



### 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in Context

Magic, Madness and Mayhem

By Keith Linley

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#### The cultural contexts of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'

'A splendid, lucid and engaging work; the key to its success is the scholarly way we are drawn into the world which produced the Dream. Linley's style adds to the reader's experience: vibrant, lively and lit with real enthusiasm for his subject.' —Wendy Ellis, OCR A Level English Literature Team Leader

'This witty and scholarly companion will easily engage a range of readers, especially those wishing to gain an insight into the historical attitudes and the social and political systems that surrounded the creation of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream.' —Jill Leese, English Teacher, OCR Team Leader

How might Shakespeare's audiences have responded to this enduringly popular comedy? This guide to the various contexts that situate 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in its time, explains the Christian ethics, the contemporary socio-political scene, the literary atmosphere and requirements of comedy that inform the background of this mad play.

#### Readership

Detailed information and discussion of the cultural contexts for any student preparing for an examination or writing an assignment on A Midsummer Night's Dream.

#### Contents

Introduction; About this book – What is a context?; Part I. The Inherited Past; Prologue: The setting; i. The Historical Context; ii. The Elizabethan World Order: From Divinity To Dust; iii. Sin, Death and the Prince of Darkness; iv. The Seven Cardinal Virtues; v. Kingship; vi. Patriarchy, Family Authority and Gender relationships; vii. Man in His Place; viii. Images of Disorder: The Religious Context Unsettling Questions; Part II. The Elizabethan Present; ix. The Context of Comedy; x. Theseus and the Setting; xi. Puck's Permutations: The Context of Love; xii. 'Sweet Moon': The Context of Magic; xiii. Literary Context; xiv. Playing Parts; xv. Transgressions and Translations; Bibliography

#### About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Poet, painter, teacher and academic, Keith Linley has lectured at university and given papers at conferences and book festivals on a range of literary subjects.

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