

Mercutio's Queen Mab Speech

Romeo and Juliet, Act I, scene iv

	O, then, I see <u>Queen Mab</u> hath been with you. She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes In shape no bigger than an agate-stone On the fore-finger of an alderman,	Queen Mab: the queen of Fairyland
5	Drawn with a team of little <u>atomies</u> <u>Athwart</u> men's noses as they lie asleep. Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub, Time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers.	Atomies: small creatures Athwart: across
10	Her wagon-spokes made of long <u>spinners'</u> legs, The cover of the wings of grasshoppers, The traces of the smallest spider's web, The collars of the moonshine's watery beams, Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of <u>film</u> ,	spinners': spiders' film: Spiders' thread
15	Her wagoner a small grey-coated gnat, Not half so big as a round little worm Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid. Her chariot is an empty hazelnut, Made by the joiner squirrel or <u>old grub</u>	old grub: an insect that bores holes in nuts
20	Time out o' mind the fairies' coach-makers. And in this state she gallops night by night Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love; <u>O'er</u> courtiers' knees, that dream on curtsies straight, <u>O'er</u> lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees,	O'er: over
25	<u>O'er</u> ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream, Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues, Because their breaths with <u>sweetmeats</u> tainted are. Sometime she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,	Sweetmeats: candy
30	And then dreams he of <u>smelling out a suit</u> ; And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail Tickling a parson's nose as 'a lies asleep, Then dreams he of another <u>benefice</u> : Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,	Smelling out a suit: finding someone who has a petition for the queen and will pay the courtier to present it benefice: church appointment
35	And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats, Of breaches, <u>ambuscadoes</u> , Spanish blades, Of <u>healths</u> five-fathom deep; and then anon Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes, And being thus frightened swears a prayer or two	ambuscadoes: ambushes healths: toasts to one's health
40	And sleeps again. This is that very Mab That <u>plats</u> the manes of horses in the night, And bakes the <u>elflocks</u> in foul sluttish hairs, Which once untangled, much misfortune bodes: This is the hag, when maids lie on their backs,	plats: tangles elflocks: tangled hair
45	That presses them and learns them first to bear, Making them women of good <u>carriage</u> . This is she—	Carriage: posture

Directions: Answer these questions to demonstrate your understanding of the “Queen Mab” speech.

1. Who is Mercutio talking to when he begins this speech? What is the other character’s state of mind?

2. Who is Queen Mab? To what does Mercutio compare her to suggest her size? _____

3. How would you describe Queen Mab’s actions? _____

4. Study the description of Queen Mab’s wagon.

a. What are the spokes of the wheels made of? _____

b. What is the wagon’s cover made of? _____

c. What is the “trace” (strap connecting the harness to the vehicle) made of? _____

d. What is the collar (part of the harness) made of? _____

e. What is the whip made of? _____

f. What is the lash made of? _____

g. Describe the wagoner. (driver) _____

h. Describe the chariot in which Queen Mab rides. _____

5. What happens when Queen Mab . . .

a. gallops through lovers brains? _____

b. rides over courtiers’ knees? _____

c. rides over lawyers fingers? _____

d. gallops over ladies’ lips? _____

e. gallops over a courtier’s nose? _____

f. tickles a parson’s nose with a pig’s tail? _____

g. drives over a soldier’s neck? _____

h. drums in a soldier’s ear? _____

6. What does Queen Mab do to horses' manes? _____

7. Identify four groups of Elizabethans who are mocked or satirized by Mercutio in this speech.

8. Given Romeo's depressed state at the beginning of this scene, what might be Mercutio's purpose in Making this speech? Does the speech have the desired effect? Explain.

9. In this scene, Romeo indicates that he believes that dreams "presage," or foretell future events. Would Mercutio agree that dreams show us the future? Explain your answer.

10. This speech contains many examples of Shakespeare's use of imagery. Imagery refers to the author's use of words, phrases, or details intended to appeal to one or more of the senses of the reader. Identify one image from the monologue that appeals to each of the five senses.

a. sight: _____

b. hearing: _____

c. touch: _____

d. taste: _____

e. smell: _____

