rash wanton: am not I thy lord?

TITANIA

Then I must be thy lady. But I know

10 When thou hast stol'n away from Fairyland,

And in the shape of Corin sat all day,

Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love

To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,

Come from the farthest Steppe of India?-

15 But that, **forsooth**, the bouncing Amazon,

Your **buskined** mistress and your warrior love,

To Theseus must be wedded; and you come

To give their bed joy and prosperity.

OBERON

20 How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,

Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,

Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?

Didst thou not lead him through the **glimmering** night

From Perigenia, whom he ravishèd?

25 And make him with fair Aegles break his faith,

With Ariadne, and Antiopa?

TITANIA

These are the forgeries of jealousy:

And never, since the middle summer's spring,

30 Met we on hill, in **dale**, forest, or **mead**,

By pavèd fountain or by **rushy** brook,

Or in the **beachèd margent** of the sea,

To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,

But with thy **brawls** thou hast disturbed our **sport**.

35 Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,

As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea

Contagious fogs; which falling in the land,

Have every **pelting** river made so proud

That they have overborne their continents.
 40 The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,
 The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
 Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard.
 [...] The spring, the summer,
 The childing autumn, angry winter change
 45 Their wanted liveries, and the mazèd world,
 By their increase, now knows not which is which.
 And this same progeny of evils comes
 From our debate, from our dissension.
 We are their parents and original.

https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1514/1514-h/1514-h.htm#sceneII_1

Vocabulary

forswear : renoncer à • **tarry!** : arrête ! • **rash wanton** : impudente dévergondée •
forsooth : en vérité • **buskined** : en cothurnes • **glimmering** : lumineuse • **dale** : vallon
 • **mead** : pré • **rushy** : de joncs • **beachèd margent** : grève • **brawl** : dispute • **sport** :
 divertissement • **pelting** : rapide • **ox** : bœuf • **yoke** : joug • **ploughman** : laboureur •
rot : pourrir • **wanted liveries** : livrées habituelles

FOCUS ON

1. Find another couple mentioned in the text whose marriage accounts for the reunion between Oberon and Titania.
2. How is Oberon portrayed in the passage?
3. How is Titania portrayed in the passage?
4. Who's got the upper hand in this confrontation between Oberon and Titania? Why?
5. Identify the common features that the two characters share.
6. What is the purpose of Titania's last speech? What does it reveal about the Elizabethans' vision of the world?
7. Find all the images in Titania's last speech showing that, because of Titania and Oberon's brawl, the natural world is topsy-turvy.

BRANCHING OUT

Sir Joseph Noel Paton, a Scottish 19th century artist, painted two illustrations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and more particularly focused on the relationship between Titania and Oberon. Observe the two canvasses. One is entitled *The Reconciliation of Titania and Oberon* (1847) and the other *The Quarrel of Oberon and Titania* (1849). Analyse the different characters and details and finally define which painting is which.



TASK

▶ WRITING AND SPEAKING

Imagine you're Oberon or Titania quarrelling over an imaginary cause of dispute. Work in pairs and choose your bone of contention. Then write the quarrel, not necessarily in iambic pentameters if you don't feel at ease with it... Then rehearse the scene to play it in front of the class.

If you feel like...

Further information to supplement your personal exam file



Reading

As Shakespeare was working on *Romeo and Juliet* while he was writing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it can be interesting to read *Romeo and Juliet* as the tragic pendant of this comedy. Both stories were inspired by the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe which was related by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*, (Book IV). You can find information about this Babylonian myth borrowed by Ovid (and Shakespeare later on) on the following site: [<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pyramus>]



Watching

Several film adaptations were made of this play. You can watch:

- the 1999 film adaptation which was directed by Michael Hoffman. It stars: Kevin Kline as Bottom, Michelle Pfeiffer and Rupert Everett as Titania and Oberon, Stanley Tucci as Puck, and Calista Flockhart, Anna Friel, Christian Bale, and Dominic West as the four lovers.
- the 2014 filmed theatrical adaptation of the play by the *Globe on Screen*. Director: Dominic Dromgoole with Steffan Donnelly, Huss Garbiya, Tala Gouveia as actors.
- the 2016 BBC version. It was adapted by Russell T Davies and directed by David Kerr. It stars Maxine Peake as Titania, Matt Lucas as Bottom, John Hannah as Theseus and Nonso Anozie as Oberon.



Listening

Felix Mendelssohn, the famous 19th century German music composer, was inspired by *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for which he wrote a concert overture (Op. 21) in 1826: [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEkcP8lZvZA>]



But more interestingly, later, in 1842, only a few years before his death, he wrote Op. 61 for a production of the play into which he incorporated the existing overture. It includes the world-famous Wedding March: [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0wmzoHd6yo>]

