

Before You Read

A Midsummer Night's Dream Act 3

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Think of a time when you got so involved in a play or movie that you temporarily forgot that it was not real.

Share Experiences

Talk to other classmates and share examples of experiences when a play or movie made you forget the division between illusion and reality.

Setting a Purpose

As you read, pay attention to the games Shakespeare plays with illusion and reality.

BACKGROUND

Comedy or Tragedy?

One of the many lines Shakespeare blurs in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the one between comedy and tragedy. Bottom's actors rehearse a play about the legendary lovers Pyramus and Thisbe. The script and the performances by the mechanics are so silly that the play becomes a sort of slapstick comedy. Yet it is based on a tragic and rather gruesome story that the Latin poet Ovid retold in his poem *The Metamorphoses*.

Perception versus Sight

Seeing is the act of using the eyes to gain physical knowledge about the world. Perceiving is the psychological act of interpreting information received through the eyes and other senses. In act 3, Shakespeare plays with ideas of vision, of blindness, and of different ways of interpreting what one sees. One of the things that love, or infatuation, does is to make the lover see the beloved as perfect, no matter what the actual circumstances. As you read this act, pay special attention to imagery of eyes and seeing. Analyze what Shakespeare is saying about the nature of perception.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

bequeath [bi kwēth'] v. to leave to or pass on to, as in a will

chide [chīd] v. to scold

derision [di rizh'ən] n. scorn

entreat [en trēt'] v. to beg

rebuke [ri būk'] v. to scold

recompense [rek'əm pens'] n. payment

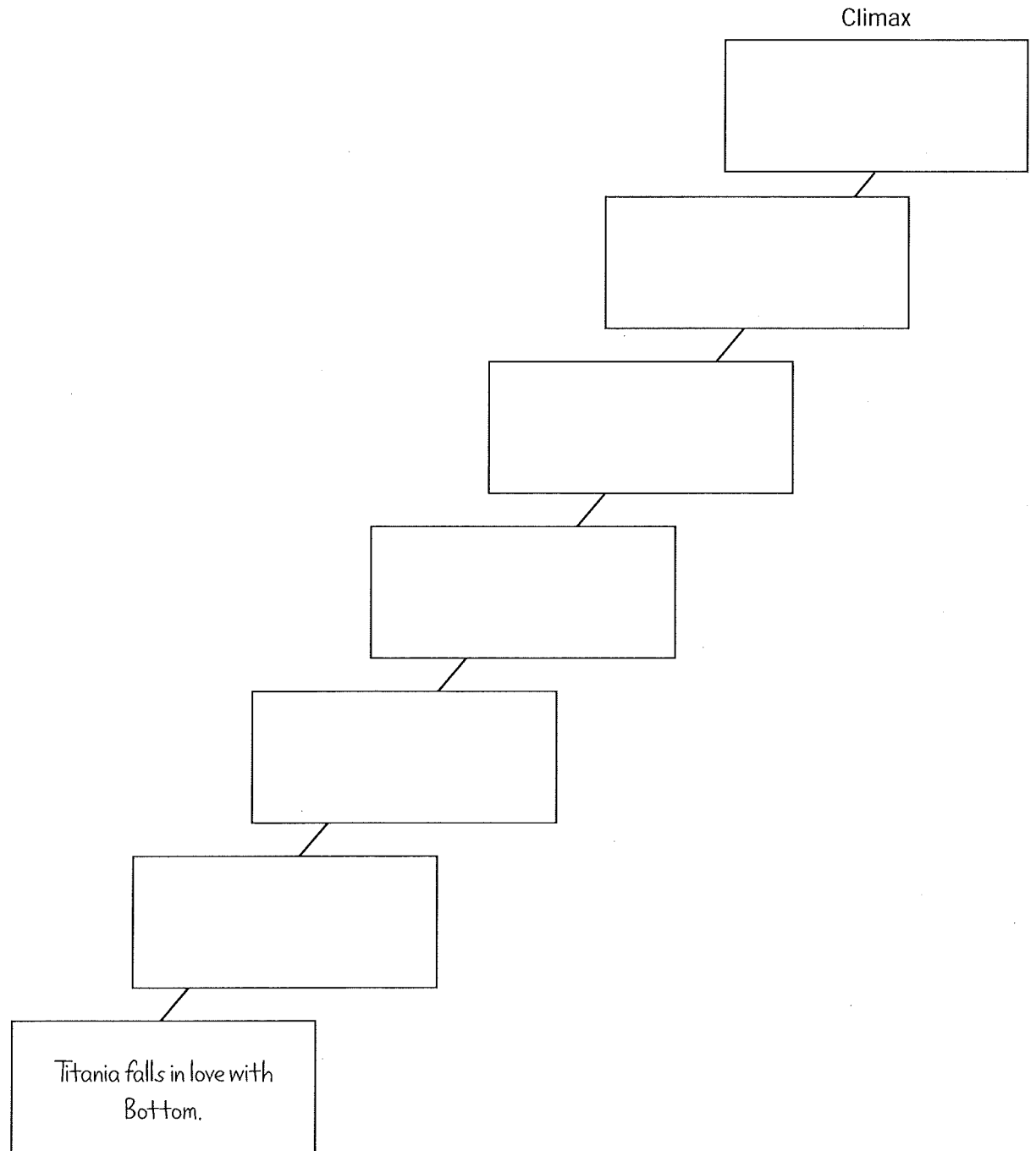
sojourn [sō'jurn] v. to stay somewhere for a while

spurn [spurn] v. to reject

Active Reading

A Midsummer Night's Dream Act 3

The climax, or turning point, of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* comes at the end of act 3. Describe the climax in the box at the top of the diagram below. In the other boxes, write the major events leading up to the climax. Write the events in the correct chronological order. You may add more boxes if you wish.



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Responding

A Midsummer Night's Dream Act 3

Personal Response

Some critics see Bottom as a fool. Others think he is wiser than he appears. What is your opinion of Bottom?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. How does Bottom become an ass? What is the reason for this strange event?

2. What does Oberon realize when he sees Demetrius following Hermia?

3. What causes Helena to become angry with Hermia? In your opinion, why does Helena refuse to believe her friend and her would-be lovers?

Responding

A Midsummer Night's Dream Act 3

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. In act 3, what emotion does Oberon show he is capable of? How does he show this?

5. Think of characters from television or the movies who are tricksters like Puck. Why might audiences enjoy watching the antics of such characters?

Literature and Writing

Police Report

Imagine that you are a police officer investigating reports of strange occurrences in the woods outside Athens. You have interviewed all of the participants and are going to write a report which summarizes the various comings and goings and activities of the persons involved. Review your notes from the **Focus Activity** on page 20 on the topics of illusion and reality. Then write your police report. As a police officer, you are not interested in illusion, poetic details, or complex symbolic explanations. You need to focus on reality. In your report, address *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why*.