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## Limited Power Of Human Vision In A Midsummer Night's Dream

People perceive most of their impressions by sight among five sensors. However, relying solely on the eyes could lead to problems. In William Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the author makes references to vision constantly. This play was written about 1595-96 and is one of Shakespeare's most well-known works. It mainly portrays the bizarre adventures of four Athenian youths who are manipulated by fairies in the magical dark forest where they live. In the play, Shakespeare depicts the limited power of human vision by displaying the disarrays caused by relying only on vision and the idea that love can blind people for what they see.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare discusses the constraints of vision by showing the mistrusting, confusion and blind trust caused when simply relying on that. Firstly, when Oberon, king of fairies, sees his wife Titania with a pretty young boy, his heart is immediately filled with jealousy. It is reflected by Puck warning another fairy that "... Oberon is passing fell and wrath, / Because that she (Titania), as her attendant, hath /A lovely boy, stol'n from an Indian king" (II.i.20-22). Though Titania explains that the boy is her changeling, however, Oberon only trusts what he sees and judges based on the preconceived bias that Titania shows favour to the beautiful boy instead of to him. He ignores what he hears and hence, does not find the truth, leading to mistrusting towards Titania. Secondly, Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius and drops some magic potion on his eyelids by assuming his identity only on "the Athenian garments he hath on" (II.i.264). In this example, Shakespeare signifies the danger of solely based on vision, which can result in confusion since people are likely to ignore the reasoning, for they trust their eyes too much. Thirdly, when Helena and Demetrius enter the dark forest, though Demetrius treats Helena cruelly and threatens to take advantage of her by taking away her "virginity" (II.i.219), yet, Helena still blindly trusts Demetrius' "virtue" (II.i.220) when "see your (his) face" (II.i.221). The dramatic irony reveals a darker side of Demetrius, which indicates that Helena puts trust in Demetrius without serious consideration since she relies enormously on what she sees and therefore, loses the ability of reasoning. It further depicts that putting too much trust in vision can lead one to be frantic and overlook the truth under the surface. Along with the chaos caused by sight, Shakespeare also demonstrates the restrictions of vision through his idea that love can reduce the power of vision and blind people for what they see.

Additionally, William Shakespeare illustrates the idea that the limitation of human vision when people are in love. Above all, Oberon's love juice can magically force people to fall in love. Out of revenge, Oberon decides to drop some onto Titania's eyelids when she is asleep: "The next thing then she waking looks upon... She shall pursue it with the soul of love" (II.i.179-182). His diction reveals the fact that the potion works as Cupid's arrow, which can impair human vision and further affect the ability of judgment, showing the weakness of sight comparing to individual conciseness. Afterwards, upon waking up, Titania sees the ass-headed Bottom and falls in love with him due to the magic potion by uttering: "On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee (Bottom)" (III.i.134). Titania's diction demonstrates that the love juice turns her spellbound by charming her vision and therefore, influences her mentally. This instance emphasizes the idea of "love blinds people" by demonstrating people only see what they want to see in their lovers

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and ignore the reality, highlighting the powerfulness of individual perception. Furthermore, when Helena expresses her envy of Hermia for being loved by Demetrius, she argues in her monologue that “Love looks not with the eye, but with the mind,” (I.ii.234). Personifying love as a person, Helena addresses the reasonless nature of love. She counters the cliché of “vision determines love”, instead, she believes that love bears little relationship with one’s physical appearance, but rather how people perceive their beloved in their own mind. Hence, to show the limitations of human vision, Shakespeare demonstrates sight cannot overcome individual perception when people fall in love.

In conclusion, William Shakespeare’s comedy *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* signifies the constraints of power of sight by showing the chaos caused by relying solely on vision and the thought that love blinds people for what they see. On one hand, Shakespeare illustrates the limitations of human vision by displaying the suspicion, misunderstanding and blind trust caused by only relying on the sight. On the other hand, the author also conveys that the power of sight is reduced when people fall in love. In this seemingly light-hearted play, Shakespeare warned the audience of the dangers of exclusively depending on the vision. Rather, people should also use other senses to detect the reason under the surface. (847 words)

## **Works Cited**

1. Shakespeare, William. *The Oxford Shakespeare: a Midsummer Night's Dream*. Oxford Paperbacks, 2008.