

Puck

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend:
if you pardon, we will mend:
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck a liar call;
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

but = just

idle = trifling/ silly
yielding but = meaningful than

And so, fellow travellers, we come to the end of our journey for this year – our revels, for now at least, are ending. I thought, then, it would be quite fitting to bid farewell to the Shakespeare path of our journey with Puck's famous epilogue. Puck is the fairy attendant of Oberon; he can be pretty mischievous, and he is also known as 'Robin Goodfellow' – after a legendary fairy in stories when the play was written. At the end of the play, Puck comes to address the audience.

Questions

What do you think Puck means when he says 'we shadows'? Who might he be referring to? Why use this term?

What does Puck suggest that the audience do (or, rather, to think) if they have been offended by the play?

What do you think he might mean when he says "scape the serpent's tongue?" (this is an address by an actor to an audience – what sound might an audience make if they really hated the performance?)

What do you think Puck means when he says 'give me your hands, if we be friends'? (again, remember that an audience are being addressed; how could an audience 'give their hands' to a group of actors at the end of a performance?)

Creative response

I thought it would be fun for you to write an epilogue to your Year 5 experience. You can imagine that it has been a performance, or a dream, or just an experience that you'd like to sum up. You can address any 'audience' you want – your choice – and you can respond in any way. Most of all, enjoy! :)