



EXPEDITIONARY
LEARNING

Grade 8: Module 2B: Unit 2: Lesson 5

Reading Shakespeare: The Play within the Play



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GRADE 8: MODULE 2B: UNIT 2: LESSON 5

Reading Shakespeare:
The Play within the Play



Long-Term Targets Addressed (Based on NYSP12 ELA CCLS)

I can determine the meaning of words and phrases in literary text (figurative, connotative, and technical meanings). (RL.8.4)

I can analyze the connections between modern fiction and myths, traditional stories, or religious works (themes, patterns of events, character types). (RL.8.9)

Supporting Learning Targets

- I can analyze Shakespeare's use of tragedy within a comedy.
- I can explain why Shakespeare wrote the play "Pyramus and Thisbe" into *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Ongoing Assessment

- "Pyramus and Thisbe" structured notes (from homework)
- Venn Diagram: Comparing and Contrasting Two Plays
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* structured notes, 5.1.114–379



Agenda	Teaching Notes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Opening <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging the Reader: Homework Focus Question (5 minutes) Reviewing Learning Targets (2 minutes) Work Time <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Drama Circle: Act 5, Scene 1 (25 minutes) Author's Craft: Comparing and Contrasting the Play within the Play (10 minutes) Closing and Assessment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Making Connections between <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> and "Pyramus and Thisbe" (3 minutes) Homework <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reread 5.1.114–179 and complete the structured notes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students read the play within the play, "Pyramus and Thisbe," performed by Bottom and his group of players for Theseus, Hippolyta, and the lovers. They compare and contrast the two plays to determine why the play "Pyramus and Thisbe" was written into <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>. Students also identify references to mythological stories within the play to make further connections between <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> and other texts. Students reread the same scene independently for homework, reinforcing the idea that complex texts often require multiple readings. Today, students read part of Act 5, Scene 1 in a full-class Drama Circle so they can continue building confidence with the text with teacher support. Post: Learning targets.

Lesson Vocabulary	Materials
tragedy; sunder (5.1.140), scorn (5.1.147), woo (5.1.147), chink (5.1.167), partition (5.1.176), discharged (5.1.217)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> (book; one per student) Act 5, Scene 1 Teacher's Guide (for teacher reference) Venn Diagram: Comparing and Contrasting Two Plays (one per student and one for display) <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> structured notes, 5.1.114–379 (one per student) <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> supported structured notes, 5.1.114–379 (optional, for students needing additional support) <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> Structured Notes Teacher's Guide, 5.1.114–379 (for teacher reference)



Opening	Meeting Students' Needs
<p>A. Engaging the Reader: Homework Focus Question (5 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite students to sit with their Rochester discussion partners. • Have students discuss their answers to the homework focus question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * “How is the Greek myth ‘Pyramus and Thisbe’ related to the story of the young lovers in <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i>?” • After a minute, cold call a pair to share their responses to the focus question. Listen for students to notice that both the story “Pyramus and Thisbe” and the love story in <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i> start with two people who are in love but are forbidden to be together by their parents. In both stories, the lovers make a plan to be together despite their parents’ wishes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening the lesson by asking students to share their homework makes them accountable for completing it. It also gives you the opportunity to monitor which students are not doing their homework.
<p>B. Reviewing Learning Targets (2 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the learning targets aloud as students follow along silently: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * “I can analyze Shakespeare’s use of tragedy within a comedy.” * “I can explain why Shakespeare wrote the play ‘Pyramus and Thisbe’ into <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i>.” • Draw students’ attention to the word <i>tragedy</i>. Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * “When we are talking about a story or play, what is a tragedy? Can you think of any other stories or plays that are tragedies?” * “Are there any other meanings of the word <i>tragedy</i>?” • Select students to share their responses with the whole group. Listen for them to explain that a story or play tragedy is one in which there are tragic events occurring to a main character and an unhappy ending. Another meaning of the word <i>tragedy</i> is an event causing a lot of suffering. • Tell students that today they will read Act 5, Scene 1, which is a play performed by Bottom and his players within <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i>. After the wedding celebrations are over, Theseus wants some entertainment and chooses the tragedy “Pyramus and Thisbe,” a classical mythological story that we have seen rehearsed throughout <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i>—it is the same story by Thomas Bulfinch that they read in the previous lesson. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning targets are a research-based strategy that helps all students, especially challenged learners. • Reviewing the key academic vocabulary in learning targets can prepare students for vocabulary they may encounter in the lesson. • Posting learning targets allows students to reference them throughout the lesson to check their understanding. The learning targets also provide a reminder to students and teachers about the intended learning behind a given lesson or activity.



Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<p>A. Drama Circle: Act 5, Scene 1 (25 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite students to set their chairs up in a Drama Circle as they have in previous lessons with their copy of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>. Explain that in this lesson, they will read the play within the play—the play that Bottom and his players perform for Theseus, Hippolyta, and the lovers after the wedding celebrations. • Remind students that in a Drama Circle, a different person reads each role. Assign parts for this scene: Prologue, Theseus, Demetrius, Wall (Snout), Pyramus (Bottom), Thisbe (Flute), Hippolyta, Lion (Snug), Lysander, and Moonshine (Starveling). • Have students read this scene aloud from 5.1.114–379, starting at the top of page 151 (5.1.114) and ending on page 167 (5.1.379). (Refer to the Act 5, Scene 1 Teacher's Guide for detailed notes on guiding students through this scene.) Before students begin to read, make it clear (since it's not clear in the scene itself) that the main characters in the play within the play “Pyramus and Thisbe” are lovers who are forbidden from seeing each other by their parents. Students will be reading how the mechanicals perform a play version of the Greek myth they read in the previous lesson. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may want to split the roles up by page (Pyramus 1, Pyramus 2, etc.) so more students can participate in the Drama Circle. This also allows you to differentiate, as some pages have fewer lines than others. • Consider creating a nametag for each character to wear during the Drama Circle to help students. • Consider playing one of the main roles (Prologue, Pyramus, or Thisbe) yourself. This will allow students to hear longer chunks of the text read aloud fluently. • Consider appointing several students to act as “interpreters.” When the Drama Circle read-aloud hits a particularly challenging bit of language, the interpreters are charged with referring to the left-hand page for explanatory notes, then reading or paraphrasing those notes for the class.



Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<p>B. Author's Craft: Comparing and Contrasting the Play within the Play (10 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell students that now that they have read the play within the play, they will compare and contrast the two plays to begin to think about the purpose of including "Pyramus and Thisbe" within <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>. Display and distribute Venn Diagram: Comparing and Contrasting Two Plays. Invite students to read the questions at the top of the diagram with you and explain that these questions will help guide them as they compare and contrast the two plays. Remind students that things that are similar about the two plays go in the middle and things unique to each of the plays go in the circles on either side. Model an example. Ask students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * "What is similar about the two plays?" Select volunteers to share their responses. Listen for students to explain that both contain lovers who want to be together but are forbidden from being so. Record this in the middle box. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * "What is unique about the play 'Pyramus and Thisbe'?" Select volunteers to share their responses. Listen for students to explain that it is a tragedy, but Shakespeare used it as part of a comedy. He made fun of the story by having the actors portray the story as a farce. On the Venn diagram, record this in the "Pyramus and Thisbe" circle. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * "What is unique about <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>?" Select volunteers to share their responses. Listen for students to explain that it is a comedy. On the Venn diagram, record this in the <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> circle. Invite students to work in discussion pairs to complete their diagram. Emphasize that they should discuss ideas before recording anything on their diagram. Circulate to support students in completing their Venn diagrams. Use the questions at the top of the diagram to guide students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modeling how to fill out an organizer provides a guide for students and outlines the expectations you have of their work. Consider working with students who may require assistance in recording their ideas. Invite those students who may need support recording ideas to say their ideas aloud before writing anything.



Closing and Assessment	Meeting Students' Needs
<p>A. Making Connections between <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> and "Pyramus and Thisbe" (3 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ask students to discuss:<ul style="list-style-type: none">* "Why does Shakespeare turn the tragedy into a silly story by having these players perform it in such a silly way? Why does he have the play within the play here at all?"Select volunteers to share their responses. Listen for students to explain that it provides an opportunity for Shakespeare to show us the difference between good and bad theater; we know from the comments of the audience (Hippolyta, Lysander, Demetrius, etc.) that the play performed by Bottom and his crew of players is not a very good one, whereas <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> is. The play "Pyramus and Thisbe" also echoes some of the ideas from <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>: Pyramus and Thisbe are lovers who, facing opposition from their parents, plan to run away to get married, just as Hermia and Lysander do. So even as the lovers and Theseus make fun of the ridiculous performance, the audience, which is watching the lovers watch the play, is aware that the lovers had been just as strange at the beginning of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>.Distribute the <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> structured notes, 5.1.114–379.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider inviting ELLs to discuss their ideas with other students speaking the same first language to allow for deeper thinking and discussion.
Homework	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reread 5.1.114–379 and complete the structured notes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider providing the supported version of the structured notes to students who need help summarizing Shakespeare's dense text and defining key vocabulary words.



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Supporting Materials



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Act 5, Scene 1 Teacher's Guide

Use this guide during the Drama Circle. As students read the scene aloud, pause to ask questions and discuss the scene. Encourage students to support their answers with evidence from the text whenever possible.

Line(s)	Quotation	Notes, questions, and discussion prompts
5.1.129–131	“Indeed he hath played on this prologue like a child on a recorder ...”	<p>What does Hippolyta think of the prologue? How does a child play on a recorder?</p> <p><i>When children play on a recorder, they often make awful sounds because they don't know how to play it and control their breath to make it sound good. Therefore, Hippolyta is suggesting that the prologue didn't sound very good.</i></p>
5.1.138–140	“This man with lime and roughcast doth present ‘Wall,’ that vile wall which did these lovers sunder.”	<p>“Sunder” means split apart, so thinking about that, why is the wall described as “vile”?</p> <p><i>Because it split the two lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe, apart.</i></p>
5.1.146–147	“By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn To meet at Ninus’ tomb, there, there to woo.”	<p>What is “scorn”? What does “woo” mean? What do these lines mean together?</p> <p><i>Scorn means to feel contempt for hatred for. Wooing is when people spend time together to try and gain each other's love. These lines mean that Pyramus and Thisbe thought they could meet by moonlight at Ninus' tomb without being hated to spend time together.</i></p>



Act 5, Scene 1 Teacher's Guide

Line(s)	Quotation	Notes, questions, and discussion prompts
5.1.148–152	<p>“This grisly beast (which ‘Lion’ hight by name) The trusty Thisbe coming first by night Did scare away, or rather did affright; And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall, Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.”</p>	<p>What did the lion do to Thisbe? How do you know?</p> <p><i>The lion scared Thisbe away.</i></p> <p>A mantle is a sleeveless cloak or shawl. What happened as Thisbe ran away? Did Lion get Thisbe? How do you know? <i>The mantle fell off and Lion stained it with blood from this mouth. Lion did not get Thisbe, just her mantle.</i></p>
5.1.155–156	<p>“Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade, He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast.”</p>	<p>Why was his chest “boiling”?</p> <p><i>Because he was in turmoil and overcome with a torrent of emotion from thinking Thisbe was dead.</i></p> <p>“Broached” means stabbed. What did Pyramus do? Why? How do you know?</p> <p><i>He stabbed himself in the chest because he thought his love, Thisbe, was also dead.</i></p>
5.1.157	<p>“And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade, His dagger drew, and died.”</p>	<p>“Tarrying” means stayed longer than intended. What was Thisbe doing while Pyramus was stabbing himself in the chest? Was she alive or dead? How do you know?</p> <p><i>She was alive and was in the shade of some mulberry trees after running away from Lion.</i></p>
5.1.191–193	<p>“But what see I? No Thisbe do I see. O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss, Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me.”</p>	<p>Why does Pyramus go from calling the wall nice things to calling the wall “wicked”?</p> <p><i>Because before he looks through the hole in the wall, he is hopeful that he will see his love, Thisbe, on the other side, but when he actually looks through, she isn't there and he is disappointed.</i></p>



Act 5, Scene 1 Teacher's Guide

Line(s)	Quotation	Notes, questions, and discussion prompts
5.1.299–301	“Approach, ye Furies fell! O Fates, come, come, Cut thread and thrum ...”	<p>Look at the glossary. Who were the Furies? Why does Pyramus mention them?</p> <p><i>They are mythological beings who punished those who did things wrong. Pyramus calls them because he wants to die because he thinks his lover is dead.</i></p> <p>Who were the Fates? Why does Pyramus mention them? What is the link between the Fates and line 301 about “Cut thread and thrum ...”?</p> <p><i>The Fates were from Greek mythology and brought about death by cutting a thread. Pyramus calls them because he wants them to kill himself because he thinks his lover is dead.</i></p>
5.1.353–354	“O Sisters Three, Come, come to me ...”	<p>Look at the glossary. Who were the “Sisters Three”? And why does Thisbe mention them?</p> <p><i>They were the Fates, and Thisbe called them because she found Pyramus dead. She called the Fates to kill her.</i></p>
5.1.360–361	“Come, trusty sword, Come, blade, my breast imbrue!”	<p>What does Thisbe do to herself? How do you know?</p> <p><i>She stabs herself in the chest with a sword.</i></p>



Act 5, Scene 1 Teacher's Guide

If you have time, ask some of these follow-up discussion questions after students have read all the way to line 379. Note that the answers to these questions will be fairly subjective, but students should still support their ideas with evidence from the text.

“Now that you have read this play within the play, how would you describe the story in this play? Why?”

It is a tragedy because one of the main characters takes their life thinking that their love has been killed, but it is all done in a farce, and meant to be silly.

“What connections are made to mythological stories and characters? Why?”

The story “Pyramus and Thisbe” is a mythological story in itself. In the play “Pyramus and Thisbe,” both Pyramus and Thisbe mention the Fates and the Furies when they are distraught at thinking each other dead. They call on the Furies and the Fates to help them to die like their lover.

Venn Diagram: Comparing and Contrasting Two Plays

Name: _____

Date: _____

Within the play of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, there is another play, the story "Pyramus and Thisbe." Use this Venn diagram to compare and contrast the two plays.

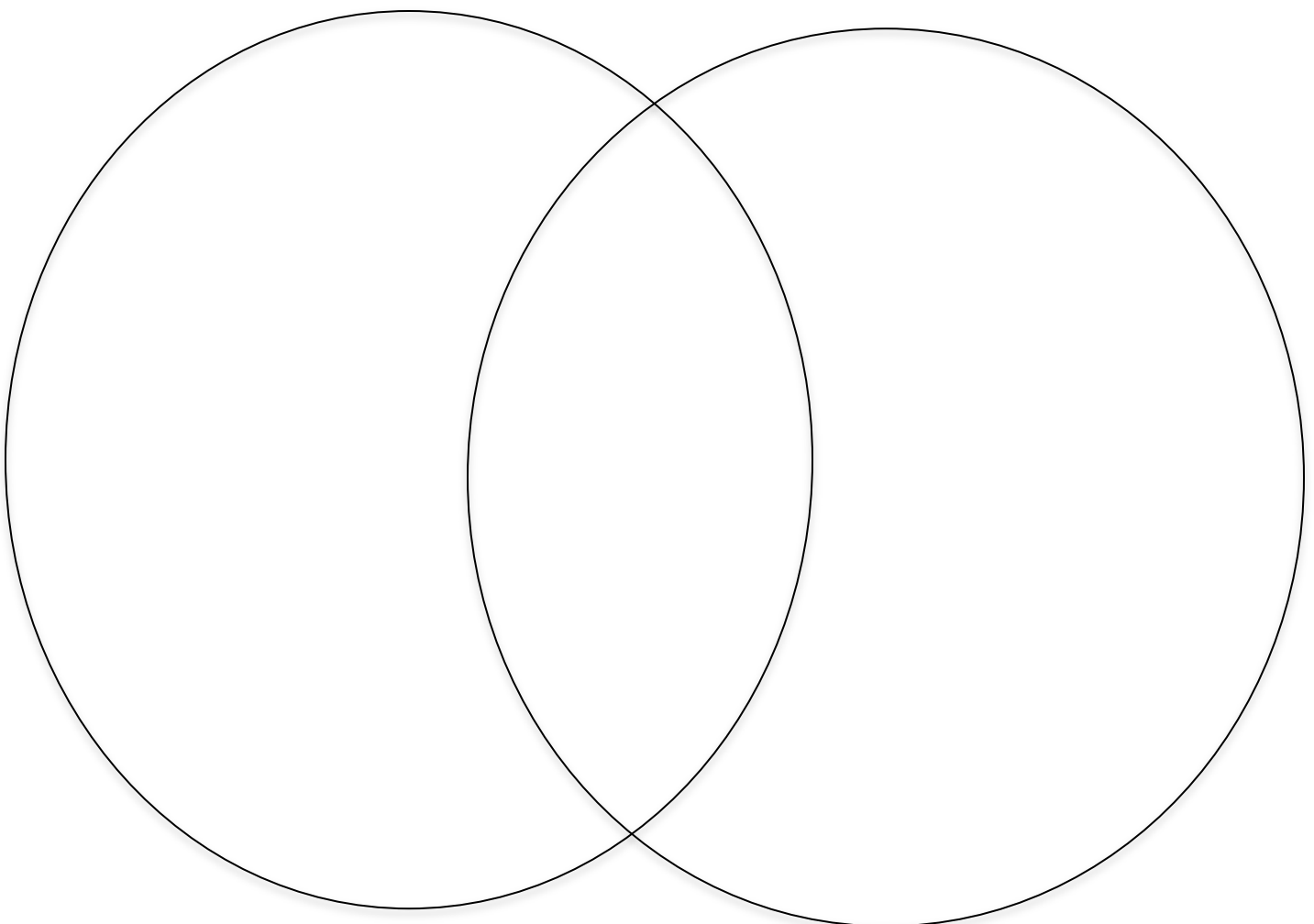
What is similar about the two plays?

What is unique about *A Midsummer Night's Dream* compared to the play "Pyramus and Thisbe"?

What is unique about the play "Pyramus and Thisbe" compared to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?

"Pyramus and Thisbe"

A Midsummer Night's Dream





Midsummer Night's Dream Structured Notes, 5.1.114–379

Name:

Date:

What is the gist of lines 5.1.114–379?

Focus question: What does the audience of “Pyramus and Thisbe” think of the play? How do you know?



Midsummer Night's Dream Structured Notes, 5.1.114–379

Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Context clues: How did you figure out this word?
chink (5.1.167)		
partition (5.1.176)		
discharged (5.1.217)		



A Midsummer Night's Dream Supported Structured Notes, 5.1.114–379

Name: _____

Date: _____

What is the gist of lines 5.1.114–379?

Bottom and his team of players perform poorly the play “Pyramus and Thisbe” to Theseus, Hippolyta, and the lovers. In the story “Pyramus and Thisbe,” they are two lovers who are not allowed to see each other yet still love each other and agree to meet at night. On the way, Thisbe is frightened away by a lion and loses her shawl, which the lion gets blood on. Pyramus sees the bloodstained shawl and, thinking she is dead, kills himself. Thisbe then finds Pyramus dead and kills herself.

**Focus question: What does the audience of “Pyramus and Thisbe” think of the play?
How do you know?**



A Midsummer Night's Dream Supported Structured Notes, 5.1.114–379

Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Context clues: How did you figure out this word?
chink (5.1.167)	A small hole	
partition (5.1.176)	A wall	
discharged (5.1.217)	Told to leave	



A Midsummer Night's Dream Structured Notes Teacher's Guide, 5.1.114–379

Name: _____

Date: _____

What is the gist of lines 5.1.114–379?

Bottom and his team of players perform poorly the play “Pyramus and Thisbe” to Theseus, Hippolyta, and the lovers. In the story “Pyramus and Thisbe,” they are two lovers who are not allowed to see each other yet still love each other and agree to meet at night. On the way, Thisbe is frightened away by a lion and loses her shawl, which the lion gets blood on. Pyramus sees the bloodstained shawl and, thinking she is dead, kills himself. Thisbe then finds Pyramus dead and kills herself.

Focus question: What does the audience of “Pyramus and Thisbe” think of the play? How do you know?

They think it is terrible and make fun of it. Theseus says of the prologue, “His speech was like a tangled chain—nothing impaired, but all disordered.” Partway through the play, Hippolyta says, “This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.” At the end of the play, Theseus begs the players not to give an epilogue, which suggests he has had enough and doesn’t want to see any more!



A Midsummer Night's Dream Structured Notes Teacher's Guide, 5.1.114–379

Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Context clues: How did you figure out this word?
chink (5.1.167)	A small hole	
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