



EXPLORING STATUS IN
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Grade Levels: 6-12

The struggle between order and disorder is a central theme of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This exercise has been designed to help students physicalize different levels of status and understand how status imposes order on society.

Status Activity

1. Have students spread out around the classroom. As a group, they will now work to physicalize five different levels of status through body language. Begin with Level 1, the lowest status. Body language for this level might include folded arms and withdrawn posture. Students at Level 1 might make little eye contact with others and try to take up little space. Level 2 is a slightly higher status. At Level 3, students see themselves equals (e.g., confident posture and comfortable interactions). Level 4 has superior body language and takes up a lot of space. Level 5 is the highest status—the boss or ruler.
2. Once students have created physicality for each status, ask them to walk around the room assuming different levels and making small, non-verbal interactions with each other.
3. Ask students to sit, and call for four volunteers. Using sticky notes, put a number from one to five on the back of each volunteer. Numbers may be repeated (i.e., there may be two Level 3s in one round). Make sure students do not know what number they have been assigned. Have volunteers check the number on others' backs. This number corresponds to their level of status. Tell the volunteers they will now hold short conversations with each other, suggesting an easy topic (e.g., dinner plans). Throughout the conversation, students should relate to others according to the number on their backs. A Level 1 might not be given much of an opportunity to speak or might be ignored completely. On the other hand, a Level 5 should be admired. Give students a minute or so before calling time.
4. When time is called, ask students to line up in order of lowest to highest status, based on how others treated them. Once in order, have students check the number on their backs to see if they got it right. This exercise may be repeated with more volunteers. When it is complete, discuss the clues students used to determine their number and how students felt being of different levels of status.