

SHAKESPEARE WEEK

Active Storytelling Kit



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- Active storytelling tips
- An active storytelling session based on 'Chaos in the Woods'
- 'Chaos in the Woods' – a short story for children based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- Storytelling games and rhymes
- Art and craft activities
- Certificate

Introduction

Why tell stories?

Stories are basic to human life. They are a way of helping us to understand the world around us and are an ancient tradition that transcends cultural and historic boundaries. Stories surround us in everyday life – not just in books, newspapers, websites and other written forms, but in films, broadcasts and even in our everyday conversations.

Stories inform us – they tell us about ourselves and each other, about places and people, the past, the present and the future. They have the power to transport us to other worlds and magical places, and they can make us feel a range of emotions.

Stories are vital in the early years of life – not just to inform and entertain, but for developing language skills and vocabulary and to help us to develop empathy for others. Children absorb language from a range of sources. Experiencing stories, whether told or read to them, exposes children to richer vocabulary and different patterns of language, rhythms and structures.

A larger vocabulary will make a child a better communicator. The ability to talk easily with parents, teachers and peers will foster confidence and a greater sense of self-esteem. We all want to arm our children with the best coping strategies for life and the gift of confidence is one of the greatest we can nurture. Children who can find the words to express their feelings are more likely to have a stronger self-image, higher levels of confidence and higher academic achievement.

What is active storytelling?

Active storytelling is about bringing a story to life. It's more of a performance than just reading a story. By using physicality, voices, props and puppets you are giving the story more energy, more life and ultimately capturing children's imaginations. By embodying the story and character action you are engaging the children in a different way. It is easier for them to absorb the language, themes and characters when they see them being played out in front of them.

By encouraging the children's participation and making the storytelling an interactive experience, they will be active, engaged and immersed in the story. In this pack we will share some ideas of ways to add interactivity to your storytelling sessions, as well as providing some tips for telling a story in an active and engaging way.



Running your event

Running an event in Shakespeare Week can be as elaborate or as simple as you wish it to be. In this pack you will find lots of easy-to-use resources based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that will help you to plan an active storytelling session for children aged 3-7 years.

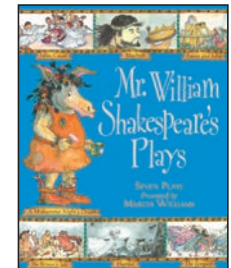
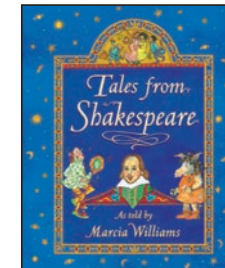
You can use the invitations in this kit to distribute before the event if you wish.

If you have the time and the space you may wish to set the scene by turning your area into a magical woodland setting, with the help of the children. Adding brown and green drapes, large trees cut from cardboard and painted, or a collection of tall potted plants will all add atmosphere. Small children's stools can be covered in red and white spotty material scraps to look like toadstools.

Add brown or green tablecloths to your tables and if possible scatter brown, green and orange cushions and beanbags. You could also invite children to make simple decorations, for example by cutting out and colouring leaf shapes. Adding twinkling fairy lights will also add to the atmosphere.

Please take a look at the resources in this pack – there are active storytelling tips, several games and craft activities that you can incorporate into your session and an outline of an active storytelling session based on the story provided in this pack. The story is based on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and is called 'Chaos in the Woods', written by Gemma Sharp of Hoglets Theatre (hoglets.org.uk).

We also thoroughly recommend Marcia Williams' retellings of Shakespeare stories. You can find her version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in:




A Midsummer Night's Dream (Shakespeare Retellings) by Marcia Williams (Walker Books)

Tales from Shakespeare by Marcia Williams (Walker Books)

Mr William Shakespeare's Plays by Marcia Williams (Walker Books)

At the end of your session you may wish to present each participating child with a certificate such as the one included in this pack.





INVITATION

Dust off your wings, brush up
your sprite outfits, polish your sparkly
headdresses and come to our magical
A Midsummer Night's Dream event at

.....

on

.....

Listen to a story and meet characters
including bickering fairies, an actor
called Bottom and a mischievous sprite.
Take part in craft activities and enjoy some
fun games in this special storytelling event.

*

We hope you can come!

* You can come in your normal clothes if you would prefer.



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Active storytelling tips

Connection

You can engage the children without saying a word by using eye contact. Look at them, draw them in. Smile and put the children at ease.

Go big

Try not to feel self-conscious while telling your story. Ham it up, over-exaggerate, make them laugh – the kids will love it. You have a partisan audience who are rooting for you, not judging you.

Physicality

Standing when storytelling instantly gives you and your performance more energy and urgency. You can use levels to create drama: kneel down for intimacy, draw back to create tension. Don't be afraid to use your body, make yourself bigger or smaller and pull silly faces.

Silly voices

Voices are a must. They give each character identity and bring them to life for your little listeners.

Familiarise yourself with the story

It doesn't matter if you can't learn the story by heart, you can try to familiarise yourself with it as much as you can. The more you know the story, the more you can watch your audience as you tell it. There is sometimes a temptation to hide behind the book if you are lacking in confidence, but this can create a barrier between you and your audience. If you feel you need the book to refer to then have it flat on your knee or close to hand. Watch your audience – which bits of the story do they like? Notice if their attention wanders and play it up a little more.

Energy, pace, volume

Don't be afraid to slow down your story to build suspense or speed it up to create a sense of urgency. Whispering can create tension, and who doesn't like a little scare with a big, loud, 'Boo'? Relax and enjoy yourself.

REMEMBER!

This is supposed to be fun for all of you. Don't put pressure on yourself. Relax, take your time and most important of all, smile.



An active storytelling session based on 'Chaos in the Woods'

Start the session by asking all participants, including accompanying adults, to sit down and join you. Ask everyone to sit in a circle on the floor so that you can see every child clearly. It's important that the adults in the group are involved because that frees you up to entertain and interact with the children, while other adults are able to help the children to focus and can offer specific guidance for individuals.

Introduce yourself and outline the session before you begin, so the children know the structure and what to expect as well as what is expected of them. A brief 'Hello I'm ... Today I will be taking you on an adventure based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. First, we'll hear the story, and then we'll head into the "Enchanted Woods" to play games, sing songs and make some magical crafts together.' The children may have questions about the story, so let them know that there will be time to answer questions and talk about the story once they've heard it. This usually stops interruptions mid-story or gives you a way to stop too many interruptions ('Great question – let's chat about that at the end of the story!').

Reintroduce yourself and begin your session. Start by inviting the children (or their adults) to introduce themselves to the group. Try using a 'hello' song – there are numerous examples on YouTube. This relaxes the children and makes them feel more involved.

Now tell the story in the way you feel most comfortable. Standing up instantly gives the story more energy, but it's important that you find your own way of storytelling; the way you feel most confident and relaxed. After the story is finished, ask if there are any questions and find out what the children thought about it.

Next, invite the children onto their feet and get active together. Try using a warm-up song to get the children energised and moving. You can use any piece of music you choose, such as 'Keep on the Go' by Julia Donaldson (downloadable from her website). If you can't find a song that works for you, you can always use 'Head, shoulders, knees and toes' (or use Bottom's version of this song, in the 'Storytelling Games and Rhymes' section).

Include a craft activity now, if you wish. Give out materials and equipment and provide clear step-by-step instructions (see 'Art and Craft Activities' for suggestions). Make the craft together as a group. Once finished, tidy up together, store the 'makes' safely and ensure the area is clear of trip hazards etc.

Now get everyone back up on their feet and do another mini warm-up, 'Shakespeare Stretches' (see the 'Storytelling Games and Rhymes' section).

Next, explain that to go exploring in the enchanted woods of Athens, first, we have to grow the trees! Play the 'Growing Trees' game (see the 'Storytelling Games and Rhymes' section).

Take the children on an imaginary walk through the forest and meet all the creatures that live there. Play 'Walking Through the Woods' (see the 'Storytelling Games and Rhymes' section).

Remind the children of the section in the story when 'The Lovers' went into the woods. Now enjoy 'The Lovers' action song together. Alternatively, ask the children to join in with the action rhyme 'Going to the Woods', encouraging them to follow your actions. If you say the rhyme multiple times with the actions they will start to remember the words and join in. (See the 'Storytelling Games and Rhymes' section for the song and rhyme.)

Chat together about how mischievous Puck is and all the cheeky things he does in the play. Explain that Puck is able to do these things by using his magic to become invisible to the human eye. Let's see if we can be as magical and mischievous as Puck. Play 'Fairy's Footsteps' (see the 'Storytelling Games and Rhymes' section).

Finally, become Titania/Oberon and turn all the children into your fairy court. Play 'Titania/Oberon Says' (see the 'Storytelling Games and Rhymes' section).

Ask everyone to sit on the floor again. When everyone is seated and calm, say goodbyes or sing a goodbye song.



Chaos in the Woods

A short story for children based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, written by Gemma Sharp (hoglets.org.uk)



Are you ready for a tale stranger than you've ever heard before? A tale of warring fairies, confused lovers and a man named Bottom! Yes, that's right – Bottom.



We start our story in the Greek city of Athens, though we won't stay here long!



The entire city was bustling with excitement for the Duke of Athens, Theseus' wedding to the Amazon Queen Hippolyta. Everyone was happy, everyone but a young girl named Hermia. Hermia had just had a huge row with her father. You see, she was in love with Lysander, but her father said she must marry someone else; a young man by the name of Demetrius. Hermia's father took her to see Duke Theseus, who told her she must marry Demetrius or face punishment.

Hermia and Lysander made a plan to run away together. They would meet at the edge of the woods at nightfall and leave Athens for ever. Hermia told her best friend Helena about her plan and asked her to keep it a secret. Helena, however, was in love with Demetrius, and she decided to tell him of Hermia's plan to prove to him how much she loved him. (I did say they were confused lovers.)



At nightfall Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius and Helena all made their way into the woods.

Little did these four unfortunate souls know, but they were walking into a war – a magical war between the king and queen of the fairies.

After yet another argument, Oberon the king of the fairies decided to play a trick on Queen Titania. Oberon called upon his most loyal but mischievous servant, Puck. He told Puck to search for a magical purple flower named 'Love-in-Idleness'. With this flower, he planned to play a cruel trick on the fairy queen. This flower was so powerful that when sprinkled on a sleeping eye it could make people fall in love with the first person or creature they saw upon waking. Oberon told Puck to place the flower on Titania's eyes as she slept, so she would fall deeply in love with the first beast she saw.

Whilst waiting for Puck to return, Oberon watched as Demetrius searched the forest for Hermia. Oberon saw how mean he was being to poor heartbroken Helena as she followed behind. Once Puck had returned, Oberon told him to also use the flower to make the mean Demetrius fall in love with Helena. Puck flew off as quickly as his cheeky wings could take him and enchanted Titania and then Demetrius. Or so he thought. The problem was that he got the wrong Athenian and cast his mischievous spell on Lysander instead.

As Puck proudly set off to tell his master what he had done, he came across an opportunity too good to resist.



A group of workmen had come into the woods to rehearse a play, 'The Tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe' (spoiler – they both get eaten by a lion!), for the Duke's wedding. One of these workmen caught the cheeky fairy's eye – a big, loud, bossy man by the name of Nick Bottom. Yes, Bottom!

Puck used his fairy magic to turn Bottom into a monster, giving him the head of a donkey. The other workmen were so scared when they saw what Bottom had turned into that they ran screaming from the woods. Puck laughed so much that he almost fell out of a tree. Bottom was so scared and so alone that he began to cry. *Whaaaaaaaaaaa!* His cries were so loud that he woke the sleeping fairy Queen Titania. Titania instantly fell in love with the donkey-headed Bottom and took him away to her fairy bedroom, where her servants attended to him.



Puck returned to Oberon with his amusing news, but his master was furious. He knew about Puck's little mistake with the wrong 'mean Athenian'. He sent him out straight

away to fix things. Now, Puck being Puck he didn't really fix things, he just found Demetrius and cast the spell on him too. But the first person both Demetrius and Lysander saw when they awoke was Helena.

Hermia was furious that everyone was now in love with her friend and that no one loved her. A huge argument began between them all. Oberon immediately put all the lovers to sleep and fixed Puck's mistake. He made Lysander fall back in love with Hermia and left Demetrius in love with Helena.

Then Oberon found his wife and removed the spell upon her. The queen of the fairies was quite shocked to discover a donkey-headed monster in her bedroom! Titania and Oberon put aside their differences and were happy together once more.

The next morning Hermia's father and Duke Theseus found the four lovers laid asleep at the edge of the wood. Demetrius told them he was in love with Helena, and Hermia's father agreed to let her marry Lysander. The Duke declared that there would be a triple wedding!



All three couples were married that very day and the workmen performed their play in celebration – to rapturous applause and howls of laughter. Titania and Oberon blessed the marriages and all was happy and well.



Storytelling Games and Rhymes: The Lovers' Song

This song is a funny way to try to explain the complex love-square that takes place in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – or at least show how confusing it is at times!

Give each of the four characters of The Lovers an action such as:

Hermia – squat down

Helena – jump up high

Lysander – stand on one leg

Demetrius – flex your muscles

Every time the character's name is mentioned in the script, the children have to do the character's action. As the song goes along it speeds up, making everything more of a challenge (and hopefully very funny). You can sing along to the backing track if you wish or play the vocal version and join in with the children! You could also just say the rhyme if you prefer.

Link to backing track:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-747862556/sbt-amnd-the-lovers-song-backingtrack?si=8127e858e2d14a13b2b4544ccac516c2>

Link to vocals:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-747862556/sbt-amnd-the-lovers-song-vocals?si=8127e858e2d14a13b2b4544ccac516c2>

CHORUS 1

Soooo...

Hermia loves Lysander,

Demetrius loves Hermia,

Helena loves Demetrius

AND no one loves Helena!

VERSE 1

Wellllll...

Her father takes Hermia

To see the Duke Theseus,

Who tells her to marry Demetrius

Even though she loves Lysander!

CHORUS 2

But...

Hermia loves Lysander,

Demetrius loves Hermia,

Helena loves Demetrius

AND no one loves Helena!

VERSE 2

Thennnnn...

Hermia says to Helena,

I'm running away with Lysander,

but don't tell Theseus

and you can have Demetrius.

CHORUS 3

Because...

Hermia loves Lysander,

Demetrius loves Hermia,

Helena loves Demetrius,

AND no one loves Helena!

VERSE 3

But...

Helena tells Demetrius,

All about Hermia,

Who's running away with Lysander

And they follow them into the wood.

CHORUS 4

So...

Hermia loves Lysander,

Demetrius loves Hermia,

Helena loves Demetrius

AND no one loves Helena!

And they all go into the wood!

By Gemma Sharp (hoglets.org.uk)



Storytelling Games and Rhymes: Going to the Woods

Say the rhyme and encourage the children to move in the way that the rhyme suggests:

**creeping,
skipping,
strolling,
stomping
and dancing.**

What other actions can they make to go with the words?

Suggest some actions for the children to follow and ask for their ideas too.

Creeping through the woods, what can you see?
I see a sprite, looking at me!

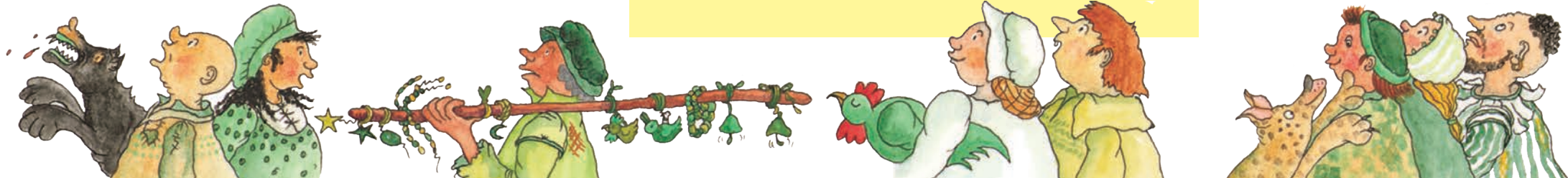
Skipping through the woods, what can you hear?
The king of the fairies is cross – oh dear!

Strolling through the woods, what will you find?
A donkey's head with a man's behind!

Stomping through the woods – splash! That was a puddle!
It's all down to Puck, that we're in such a muddle!

Dancing in the woods, it's time to be friends,
To go to a wedding and make some amends!

By Sally Gray (Shakespeare Week Education Officer)



Storytelling Games and Rhymes: Bottom's Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes

Start by asking the children to sing
'Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes'
with all the actions.

Ask them to sing it again at twice the speed with
actions, then again – getting faster each time!

When they can't possibly go any faster, teach them
Bottom's version.

Bottom's version

Ee-yaw, shoulders, hooves not toes, hooves not toes
Ee-yaw, shoulders, hooves not toes, hooves not toes
And eyes, big ears and a very long nose
Ee-yaw, shoulders, hooves not toes, hooves not toes

Actions

Ee-yaw – hands on hips and kick up one leg

Shoulders – touch shoulders

Hooves not toes – cup your hands around the front
of your toes

Eyes – point to eyes

Big ears – put hands on top of head like donkey's ears

A very long nose – put your hand to your face and
then pull it outwards in a long nose motion



Storytelling Games and Rhymes:

Shakespeare Stretches

Invite the children to stand up and tell them to make themselves:

- As tall and thin as Helena
(stand on your tiptoes and reach for the ceiling)
- As small as Hermia
(make yourself into the tiniest ball possible)
- As wide as Bottom's ego
(stretch one arm to one wall and the other arm to the opposite wall)
- As big and round as the Lion
(bend forward and round your back, shoulders and arms ... now ROAR!)
- As mischievous as Puck
(wiggle everything, your arms, legs, bottoms, heads, fingers, toes, ears ... everything!)

Growing Trees

Transport the children to the woods with this simple, imaginative game.

- Ask the children to crouch down into tiny balls and tell them they are seeds. As they count to ten they must grow up from seeds to trees.
- First, ask them to grow into a normal wood – suggest a tree they may have seen or know as an example.
- Next, invite them to grow into a spooky wood (give them a few seconds to think of spooky thoughts: spiders, slugs, wolves howling at the wind and so on). Guide them as they count to ten to grow into creepy trees with scary faces and gnarled fingers.
- Finally, try an enchanted wood – a wood with fairies flying through the skies, sparkling flowers growing from the branches and glowing toadstools living in the grass. Tell the children to think magical thoughts, then guide them as they count to ten to grow into twirling, beautiful trees.



Storytelling Games and Rhymes:

Walking Through the Woods

Take an imaginary wander through the woods, looking for woodland creatures as you go! Choose five woodland creatures and give them all actions.

For example:

- An owl – flap your arms up and down and call 'twit-twoo'
- A fox – wiggle your bottom to swish your tail
- A mouse – make yourself into a ball, put your hands on your head as ears and squeak
- A rabbit – bounce up and down like a bunny
- A snake – put your hands together and make your arms slither like a snake

Tell the children that you are going to lead them on a walk through the forest to see the animals. Ask them to walk quietly so that they don't scare the creatures that live there.

Tell them that you will lead and when you see an animal you will give them a signal and they must do the animal's action. Teach them the five actions, then walk around the room pointing out imaginary animals in different places and encourage them to do the corresponding actions.

This game can be as long or as short as you like. To end the game, lead them into the clearing where they will 'meet' the lovers. Then go into the 'Lovers' Song' with actions. Alternatively, take them to the edge of the woods and ask them to join in the action rhyme 'Going to the Woods', performing actions and moving in the way the rhyme suggests!

Fairy's Footsteps

Play this variation of the traditional game 'Grandma's Footsteps', where the children are the 'fairies' that must sneak up on the 'human' whose back is turned.

The children (fairies) make a horizontal line at one end of your space and you stand at the other end of the space with your back turned. The 'fairies' must tiptoe towards you and freeze whenever you turn around. Any 'fairies' that are seen moving have to go back to the beginning and try again. You can play this as many times as you feel is appropriate.

Titania/Oberon Says

Play the traditional game of 'Simon Says' but change the instruction to 'Titania/Oberon Says'. This game is a good one to finish with, gradually calming the children down with gentle actions such as, 'Titania says lie down and take deep breaths with your eyes closed!'



Art and Craft Activities: Make a magic wand

Not all fairies need wands to weave their magic – but we personally think it helps! Make a magic wand to take on your adventures in the forest. When designing your wand, think about what kind of magic you want to perform. This can be shown in the colour of the feathers, beads, pipe cleaners and pom-poms you choose.

You will need:



- A stick, a piece of willow or a lollipop stick
- Three pipe cleaners
- A feather
- Some beads and pom-poms
- Sticky tape

How to make your wand



1. Take the feather and use a small strip of tape to secure it to the top of your stick.



2. Next, take one of the pipe cleaners and thread the beads along it. This is a great exercise for little folks to work on their fine motor skills.



3. Starting at the top, wind the bead-covered pipe cleaner around the wand.



4. Take another pipe cleaner and attach the pom-poms to it, by pinching the pipe cleaner around each one and twisting it around to make sure it's secure.



5. Finally, wrap the third pipe cleaner around the bottom of the wand to create a nice comfortable grip.

Starting at the top again, wind the pom-pom covered pipe cleaner around the wand in the opposite direction to the previous one.

Ta da! Your very own magic wand. Now start casting those spells – but don't go making people fall asleep!



Art and Craft Activities:

Make a crown



A crown can be so many things, depending on what you want to play. Is the crown yours? Are you queen of the fairies? Or is it the king of Athens' crown? Is it buried treasure? The choice is yours!

You will need:



- A paper plate
- A pair of scissors
- Some felt-tipped pens and decorating materials

How to make your crown



1. Leaving the outer ring of the plate intact, take your scissors and cut a zig-zag all around the centre to create a ring of spikes.



2. Using your colouring pens, colour in your crown. Decorate it in whatever way you want – imagine who you are and how your crown would look. You could add feathers, jewels, stickers, pasta pieces, glitter – your only limit is your imagination!



3. Fold the spikes upwards to create a crown.



Art and Craft Activities: Make a lion's mane mask

Become a lion yourself – like Snug, the Joiner in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – with this roarsome lion's mane mask!

You will need:

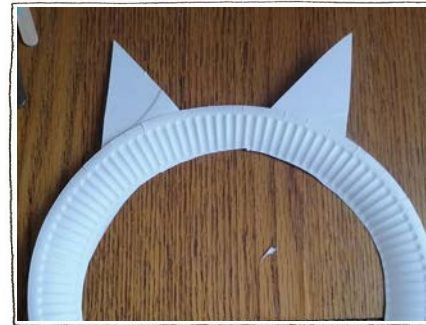


- A paper plate
- Two different coloured sheets of paper
- A pair of scissors
- A glue stick
- A lollipop stick or twig from the garden

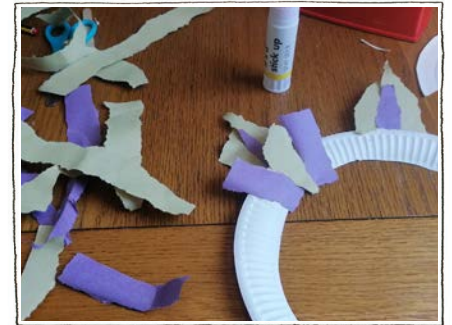
How to make your mask



1. Cut out the centre of the plate, leaving the outer ring intact.



2. Cut two triangles from the discarded centre of the plate and stick them to the top of the plate. These are your lion's ears.



3. Next, take your two pieces of coloured paper and cut them into strips. Don't worry about them being neat, the scruffier the better. Cover the ears with glue and then stick smaller strips of coloured paper over them. Next, taking alternate colours, stick longer strips around the edge of the plate until it is completely covered.



4. When the glue has completely dried, turn your mane mask over and secure your lollipop stick/twig to the centre of the back at the bottom.



5. Now hold up your lion's mane mask and roar!

SHAKESPEARE WEEK

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION



.....

You have found out about Shakespeare's famous play,
A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Signed:

Date:

Place:

Well
Done!

