
The Idea Of Happy Wife Happy Life In A Midsummer Night's Dream By William Shakespeare

There is a saying that floats around modern society that all of human race is familiar with. This saying "Happy Wife Happy Life" is based around societal norms that portrays; if your female partner is happy (with anything really) the male in the relationship has a great life filled with less nagging. This statement sets up the gender roles we see in everyday life. In marriages, the Wife role normally has the final say and tend to be that hardest to please. On the other hand, there are the husbands who do just what they are told to accomplish and go with the flow with no arguing. Now if life was that simple we would be a well-oiled machine. Even to this day that saying doesn't always hold true. In the 16th Century gender roles were different and unfortunately, not all relationships/ marriages are the best love story or work out in the best way possible. This can be seen in the play "A Midsummer Night's Dream, " by William Shakespeare.

In the Play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" we are first introduced to Theseus, Duke of Athens and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. Hippolyta is on path to wed the king of Athens, not by choice, but after the defeat of the Amazons. "Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword/ And won thy love doing thee injuries..." The amazons were ruled by women and Theseus genuinely thinks he won Hippolyta over by taking her by force from her home/kingdom in the Amazons. When thinking about gender roles Hippolyta and Theseus are the perfect example of what a classic male-female role are in the 16th Century societal and current societal relationships. Theseus took over a female dominated sanctuary and took the queen to become his wife, a prisoner, shows men should be portrayed as a dominant force and women serve a less powerful servant role to the male they are married to. This type of forced relationship goes against today's saying of "Happy Wife Happy Life" because it doesn't matter to Theseus that Hippolyta isn't happy, and she is not allowed dictate her own life.

The Next two couples we get introduced to are Hermia and Lysander and Demetrius and Helena who get caught up in a love triangle. These couples get complicated and are the main driving force to keep the play moving forward. Hermia and Lysander are in love, but Hermia's father wants Hermia to marry Demetrius who was once engaged to Helena. Helena still loves Demetrius, but he wants Hermia meanwhile Hermia is interested Lysander. Hermia and Lysander are the most real relationship in the play. They both reciprocate the same feeling's towards each other however Hermia's father, Egeus wants to mess up a perfect love story. He believes Lysander "hath bewitch'd the bosom, " or tricked Hermia into being disobedient towards him as well as "thou hast given her rhymes, " and has "interchanged love tokens" with

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Hermia. Because of this Egeus is willing to have his own daughter killed which then forces Lysander and Hermia to run away into the forest to try to live their life. Unfortunately, the couple hits an obstacle that causes confusion of love but eventually find their way back to each other. We can tell Lysander's true love for her by saying "Love takes the meaning in love's conference. / I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit/ So that but one heart we can make of it;/ Two bosoms interchained with an oath;/ So then two bosoms and a single troth. "

This profession of love proves that Lysander wants to do and will do whatever he can to make Hermia happy. Even though the saying "Happy Wife Happy Life" wasn't prominent in the 16th Century Lysander was abiding by it without actually knowing it existed. With this love story you can also see the gender roles start to change and bring into question the family's roles in a young woman's life. At first, we see Egeus trying to control Hermia's life and threatening her with death for disobeying him. He believes he is supreme ruler and since he is the male in this situation he has the authority to dictate how his daughter lives the rest of her life. Then we see something new, when many girls would obey their fathers especially after being threatened with death, Hermia stands up for herself and challenges the consequences before her. Hermia is trying to take control of her own life and live with a person she loves. Meanwhile, Lysander is by her side supporting her every step of the way and not controlling her every move. I believe this is the first couple of steps to women gaining rights to themselves.

In Shakespearean plays I believe that everyone will interpret the meaning in their own ways depending on what they have been through in life as well as based off of their personal morals and belief systems. The same thing relates to a Marriage Ceremonies. At the end of the story when all is restored Shakespeare leaves out the marriage ceremonies. For what reason? Well I think it's up for interpretation for me marriage means something different for everyone. Some it's the gathering of friends and family or being within a church if your religious, and something just as simple as a courthouse marriage. It doesn't matter which one you do as long as it has a strong bond in your heart for the other person. This is what I think Shakespeare was trying to convey the bond you share with your loved one and that bond is different for everyone.

In conclusion, when you compare the relationship of Theseus and Hippolyta to Hermia and Lysander you have two different relationships that got started on two different moral and belief systems. Hippolyta was forced into a marriage by a man that took her from her home land after he destroyed it. Hermia by choice wanted to spend the rest of her life with Lysander but had her dad controlling her life which caused an issue. They both had a heavy male presence who thought they could always control the situation. If you take the saying "Happy Wife Happy Life" and apply it to the two couples within William Shakespeare's, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" which one is going to have a great life and a great marriage? Not everything will work out perfectly, but Lysander and Hermia will most likely have a prosperous life filled with joy, laughter, and equal respect. While, Hippolyta and Theseus may have a long marriage they may

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not have a happy overall life together.

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