Subtitles

Giving a play a subtitle (an alternative title) was fashionable in Elizabethan times. 'Twelfth Night' was the only one of Shakespeare's plays to have a subtitle – "Twelfth Night, Or what you will" when first published in 1602.

In plays and other works, a subtitle is an alternative title that explains a little more about the plot. However, the subtitle Shakespeare uses for 'Twelfth Night' is 'Or what you will' and this does not give us a real clue about the plot in the play. Some people believe that Shakespeare's purpose in using this subtitle was to allow the audience to make up their own minds about the meaning of the play and therefore add more confusion.

Why do you think Shakespeare chose these words for his subtitle and what do you think the words mean?

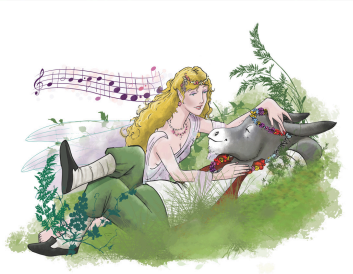
Activity

Here are summaries of three of Shakespeare's other plays. Can you think up a subtitle for each one?

A Midsummer Night's Dream

- Four young people from Athens run away to the forest chasing each other for love.
- In the forest, mischievous Puck, the fairy, makes both boys fall in love with the same girl.
- Puck then helps his master play a trick on the fairy queen.
- In the end, Puck reverses the magic, and the young people fall in love with the person they truly love and marry them.

A Midsummer Night's Dream or _____



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General

Macbeth

- Three witches tell the Scottish soldier Macbeth that he will be King of Scotland.
- Encouraged by his wife, Macbeth kills the existing king and becomes the new king himself.
- Macbeth kills more people to make sure he remains powerful.
- Civil war erupts to overthrow Macbeth, resulting in more death.



Macbeth or _____

The Tempest

- Prospero uses magic to conjure a storm and cause a shipwreck.
- The King of Naples and Prospero's treacherous brother, Antonio are shipwrecked on Prospero's island.
- Prospero's slave, Caliban, plots to rid himself of his master, but is prevented by Prospero's spirit-servant Ariel.
- The King's young son Ferdinand, thought to have died in the shipwreck, falls in love with Prospero's daughter Miranda.

The Tempest or _____



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