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A Midsummer Night's Midterm

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LaVohn, Robert W. *A Midsummer Night's Midterm*. Pioneer Drama Services, 1999. Contact publisher regarding price. 30 pp.

Reviewer: Mindy Nelsen

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Plays; Plays; Fairy Tales;

Subject: Drama--Reviews; Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616--Adaptations--Juvenile drama;

Classical literature--Juvenile drama; Comedy--Juvenile drama;

Theme: Everyone can understand and enjoy Shakespeare.

Production Requirements: Simplistic set, only unusual prop: donkey's head mask for Bottom.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 40 min

Characters: 26

Cast: 13 M / 13 F (gender is flexible on 6 of the characters).

Time Period: The present and antiquity.

Four students study for a midterm that will be taking place on the following day on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As one student, Kyle, struggles to help her friends understand the plot, the characters from Shakespeare's play emerge and act out the play, pausing so that they and Kyle can explain what is going on and why Shakespeare chose to make certain choices in the piece. By the end, they are well versed for the test the next day and realize that Shakespeare isn't so outdated after all. In fact, he's quite enjoyable.

In this adaptation of the original *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, obviously the Shakespearean characters are well developed and very dynamic. The four students tend to be a bit stereotypical, but at the same time, they advance the dialogue and are essential to the plot. The playwright has added an interesting twist by having the students be female but have male names. There proves to be flexibility in this casting as well. The pace is nice and moves the play along quite well. The script is enjoyable and provides a great opportunity to share Shakespeare with younger audiences, as well as adequate explanations of the play's meaning and a bit of Shakespeare's background. The cast is fairly large, but each character is important. The production requirements are minimal, using few props (a donkey head mask, most importantly) and a simplistic set which really can be just a bare stage.

An Introduction to A Midsummer Night's Dream. No play was ever named more appropriately than this; it is a "Dream," - a dream composed of elves, mistakes, wild fantasies, and the grotesque. Its time is night. When the day dawns the shadows flee away, the dramatis personae awake, and all comes right again. Shakespeare may have dreamed it, lying on some cowslip bank. And, what is most remarkable in this play, written by a master of character, there are almost no human characters in it that we can take an interest in. We care little for Helena, or Hermia; Lysander, or Demetrius; Th