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| **Theseus**  The Duke of Athens. At the beginning of the play, Theseus has recently returned from conquering the Amazons, a race of warrior women, and is about to marry the conquered Amazon queen, Hippolyta. Theseus himself projects confidence, authority, and benevolent power. | **Hippolyta**  The legendary queen of the Amazons, engaged to marry Theseus. Although Hippolyta is marrying Theseus because he defeated her in combat, she does not act at all like an unwilling bride. |
| **Egeus**  A respected nobleman in Theseus’s court. Egeus complains to Theseus that his daughter, Hermia, refuses to marry Demetrius, Egeus’s choice for her. Egeus’s wish to control his daughter is quite severe—he asks Theseus to impose the death penalty on her if she refuses to marry Demetrius. Theseus, however, reduces the penalty for noncompliance from death to life as a nun. | **Hermia**  Egeus’s daughter. Hermia is a beautiful young woman of Athens, and both Demetrius and Lysander are in love with her. Hermia defies her father’s wish that she marry Demetrius because she is in love with Lysander. She is unusually strong-willed and independent—refusing to comply even when Theseus orders her to obey her father—and resolved to elope with Lysander. Hermia is also the childhood friend of Helena. |
| **Lysander**  A young nobleman of Athens in love with Hermia. Although Hermia’s father refuses to let her marry Lysander, Lysander believes that love must conquer all obstacles, so he persuades Hermia to run away from her home and family with him, into the forest. | **Demetrius**  A young nobleman of Athens. In the past, Demetrius acted as if he loved Helena, but after Helena fell in love with him, he changed his mind and pursued Hermia. Emboldened by Egeus’s approval of him, Demetrius is undeterred by the fact that Hermia does not want him. |
| **Helena**  A young woman of Athens in love with Demetrius. Helena has been rejected and abandoned by Demetrius, who had claimed to love her before he met her best friend, Hermia. | **Puck**  A mischievous fairy that delights in playing pranks on mortals. Puck is Oberon’s jester, and his antics are responsible for many of the complications that propel the play. At Oberon’s bidding, Puck sprinkles “love juice” in the eyes of various characters to change who they love. |

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| **Oberon**  The king of the fairies. Oberon begins the play at odds with his wife, Titania, because she refuses to relinquish control of a young Indian prince whom she has kidnapped, but whom Oberon wants for a knight. | **Titania**  The beautiful queen of the fairies. Titania resists the attempts of her husband, Oberon, to make a knight of the young Indian prince whom she has taken. Until Oberon gives up his demand, Titania has sworn to avoid his company. |
| **Nick Bottom**  The overconfident weaver chosen to play Pyramus in a play that a group of craftsmen have decided to put on for Theseus’s wedding celebration. Bottom is full of advice and self-confidence but frequently makes silly mistakes and misuses language. | **Peter Quince**  A carpenter and the nominal leader of the craftsmen’s attempt to put on a play for Theseus’s marriage celebration. |
| **Francis Flute**  The bellows-mender chosen to play Thisbe in the craftsmen’s play for Theseus’s marriage celebration. | **Robin Starveling**  The tailor chosen to play Thisbe’s mother in the craftsmen’s play for Theseus’s marriage celebration. |
| **Tom Snout**  The tinker chosen to play Pyramus’s father in the craftsmen’s play for Theseus’s marriage celebration. Tom Snout ends up playing the part of Wall, dividing the two lovers. | **Snug**  The joiner chosen to play the lion in the craftsmen’s play for Theseus’s marriage celebration. Snug worries that his roaring will frighten the ladies in the audience. |
| **Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed**  The fairies whom Titania orders to wait on Bottom after she falls in love with him. |  |