



## Character Explorer:

# Titania from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

### Who is Titania?

Described as Queen of the Fairies, we first meet Titania in an enchanted forest outside Athens. However, Titania seems to travel easily all around the world, going wherever it is nighttime. Titania has many fairy followers, including Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed. Titania is part of a couple; the other half is Oberon, King of the Fairies.

### What happens with Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

When we first meet the fairies, we hear that the leaders of the fairy realm, Titania and Oberon, are in conflict over a 'changeling' child. Folk tradition believed that fairies would sometimes swap fairy babies and human babies, raising the human babies as their own. Oberon wants the child's company on forest adventures. Titania refuses to give up the child.

When we meet Oberon and Titania, we hear that their conflict is wreaking havoc in the natural world. There are floods, frost in the summertime, and general confusion and extremity in the climate. Titania shares the story of the changeling child: the child's mother was living in India and seems to have been a close friend of Titania's. This mother died in childbirth, and Titania has decided to raise the child in honour of their friendship. Titania refuses to give the child to Oberon.

Oberon vows to 'torment' Titania by using a magical flower with an extraordinary power. When the flower's juice is placed on someone's eyes while they sleep, they'll fall in love with the first living creature they see when they wake. Oberon uses this 'love juice', hoping Titania will fall in love with a beast of the forest. Oberon's servant, a mischievous fairy named Puck, arranges for Titania to see and fall in love with a clownish mortal named Bottom, but not before Puck has used magic to turn Bottom's head into that of an 'ass' (a donkey).

Titania dotes on Bottom, much to the dismay of the fairies, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed. After a while, Oberon takes pity on Titania and removes the spell with a different magical flower. Before dawn arrives in the forest, Oberon and Titania leave together to discuss these events.

The following night, Titania, Oberon, and the rest of the fairies gather in the palace of Duke Theseus in Athens. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ends as they bless the place and the three mortal couples who've just been married there.

## Some words used to describe Titania

The ways that Titania is talked about can illuminate aspects of the character.

the fairy queen	proud	rash wanton
mistress	a spirit of no common rate	sweet queen

## Some things Titania says throughout the play

Lines that a character speaks can reveal details about their personality and relationships with other characters. The lines below are listed in the order that they appear in the play.

- 1 These are the forgeries of jealousy
- 2 Fairies, away!  
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.
- 3 Sing me now asleep;  
Then to your offices and let me rest.
- 4 What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?
- 5 I do love thee, therefore go with me.
- 6 Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
- 7 O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!
- 8 My Oberon! what visions have I seen!  
Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.
- 9 O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!
- 10 Hand in hand with fairy grace,  
Will we sing and bless this place.

## Challenging assumptions about Titania

The idea of fairies being tiny, delicate creatures emerged in England a few hundred years after Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. For Shakespeare and his contemporaries, fairies were fascinating magical creatures who were closely associated with the natural world. People imagined them full-sized and were both intrigued and frightened by their power. What do you imagine when you think of magical creatures? Remember, Titania, Oberon, and the fairies seem to move around the globe, so they don't have to be tied to any particular culture or tradition. Based on your own perspective and the culture(s) of your ancestors, what does your imagination conjure when you think of Titania, Oberon, and the other fairies?

## Your interpretation of Titania

Now it's your turn! Read through the information about Titania on the previous pages. Then, using these words, lines, and the story, choose activities from the list below to explore your own interpretation.

### MOVE

#### How would your Titania move?

How would you express the thoughts with your body? How could you use your voice and/or body to create this character? Based on what you now know of Titania, create your own movement-based interpretation of the text.

**Create a sculpture or statue** using your body to express what Titania's lines mean to you. Create a gesture or sculpture for each line. You could also speak the line as you hold each pose. Try it many different ways and notice how each version feels to you.

### LISTEN

**What would your Titania soundtrack be?** What types of instruments, ambient sounds, or music would accompany your Titania? Make a Titania playlist, or create a soundscape: if you like, you could include recordings of the descriptive words and/or Titania's lines.

### WRITE

**Create a poem, story, or monologue** inspired by the list of words that describe Titania. Then, create another piece using the lines that Titania speaks. How are the two different?

### MAKE

**Create a costume design.** What would your Titania wear? Where does this character live? What's the climate like? How do they spend their time? How do they move? What do they want others to think about them? What do they enjoy wearing?

**Gather objects** that your Titania might use or care about. (Just remember to ask before borrowing anything!) Use these props in your other explorations, or create a still life of the objects by drawing or photographing them.

**Create an art project** inspired by the words used to describe Titania and by the lines that Titania speaks.

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## Reflect

- What discoveries did you make as you explored the text?
- Why did you make the creative choices that you made?
- What did you learn about Titania? About the play? About yourself?