Humor Helps Essay, Research Paper

A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Humour Helps

Humour is often the key to any good performance. In the Shakespearean play, A Midsummer Night s Dream the playwright William Shakespeare utilises humour as a tool to both enlighten the viewer and to create an interesting play.

One very humorous character, in this play, is the weaver Nick Bottom. One funny line that was used when an actual ass-head had been placed on him is when Bottom speaks of his friends knavery as to try to make an ass of him (III, i, 110). Here Bottom has no idea that he has an actual ass-head on his shoulders. Another display of Bottom s humorous disposition is when Bottom admits that he can gleek upon occasion (III, i, 136). Thereby demonstrating that he can take jokes as well as give them. Yet another instance where Bottom furthers his humour this time through ignorance when he proclaims What do you see? You see an ass-head of your own do you? (III, i, 107 108). Here – in his ignorance of the ass-head on him he insults his friend in a very humorous manner. Bottom is a very humorous character utilised to his full potential in this play.

A second, possibly even more humorous character in this play, is the fairy Puck. One farcical example of Puck s sense of jocularity is when the fairy and Puck are discussing Puck s ludicrous pranks: sometime for a three-foot stool mistaketh me; then slip I from her and down topples she (II, i, 52-53). Here Puck explains one of his many witty pranks. Another demonstration of Puck s facetiousness is when he shows his relationship with Oberon: I [Puck] jest to Oberon and make him smile (II, i, 44). In this instance, Puck describes his relationship with Oberon as that of a comical one almost as Oberon s jester. Later in the play while reporting to Oberon Puck tells the tale of his feat, when he fixed the ass-head on Bottom: An ass s nole I fixed on his head (III, ii, 17). Here, in describing his exploit to Oberon, Puck once again displays his humour. Puck the fairy- is a farcical addition to the characters in this play – Without him, the play would not be nearly so enjoyable.

A group of amusing people in this play included the four lovers; these four, in their disagreements and insults, create a very laughable main plot. Once example of these droll characters is Demitrius when he insults Helena; it is very funny: I am sick when I do look on thee (II, i, 212). In insulting Helena, Demitrius has shown his hatred and has also made fun of her, while at the same time she insists on proclaiming her love for him. A second member of the main plot of the lovers that adds to the stories humorous portrayal of magic crossed lovers is Lysander when he insults Hermia: Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose (III, ii, 260). Lysander, in referring to his former love as many things, a mockery of the very love he professed to Hermia scant hours ago. Helena responds to Lysander with confusion at his professed love for her by asking: Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born? (II, ii, 123). Believing Lysander s sudden love for her is a ruse and wants him to

The few examples mentioned are a brief demonstration of how well Shakespeare used ironic and often contrary statements and circumstances to expose to his audience the paradoxes and incongruities of the nature of humankind and their means of relating and communicating to each other. The points Shakespeare, as the author, is wanting to make are more easily slipped past his audiences awareness when cloaked in humour. While laughing at the antics of the characters in the play Midsummer Night s Dream, the audience members are, unbeknownst to them, laughing at their own follies. In today s society humour is a vital to and central theme of countless shows; it is used for the same reasons as Shakespeare used humour, to capture and keep the interest of the audience while delivering an agenda or message. It is often much easier for one to recognise one s foibles when they are communicated with humour rather than with retribution.