

Queen Mab Speech
Romeo and Juliet Act I Scene 4

Who is Queen Mab? Mercutio describes her as a fairy that brings dreams to people at night. He gives a detailed description of both Queen Mab, her carriage, and her activities.

Task #1: Reread his speech below and highlight each the physical descriptions of the queen and her mode of transportation.

Mercutio

O, then, I see Queen Mab 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*,
Drawn with a team of little *atomies*
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep;
Her wagon-spokes made of long spiders' 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 film,
Her *wagoner* a small grey-coated gnat,
Not so big as a round little worm
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid;
Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut
Made by the *joiner* squirrel or old grub,
Time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers.
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;
O'er *courtiers'* knees, that dream on court'sies straight,
court
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees,
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream,
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters *plagues*,
Because their breaths with sweetmeats *tainted* are:
Sometime she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,
And then dreams he of smelling out a *suit*;
And sometime comes she with a *tithe-pig's tail*
Tickling a *parson's* nose as a' lies asleep,
Then dreams, he of another benefice:
Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,
Of *breaches*, *ambuscadoes*, Spanish blades,
Of *healths 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

midwife = someone who delivers babies

agate-stone = gem

alderman = city official

atomy = tiny particle

traces = part of the harness

wagoner = person who drives the carriage

prick'd = taken

joiner = person who builds from wood

courtier = person who goes to the king's

plagues = diseases or illness

tainted = marked or dirtied by

suit = a request or favor

tithe-pig's tail = payment to the church

parson = a churchman (priest)

breaches, ambuscadoes = ambushes

healths five-fathoms deep = large drinks

And sleeps again. This is that very Mab
That *plats* the manes of horses in the night,
And bakes the *elflocks* in foul sluttish hairs,
Which once untangled, much misfortune *bodes*:
This is the *hag*, when *maids* lie on their backs,
That presses them and learns them first to bear,
Making them women of good carriage:
This is she--

plats = braids
elflocks = horse's mane
bode = foretell/predicts
hag = witch maids = virgins

Task #2: Complete the sentences below. According to Mercutio, what kinds of dreams does Queen Mab deliver to the following people:

1. Lovers dream of
2. Courtiers (first mention) dream of
3. Lawyers dream of
4. Ladies dream of
5. Courtiers (second mention) dream of
6. A parson dreams of
7. A soldier dreams of

Task #3: Best friends Mercutio and Romeo have different beliefs about dreams. Identify their ideas below and save your changes.

1. Romeo says: Dreamers lie "*in bed asleep while they do dream things true.*"

What does Romeo believe about dreams?

2. Mercutio says: "*I talk of dreams, which are the children of an idle (lazy) brain, begot (born) of nothing but vain fantasy, which is as thin of substance as the air and more inconstant (unpredictable) than the wind...*"

What does Mercutio believe about dreams?

3. Why would Mercutio tell such an unbelievable or imaginative story about dreams to Romeo? What is he trying to convince Romeo of?

Task #4: Draw a picture of Queen Mab and her chariot below.