

# ANALYTICAL ESSAYS

Writing an analytical essay on a theme involves looking at the whole play and discovering how the theme develops, including any build-up and resolution.

To write an analytical essay successfully, it is suggested that pupils use the P-E-E-L structure. PEEL stands for:

<b>P</b> -oint	Stating the argument.
<b>E</b> -vidence	The evidence for the point, using quotations where applicable.
<b>E</b> -xplain	A deeper explanation of the argument, taking the evidence into account, relative to the theme and the essay title.
<b>L</b> -ink	Reinforce the Point at the end, linking all arguments back to the beginning.

To prepare an essay using this technique, isolate key scenes that deal with the theme and explore each scene with reference to the essay title. These scenes, using quotations where appropriate, will form the backbone of your essay, as they provide the evidence for the arguments.

In order to avoid rambling, it is important that the analysis of the scenes is geared solely toward the title. Similarly, no more than three scenes should be explored in any depth.

The scenes selected do not have to prove the same point – indeed, it is often better to present different views, all of which support (or contradict) the argument, bringing the points together in the conclusion of the essay.

The following worksheets are presented to aid in the preparation of analytical essays:

- Charting the development of a theme throughout the play;
- Exploring a theme by briefly analyzing a number of key scenes generally (not bound to an essay title);
- Planning sheet for an analytical essay, including the deeper analysis of three scenes.

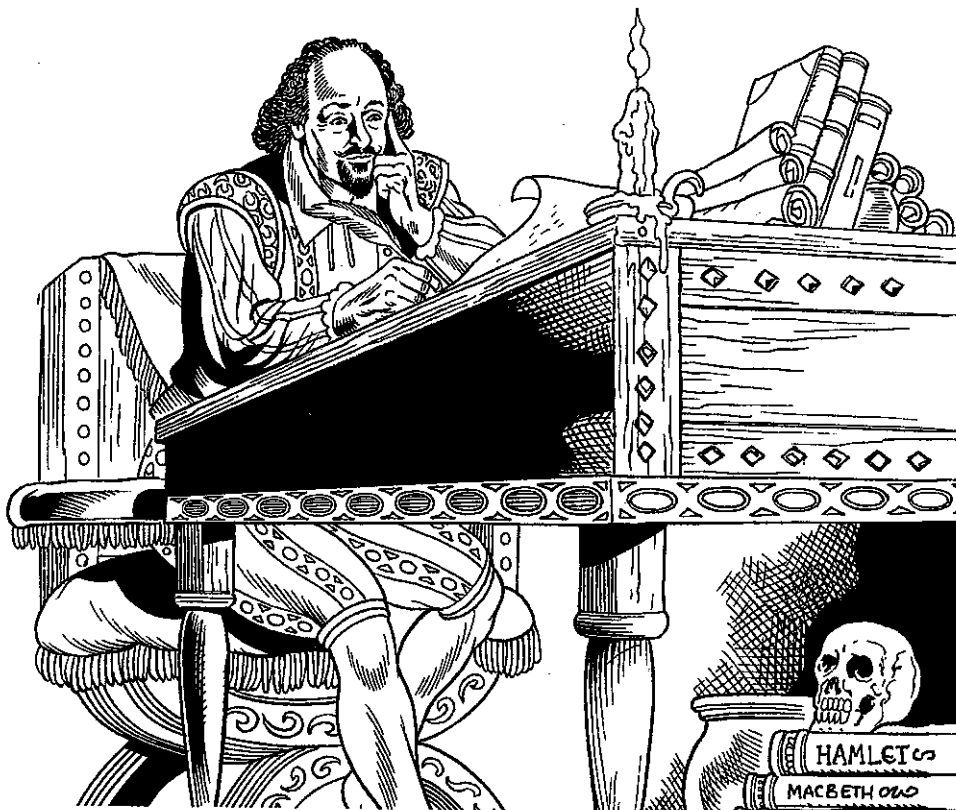


Image from Classical Comics' *The Tempest*.  
Artwork by: Jon Haward and Gary Erskine

## POSSIBLE ESSAY TITLES

Based on the main themes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the following is a selection of possible essay titles centered around each theme.

### Love and Marriage

1. In what way is the love between Theseus and Hippolyta, Titania and Oberon and the lovers different?
2. To what extent does reason govern the choice of marriage partner in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? Focus also on Egeus's choice of husband for Hermia.
3. Lysander says, "The course of true love never did run smooth." To what extent is this exemplified in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?
4. If not for the love potion, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* would not have a happy ending. Discuss this statement, making reference to either the *Pyramus and Thisbe* story or *Romeo and Juliet*.
5. Based on the evidence of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, what is Shakespeare's idea of the role of women in marriage?
6. The "roundel" of the lovers in the woods shows how fickle love can be. Do you think that the lovers can be happy after all that has happened to them in the woods?

### Obedience

1. Why does Titania cease her strife with Oberon after he has removed the enchantment from her?
2. What lessons about obedience and duty can we learn from Egeus? Think not only about his obedience to Theseus, but also about Hermia.
3. Puck and Oberon are servant and master. What kind of a relationship is it exactly? What does it tell us about obedience and servitude generally?
4. Both Theseus and Oberon rule their respective kingdoms strictly, expecting absolute obedience. Discuss.

### Dreams

1. What does *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with its multiple (supposed) dreams suggest about the nature of dreams?
2. In what way is Hermia's dream of the snake prophetic, and why is she the only person to have a warning dream?

3. In what way might it be helpful, as an audience, to imagine that the whole play was just a dream?
4. In what way does the fact that they think the happenings in the wood were just a dream affect the lovers and also Theseus and Hippolyta?

### Imagination

1. Do you agree that sight is the most important sense in love? Use evidence from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in your answer.
2. In what way is the Mechanicals' use of props and roles in their play ironic? You might wish to focus on their thoughts regarding killing and lions on stage as well as the wall and the moon.
3. To what extent might the audience believe that the whole fairy realm is nothing but a figment of the imagination? And if so, whose imagination?
4. To what extent do you think that Puck can be seen as an embodiment of the imagination?

### The Moon (Madness and Chastity)

1. In what ways does *A Midsummer Night's Dream* suggest that marriage is preferable to chastity?
2. To what extent can the female characters in the play be regarded as embodiments of chastity?
3. The moon is generally seen as a symbol of women. To what extent does *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reflect this idea?
4. Love is a form of madness. Discuss.
5. Although the mad goings-on in the wood are due to the juice of the flower, it is equally possible that they could have happened without any magical intervention. Argue for and against this proposition.
6. In what way can writing poetry or plays be seen as "a fine frenzy"? In your answer, you should also discuss the connotations of the phrase, relating your arguments to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

# ESSAY WRITING FRAME

Use the framework to help you organize your ideas for an essay on the theme of your choice.

## TITLE OF ESSAY (the statement)

### First paragraph: Introduction

Briefly discuss the statement. What are the main points? Link the statement to the play.

### Second paragraph: Illustrate the statement with an example.

Find a passage in the play that can be used as an example for the point you're trying to make.

What does this passage show in relation to the statement?

### Third paragraph: illustrate the statement with a second example.

Find a scene in the play that can be used as an example for the point you're trying to make.

What does this passage show in relation to the statement?

### Fourth paragraph: Use a third example to illustrate the statement.

Find a part in the play that can be used as an example for the point you're trying to make.

What does this passage show in relation to the statement?

### Fifth paragraph: Conclusion – your opinion.

Does the statement hold true or not? Perhaps it is only occasionally true?

Briefly re-cap the main points and finish with your own opinion.