



## My Name is Not Peaseblossom

By Jackie French

### Summary

*Titania rose to her feet. 'What is going on here, Peaseblossom?' she demanded.*

*I bowed to her. 'I apologise, Your Majesty. But I'd rather be known as Pete.'*

*'Pete?' She frowned. 'That's no name for a fairy.'*

*'No, it isn't,' I said, meeting her eyes.*

At court, he's known as Peaseblossom, a servant to the Fairy Queen.

But as Pete, he prefers pizza to sugarplums and denim to daffodils. He wants to choose his own life too. But how can he when a fairy's sole duty is to obey the all-powerful Queen Titania?

This is Shakespeare's popular and delightful comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with an added army of Amazons, a sea serpent and a selkie called Gaela, who luckily for Pete makes the best pizza in the world.

It is also a story of the intrigues of the Fairy Court, of vampire plots to dominate the world and of impossible loves that might just come true. Not by enchantment, but when two hearts thread together, making a magic of their own.

### Key Learning Outcomes

ACELA1529, ACELT1619, ACELT1620, ACELT1622, ACELT1626, ACELT1627, ACELT1632

### Themes

Love, Freedom, Choice, Control, Power, Shakespeare, Self-determination, Ethics

Recommended Ages: 11+

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## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### Understanding the Novel

- Peaseblossom can TAP forward and backwards through time in the novel. What does TAP mean?
  - Where would you go if you could move through time?
  - Who would you visit?
  - What would you change?
  - Write a scene that imagines your experience in another time or place. What problems might arise from being able to do this?
- Ultimately, Peaseblossom risks everything to return to Gaela. Why does he do this? What does he risk with his decision? Is it worth it? Write a short paragraph defending your answer.

### Themes

#### Power

- Queen Titania is a character who wields a lot of power. Find quotes that show:
  - What kind of queen she is
  - How she treats her subjects
  - What kind of power she has and how she uses it
  - Who she has control over
  - Who (if anyone) has control over her

#### Choice & Free Will

- Peaseblossom, or Pete, realises that he is uncomfortable with making people fall in love because it takes away their free will. Towards the end of the book he asks Puck why they meddle in the lives of other people: 'Have you ever thought what their lives would be like if we left them to choose freely?' (p154). How important is choice?
  - Make a list of moments when characters make choices for themselves and a list of moments when characters have a choice made for them. What are the outcomes of each?
- Puck argues that people don't really want to choose their own destinies. Is he right? Write about a time when someone has made a choice about your life without consulting you. How did it make you feel? What would you have done differently? Would you rather make your own choices, even if the outcome might be less certain?
- Gaela tells Peaseblossom that she believes 'love comes in a million flavours. Enchantment is one of those flavours, but not the one I want.' (p119). What does she mean by this? Why doesn't she want enchanted love?
- Should a person get to choose who they love?

### Literary Techniques

- How do you learn things like Queen Titania's age, attitude, role in the story, relationships with others? Why is it important to know these things about a character? What other information might an author give you about a character?
- Find a description of Queen Titania in the book that you think describes her particularly well and identify some techniques that the author uses to convey this information. How does the author *show* you what kind of person she is, rather than *tell* you? Why does this matter to the reader?
- If you could describe the flavour of love, how would you describe it? Would it change depending on the type of love you were describing, or the person receiving the love?
- Jackie French disrupts the traditional version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by switching between the world described in the play and the contemporary world. Do you think this technique contributes to the story?
  - Does it make you feel more or less engaged with the story?
  - How has the author woven the two settings together?

### Appropriation & Text Type

- *My Name is Not Peaseblossom* is based on a play written by William Shakespeare – *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Do you think you need to know the play in order to understand the novel?
- Familiarise yourself with the story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – <http://www.bardweb.net/plays/dream.html>. Identify where the novel matches the original play, and where it doesn't.
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play, and if you've read it, you'll see that it's written as a script. How is a script different to a novel? What information might you include in a novel that you would leave out of a script and why?
- Choose a scene from the book and turn it into a script. Think about how it might be performed and how to turn the story into dialogue. How might you capture some of the other information that Jackie French has conveyed in her story?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jackie French AM is an award-winning writer, wombat negotiator, the 2014–2015 Australian Children's Laureate and the 2015 Senior Australian of the Year. In 2016 Jackie became a Member of the Order of Australia for her contribution to children's literature and her advocacy for youth literacy. She is regarded as one of Australia's most popular children's authors and writes across all genres – from picture books, history, fantasy, ecology and sci-fi to her much loved historical fiction for a variety of age groups. 'Share a Story' was the primary philosophy behind Jackie's two-year term as Laureate.

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