

Before You Read

A Midsummer Night's Dream Act 4

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Think of a movie or book in which characters have an unusual experience that makes them shake their heads and ask, "Did that really happen?"

Dream List

Working in a small group, list stories, novels, movies, and television shows in which a character has an amazing experience and then wakes up to realize it was just a dream. Then compare your lists with the ones compiled by other groups.

Setting a Purpose

As you read, note the characters who explain their behavior by saying they were dreaming or under a spell.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

A curious feature of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the casual way in which Shakespeare mixes his settings. Whereas some of his fairies are beings from Celtic and Anglo-Saxon folklore, and the flowers and seasons he describes belong to the English countryside, Theseus and Hippolyta inhabit the world of ancient Greece. In this act, the royal lovers refer to Sparta, an ancient Greek city; Thessaly, a region of Greece; and Crete, a Greek island. Then, amusingly, Theseus mentions St. Valentine, a Christian martyr who lived and died long after the era in which Theseus would have lived.

Falling Action

After the **climax**, or turning point, of a drama has been reached, most of the suspense is over. The highest emotional peak has been reached, and the major conflict has been encountered. Still, the audience likes to see all of the loose ends tied up. That occurs during the part of the plot known as the **falling action**. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the falling action mostly takes place in act 4.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

discourse [dis'kôrs] *n.* conversation

enmity [en'mə tē] *n.* hostility

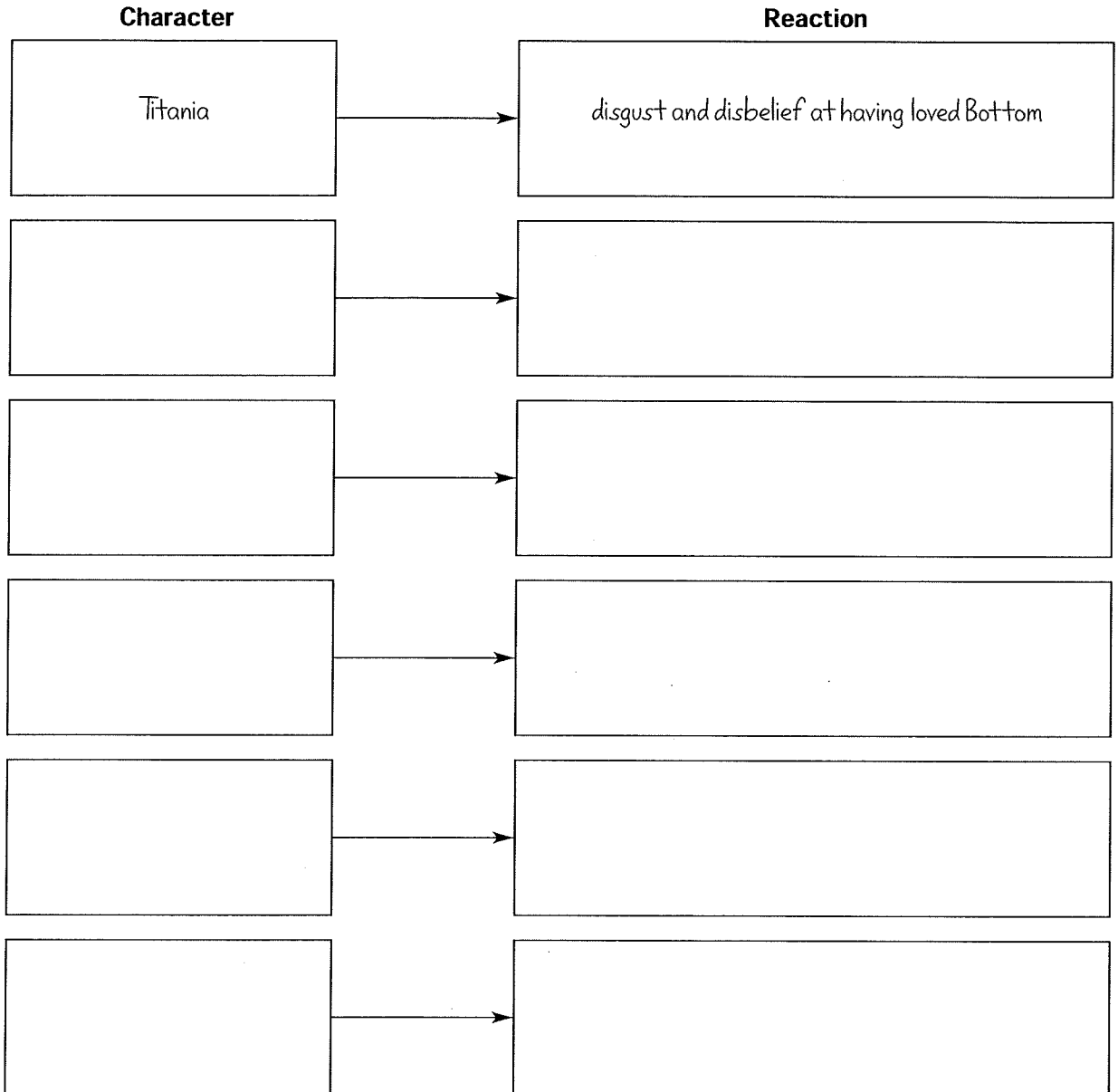
paragon [par'ə gon'] *n.* model of perfection



Active Reading

A Midsummer Night's Dream Act 4

In this act, a number of characters wake up. Complete the diagram below. In each box, write the name of a character who wakes up in act 4. Then, in the space beside the box, summarize that character's reaction to what happened during the night.



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Responding

A Midsummer Night's Dream Act 4

Personal Response

Compare this act to the previous one. In which act did the majority of the characters enjoy themselves most? Which act did you enjoy more? Explain.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. How does Titania respond when Oberon asks for the fairy child this time? What does this reveal about the strength of the love potion?

2. How do most of the dreamers respond to the dream experience upon waking? Which character is changed permanently by the dream experience?

3. How does Theseus's current decision regarding Hermia and Lysander contradict his earlier statement?

Responding

A Midsummer Night's Dream Act 4

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. The fourth act opens and ends with Bottom at center stage. What is your opinion of Bottom's character? How might he be the antithesis, or opposite, of Theseus's character?

5. In this act, several characters look back at prior infatuations with disbelief. What do you think Shakespeare is saying about love and infatuation?

Literature and Writing

Writing a Letter

When Bottom is reunited with his friends, they press him for details of what happened, but he is unable to tell them much. Imagine that later Bottom calms down enough to relate his amazing experiences. Write a letter from Bottom to his friends telling about his transformation into an ass, his meeting with the fairies, and his love affair with Titania. Try to write as Bottom would (misusing long words, for example).