

# The Tempest

THE COMPLETE GUIDE AND RESOURCE

## SAMPLE SECTION

TRUST NOTHING AND NO ONE. ON HIS ISLAND, SURVIVAL IS A DEADLY GAME OF WITS.

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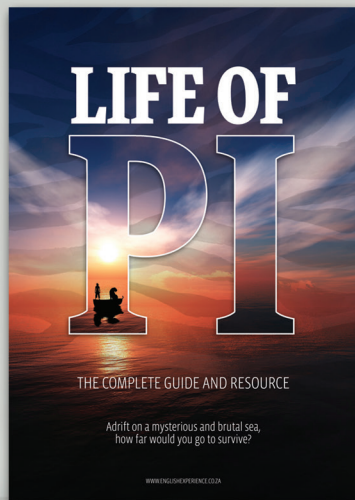
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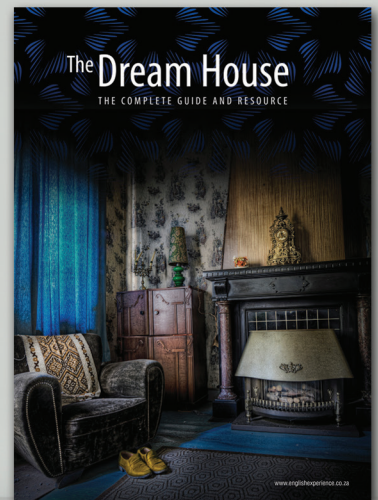
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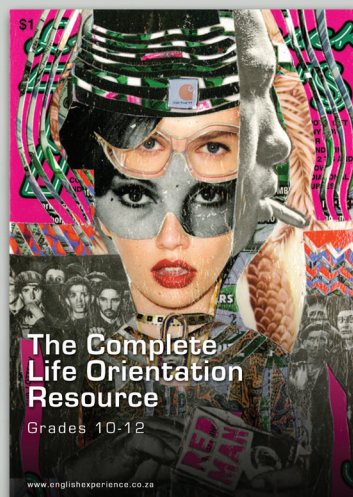
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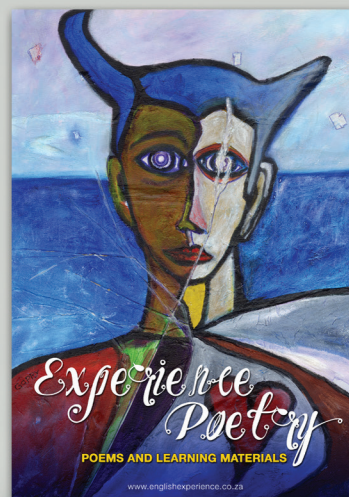
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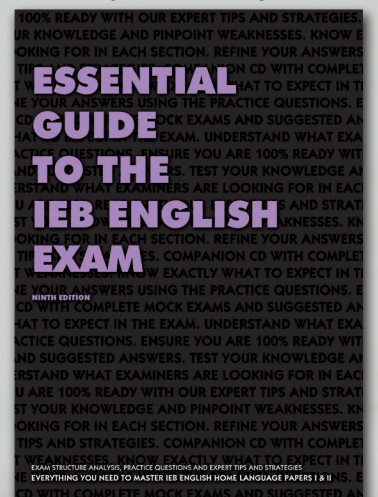
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the **English** experience

# The Tempest

**The Complete Guide and Resource for Grade 12**

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# Foreword

## About The English Experience

*The English Experience is an independent South African publishing house that specialises in developing high-quality English and Life Orientation educational resources for IEB educators and students. The team of passionate, talented experts behind The English Experience works tirelessly to ensure that every resource encourages insight, growth and debate — enriching and challenging both educators and students — without losing sight of the important goals of academic success and examination readiness.*

Focused on bringing the subject to life, every resource The English Experience publishes incorporates a range of features — including content and contextual questions and stimulating enrichment materials — designed to encourage a critical appreciation of the subject and to inspire the higher-order thinking for which examiners are always looking.

The world-class English Experience team includes highly experienced educators, some with over 20 years of classroom experience, passionate literary experts in various fields, such as historical fiction, poetry and Shakespeare, fanatical historians and researchers, creative writers, skilled editors, pernickety proofreaders and obsessive fact checkers — together with spirited university lecturers and enthusiastic young minds who help to ensure our approach remains unique and fresh.

While academic success is a non-negotiable consideration, our aspiration is to inspire a genuine interest in, and love of, English literature.



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## Our approach to Shakespeare

*The toughest challenge with Shakespeare can be overcoming the preconceived ideas many students have about how dull and tedious he is to study. Making sense of the language in which the plays are written can be hard going for learners, so it's perhaps not surprising that many of them find studying Shakespeare an alienating experience and consider his plays to be works through which they have to slog to pass an examination.*

This resource has been written with this reality in mind and particular attention has been paid to breathing new life into Shakespeare and his world. Not only have we worked hard to make sure the content in this resource is fresh and engaging, we have also divided it into accessible, digestible sections and included numerous quirky, interesting and fun facts.

We have endeavoured to make both the man and his play as accessible and entertaining as possible. We start with the man, exploring his extraordinary life and achievements, and then put these into context by bringing the dirty, dangerous and vibrant worlds of Elizabethan and Jacobean England to life.

Having armed students with an understanding and appreciation of Shakespeare's intentions and world, we tackle the play. Again, we do so with one goal in mind at every step: to make it as accessible and entertaining as possible for modern Matric learners, while remaining academically sound and accurate.

We start by providing students with detailed historical and literary backgrounds, helping them to understand the places, events, literary genres, and conventions on which the play is based. The play is also presented as a short story to help students grasp the plot, before we tackle the characters, themes and structure in detail.

We have not only worked very closely with the text of the play, adjusting punctuation and spelling and providing explanatory annotations to help students grasp its meaning, we have also incorporated act-based learning into the structure of the resource as we believe that working through the play act by act ensures that a solid foundation of knowledge is laid. Students can then build on this foundation methodically and effectively, only dealing with the whole play once they have worked through it scene by scene.

In the end, we have approached Shakespeare the same way we approach every author and text — with two, interrelated goals in mind. The first, non-negotiable objective is to ensure examination readiness and success, and the second is to inspire a genuine interest in, and appreciation of, the work being studied.

## Using this resource

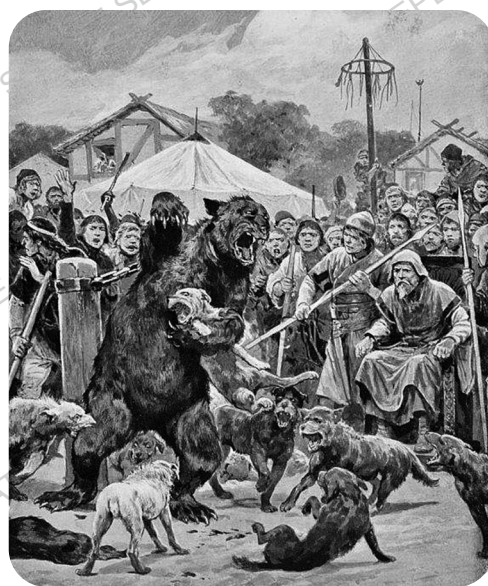
*This comprehensive resource includes: the full text of the play; an extensive introduction to Shakespeare and the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras; a guide to Shakespearean language; detailed literary context; accessible summaries; rich literary analyses; diverse content-related short questions and literary essay questions (act-specific and general), together with challenging enrichment tasks. In short, students will have everything they need to study the play intensively and bring the text to life.*



© Taphotografik

*'What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world. The paragon of animals.'*

(Act 2, Scene 2, Hamlet)



© Richard Caton Woodville (Wikimedia Commons)

*Bear baiting was still a popular alternative to the theatre during Elizabethan and Jacobean times (see page 22).*



## Preparing with the right mindset

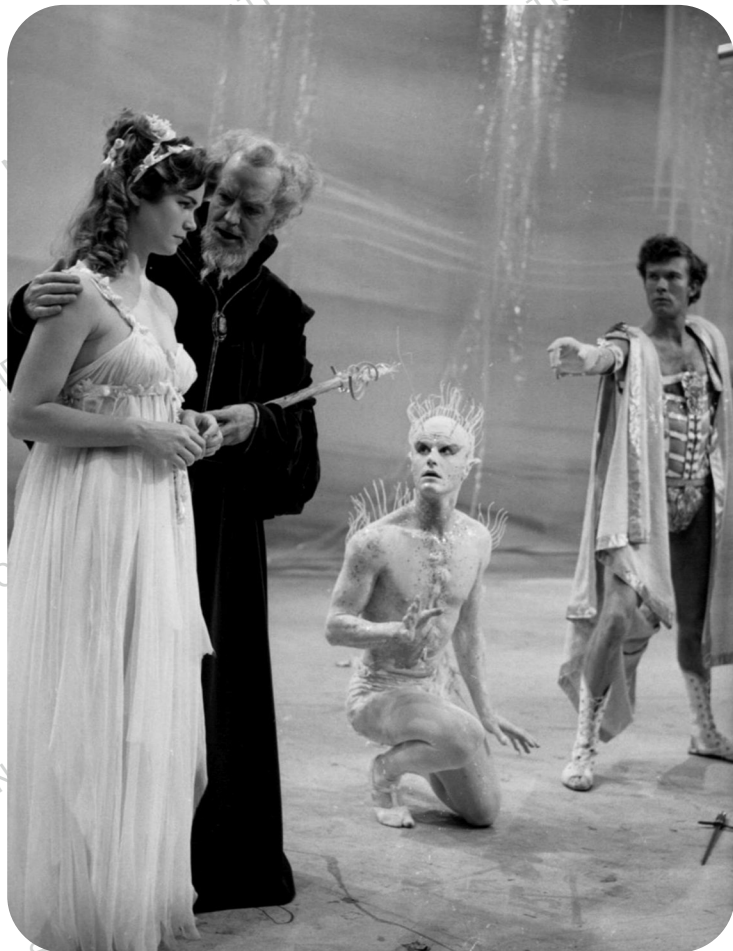
We recommend working through the **Introduction to Shakespeare** section first (even before watching a live/recorded performance) so that students become familiar with the man himself, Elizabethan and Jacobean England, and the theatre for which he wrote. Some learners might have preconceived ideas about Shakespeare and even a block about studying him. This resource has been written with such students in mind and particular attention has been paid to breathing new life into Shakespeare and his world.

To complete the introduction to the playwright, work through the **Shakespearean language** and **Background to the play** sections next. These will deepen learners' understanding of the play — the characters, themes and plot — before they tackle the text itself. By working through the comprehensive introductory section first, students will be prepared, engaged and able to approach the play with the right mindset.

## Tackling the text

Once students have been introduced to Shakespeare and his play, prepare them for working with the actual text by arranging for them to **watch it being performed**. Attending a live performance is often the most effective approach, though not always possible. If it is not, then watching one of the numerous film versions of the play is a more than adequate substitute; for example, Gregory Doran's innovative and visually spectacular 2017 adaptation for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) (available on Marquee TV); the reliable, but heavily edited and abridged 1960 version directed by George Schaefer or Julie Taymor's intriguing, fast-paced and, at times, frantic 2010 version, which reinvents the play and stars Helen Mirren as a female Prospero.

With the students properly prepared and primed, it is time to **read through the play**. This can be done either act by act or in its entirety. The version of the play included in this resource also features relevant annotations to help students understand the meaning and nuances of the text.



(From left) Lee Remick as Miranda, Maurice Evans as Prospero, Roddy McDowall as Ariel and William Bassett as Ferdinand in the 1960 NBC Television version of *The Tempest*, directed by George Schaefer.



©Miramax Films

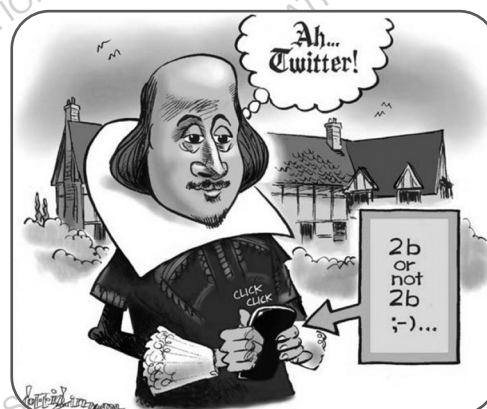
Images from the visually spectacular 2010 film directed by Julie Taymor. In this version, the gender of the main character, Prospero, is changed from male to female and played by Helen Mirren.

Once students have read through the play, work through the act-based **Summaries and analyses** section. Working through the play act by act ensures that a solid foundation of knowledge is laid and then built on gradually and effectively. Students are not required to deal with the whole play until they have assimilated it scene by scene.

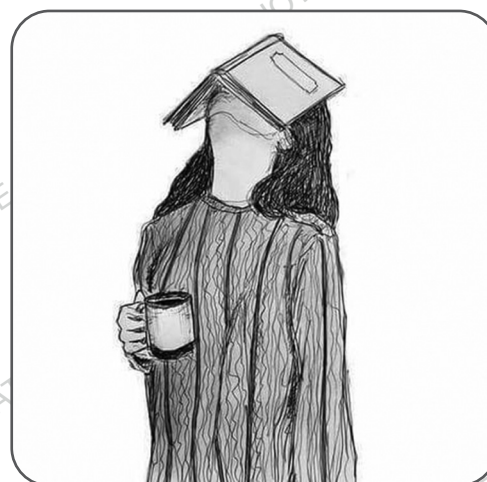
Each act is broken down into its constituent scenes, each of which is summarised and analysed separately. Students are required to engage with each scene through scene-specific questions. At the end of each act, there are also act-specific essay questions and a series of enrichment tasks (for which marking rubrics are provided on the suggested answers disc).

## Ensuring examination readiness and success

To ensure examination readiness and success, the resource also features extensive information regarding the **Literary essay**. This section provides guidelines on writing literary essays, two annotated examples from which to learn, and a wide selection of rigorous essay topics. It also includes suggestions on how to prepare for the final examination.



© Patrick Corrigan (The Toronto Star)



'Study hard, for the well is deep, and our brains are shallow.' — James Gates Percival



## What do you think?

We hope you enjoy this resource as much as we enjoyed putting it together. If you have any comments, queries or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact us by emailing [info@englishexperience.co.za](mailto:info@englishexperience.co.za) or calling our offices on (011) 786-6702.

### KEY TO USING THE BOXES IN THIS RESOURCE



#### Definition or Glossary

Provides the meanings of words and terms used in the text



#### Information

Provides additional details or facts about a topic



#### Alert

Something to which you need to pay attention or of which you need to be aware



#### Quirky Fact

Fun, interesting, extraneous information



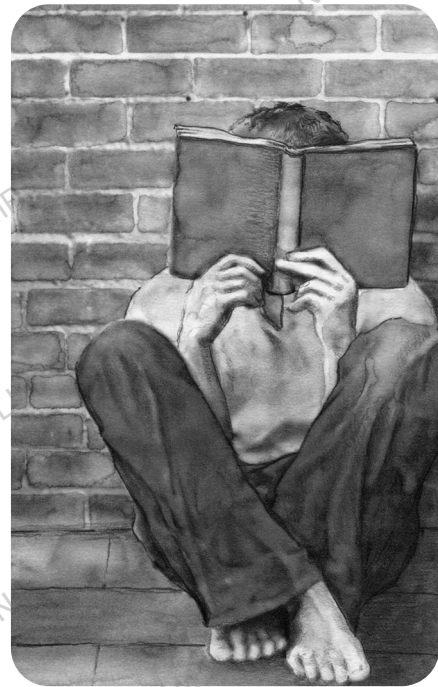
#### Checklist

A list of items or activities required to complete a task satisfactorily



#### Questions

Contextual, intertextual and essay questions on the preceding content



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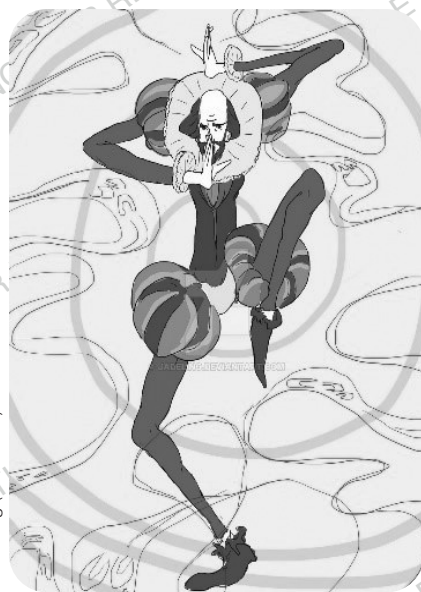
# Introduction to Shakespeare

## Meet William Shakespeare

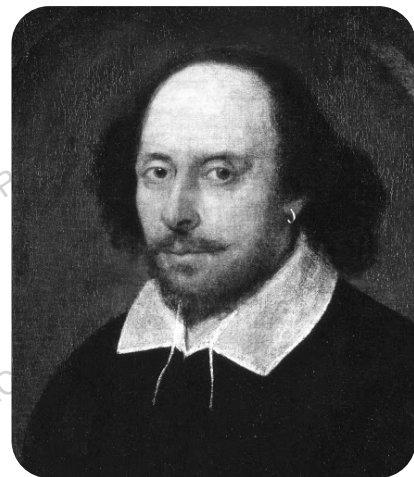
*Who was William Shakespeare? Sadly, we know little about the man considered one of the best English dramatists ever to have lived, which is all the more astonishing given the fame and fortune he achieved. In this section, we bring him to life by piecing together what we do know about his life and achievements.*

By 1600, the man Voltaire described as ‘a drunken savage, with some imagination’ was enjoying the height of his fame and success. He had achieved prominence a few years earlier — as part of the hip group of actors, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men — and made enough money to buy the second biggest house in his home town, but now he was also co-owner of the rowdy, successful Globe Theatre, which was attracting huge audiences of over 1 500 paying customers to each performance.

Shakespeare was working hard for his success, though; in addition to acting and directing performances, running the business side of the theatre, commuting between his work in London and his family in the country, he was also churning out a brand-new play every few months.



*Shakespeare knew how to entertain bawdy Elizabethan audiences. His humour was not limited to witty puns and his plays are riddled with dirty jokes and sexual innuendo.*



© Chandos portrait of William Shakespeare  
(National Portrait Gallery, London)

Not bad for a high school dropout from a small obscure town who had scandalously married an older woman whom he had made pregnant as a lusty 18-year-old.

Shakespeare seems to have been hungry for success. Around the time of his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, he left his wife and three children with his parents and headed to London to seek his fortune.

The movies of their time, plays were rapidly growing in popularity and the theatre was a booming industry — the Hollywood of its day. Whether it was his intention when he left home or not, it’s perhaps not surprising that a young man like Shakespeare should be attracted to such an exciting, vibrant new industry — where fame could be won and money could be made.

It is likely he spent his first few years in the industry learning his craft by acting and writing for several companies of actors, including Lord Strange’s Men and the Queen’s Men. It didn’t take him long to make his mark, though, and he penned the first of his plays — *Henry VI, Part One* — a couple of years later around 1589, when he was in his mid-twenties.

The play was met with acclaim and was the start of a prolific writing career that produced an incredible 37 plays and 154 sonnets before his death in 1616.



While the mystery of Shakespeare's genius is something we will probably never solve, it seems likely that he must have been writing poems and stories from a young age. It's improbable to think he could suddenly write something as accomplished and insightful as the three *Henry VI* plays in his early twenties without years of practice beforehand.



## WHY DO SOME PEOPLE CALL HIM 'THE BARD'?

Bard is a mediaeval Gaelic/British term for a professional entertainer, someone who could tell stories, recite poems or compose music. Shakespeare is sometimes called 'The Bard' in recognition of his stature and (unofficial) standing as the greatest poet of England.

*'Our speech is like honey when we tell a tale ...'  
An artist's impression of two musician bards or minstrels with their lutes.*



© Art-of-JosephG (DeviantArt)



## SAY WHAT?

You may not realise it, but you probably use words and phrases invented by Shakespeare every day, as he contributed more than 1 500 words and countless phrases to the English language. Feel you 'wear your heart on your sleeve'? Want to 'break the ice' with someone you have just met? Feeling a little 'faint-hearted' or 'heart-sick'? Talking about 'your own flesh and blood'? Think it is a 'foregone conclusion'? Well, you have Shakespeare to thank for that.

## THINGS WE SAY TODAY WHICH WE OWE TO SHAKESPEARE

"KNOCK KNOCK! WHO'S THERE?" "HEART OF GOLD"  
"SET YOUR TEETH ON EDGE" "SO-SO" "GOOD RIDDANCE"  
"FAINT HEARTED" "SEEN BETTER DAYS"  
"FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE" "TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING"  
"WEAR YOUR HEART ON YOUR SLEEVE" "SEND HIM PACKING"  
"NOT SLEEP ONE WINK" "COME WHAT MAY"  
"THE GAME IS UP" "FOR GOODNESS' SAKE"  
"BATED BREATH" "WHAT'S DONE IS DONE" "FULL CIRCLE"  
"VANISH INTO THIN AIR" "GREEN EYED MONSTER" "LAUGHING STOCK"  
"IN A PICKLE" "OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH" "BE ALL/END ALL"  
"FAIR/FOUL" "BRAVE MAKES YOUR HAIR NEW" "DEAD AS A DOORNAIL"  
"PLAY/PLAY" "STAND ON END" "WILD"  
"BREAK THE ICE" "THE WORLD IS" "GOOSE CHASE"  
"OFF WITH HIS HEAD" "LIE HIS LAST" "LOVE IS BLIND"  
"HEART OF HEARTS" "A SORRY SIGHT" "A PIECE OF WORK"

© 2011 Cho-Ying Rebecca To (hawasaka.tumblr.com)

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## The early years

Despite being one of the most popular and widely read English language authors ever to have lived, Shakespeare remains a man shrouded in mystery. He achieved tremendous fame and fortune, frequently performed for both Queen Elizabeth I and King James I, and yet we know very little about him and his life.

We do not know his date of birth, only that he was baptised at the Holy Trinity Church in the town of Stratford on 26 April 1564. As baptisms usually took place a couple of days after a birth, many people like to celebrate his birthday on 23 April, which is also the day he died on in 1616.

His parents were financially comfortable and lived in a wealthy part of town. His father, John, was a glove-maker and prominent local businessman who performed several public offices, including becoming the town's bailiff (mayor). His mother, Mary, came from an affluent family of landowners.

It is likely that young William Shakespeare attended the local grammar school, but he might not have been the most devoted student. His good friend and fellow playwright, Ben Jonson, clearly was not overly impressed with his schooling as he said that he had 'small Latin and less Greek'.

When he was 14, Shakespeare had to drop out of school and help his father support the family as John had somehow fallen out of favour with the authorities and into financial difficulties.

We don't know when Shakespeare decided he wanted to be an actor, but it could have been at a young age as the local school put on a classical play at the end of each term and travelling troupes of actors would have visited Stratford regularly.



© Baz Richardson

*Example of a timber-framed Elizabethan house on Rother Street in Shakespeare's home town of Stratford.*



© Somaseshu Gutala

*A classroom in King Edward VI School in Stratford, which is believed to have been the room where Shakespeare studied between the ages of seven and 14 years old.*



© Wikimedia Commons

*A troupe of travelling actors performing a play in the yard of an Elizabethan inn.*



## FROM STAGE TO SCREEN

Think Shakespeare's plays are only found on dusty shelves in old libraries? His work has been the basis for many aspects of popular culture. If you've watched the musical *West Side Story* or films like *The Lion King*, *10 Things I Hate About You*, *She's the Man*, *Romeo Must Die* and *O*, you have enjoyed stories originally created by The Bard himself. Some critics even suggest that *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* is a loose adaptation of *Othello*.



© Walt Disney Pictures

Fewer characters may die in the Disney version, but the tale of Simba avenging the death of his father at the hands of his evil uncle is strikingly similar to Hamlet.

## Shakespeare in love

On 27 November 1582, Shakespeare hastily married Anne Hathaway, a local woman eight years his senior. She was 26 at the time and would have been considered an 'old maid', past her prime. Anne was three months pregnant on her wedding day and these would have been difficult times for the newlyweds because William was a poverty-stricken teenager and his family had fallen on hard times. Some scholars suggest that Shakespeare may have had affairs, but there is no reliable evidence of these, and he remained married to Anne until the day he died, 34 years later.



Portrait of Anne Hathaway by Nathaniel Curzon, 1708. Appears in the book 'William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life' by Samuel Schoenbaum, 1975.

## IS SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE A TRUE STORY?

No. It is a work of plausible fiction. There is no historical record of such a love affair ever having taken place. If it happened while he was writing *Romeo and Juliet* in 1595, it's not likely he was short of cash, either, having already written nine plays and being just about to buy one of the largest properties in Stratford.



© Miramax Films

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## Trials and tribulations

Inadvertently, we know that Shakespeare was a prominent playwright by 1592 because a rival, Robert Greene, jealously attacked him in one of his pamphlets, calling him an 'upstart crow'. It wasn't all plain sailing for the talented Shakespeare, however; an outbreak of the bubonic plague in 1592 led to the closing of the theatres for two years and this meant that the actors had to take on far less profitable and more gruelling tours around the country to earn money.

Shakespeare would have been terrified of the bubonic plague. Most Elizabethans lived in fear of the illness also known as the 'Black Death'. It was a horrible way to die (see p.19) and Shakespeare had lost brothers and sisters, as well as close friends and fellow actors, to the disease. It broke out again in 1603, killing over 33 000 people in London alone, and once more, in 1608.

Shakespeare's only son, Hamnet, died at the age of 11 in 1596 and the Globe Theatre burnt down in 1613. A cannon was fired to mark the entrance of the king on stage during a performance of his latest play, *Henry VIII*, and a stray spark set the thatch roof alight (see p.31). This would have been a serious financial setback as insurance did not exist in those days.

Shakespeare would also have had to put up with regular copyright theft as there were no laws recognising or protecting an author's rights. Rival theatre companies would send their members to watch popular plays and secretly take notes, producing unauthorised copies and performances of them as quickly as possible.

### CONSPIRACY THEORY

For sheer longevity, no conspiracy theory can match the length of time the theory that Shakespeare did not write the plays that have been attributed to him has been around. The usual arguments are that his education and social standing were not good enough to have produced such extraordinary literary works. Almost every prominent Elizabethan has been suggested, at one time or another, as the real author of his plays.



© Mitchellnolte (Deviantart)

A doctor wearing the protective costume that was in widespread use during the bubonic plague outbreaks in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. To prevent physical contact with infected patients, the doctors wore long raincoats, gloves and a mask shaped like the beak of a bird. The design of the mask was deliberate because people believed that the disease was carried and spread by birds. The shape of the mask also allowed the doctors to fill the 'beak' with bundles of aromatic items like herbs. Doing so helped the doctors contend with the putrid smells emanating from the sick and the corpses. The doctors also believed that breathing in the foul air would make them sick.





## SIX TIMES A DAY

*Macbeth* is thought to be one of the most produced plays of all time, with a performance beginning somewhere in the world every four hours.

*'Blood will have blood.'*



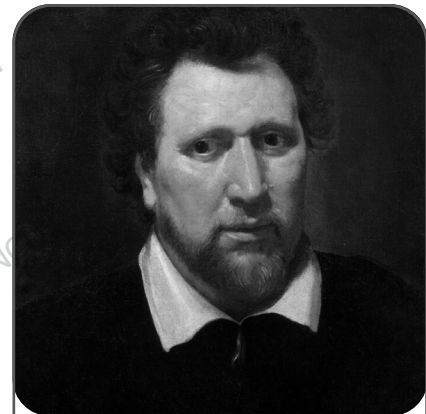
© SeeleDS (Deviantart.com)

## The life of the playwright

The insatiable appetite of the public for plays meant there was constant demand for new material. As if finding creative inspiration was not hard enough, the physical act of writing was slow and laborious as well. Playwrights had only quill and ink, and weak candlelight at night. Working alone, they would be hard pushed to produce more than two plays a year. As a result, most playwrights worked in teams of up to five writers. Solo artists, like Shakespeare, were the exception.

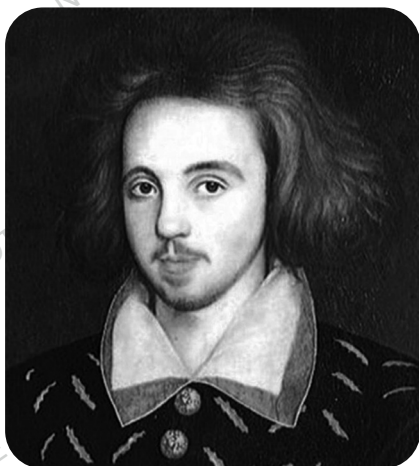
The new theatre industry needed a new breed of playwright and most of them would not fit our modern image of poets and intellectuals. Like Shakespeare, most were self-made men from modest backgrounds. (There were no professional female dramatists because few women were educated or allowed to enter such professions in those days (see p.30).)

One of Shakespeare's best friends and a successful and famous dramatist in his own right, Ben Jonson, was a rowdy ex-soldier who killed a fellow actor in a duel and was notoriously thrown out of the royal court in 1603 for 'unruly behaviour'.



*Portrait of Benjamin Jonson, a rival and friend of Shakespeare's. Although he mocked and scoffed at his friend's work, Jonson praised Shakespeare when he died, observing that he was 'not of an age, but for all time'.*

© National Portrait Gallery, London (Wikimedia Commons)



© Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (Wikimedia Commons)

Another of Shakespeare's highly successful contemporaries, Christopher Marlowe, was a flamboyant celebrity who had been a spy before he started writing and was killed in what appeared to be a tavern brawl — although some suggest he was assassinated by government agents for his publicly professed atheism and for publishing a pamphlet pointing out inconsistencies in the Bible.

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## THE SPURS CONNECTION

Formed in 1882, London football club Tottenham was originally named after 'Harry Hotspur', a character Shakespeare popularised in *Henry IV, Part 1*. Shakespeare based his character on the English nobleman Sir Henry Percy, who earned the nickname 'Hotspur' for the apparent eagerness and recklessness with which he would ride into battle.

*Statue of Harry Hotspur in Alnwick, England.*



© David Henderson (Flickr.com)

## All's well that ends well

In 1605, Shakespeare made another astute property investment in his home town, one which doubled in value and earned him a significant annual income. A few years later, his career started drawing to a close. His final solo play, *The Tempest*, was produced in 1611 and, sometime shortly afterwards, he ceased to be a writer for his company. He retired from the theatre and returned to Stratford, where he enjoyed the final years of his life as a well-off country gentleman and one of the town's leading figures.

Shakespeare died around the time of his fifty-second birthday, on 23 April 1616. We do not know the exact cause of his death, but we know that in the days leading up to it he suffered from a fever. It is comforting to know that he spent the last week or so of his life socialising and celebrating (some argue perhaps a little too hard) with his good friends Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton.

In an elegant and neat dénouement of which the great writer himself may have approved, his journey ended where it began, at the Holy Trinity Church in the small town of Stratford, where he lies buried within the chancel rail.



© Another Believer (Wikimedia Commons)

*Statue of William Shakespeare at the centre of Leicester Square Gardens, London. The playwright is depicted pointing to a parchment offering the following sage advice: 'There is no darkness but ignorance', a quote from his play Twelfth Night.*



## THE CURSE

In his epitaph, Shakespeare put a curse on anyone daring to move his body from its final resting place. Even though it was customary to dig up the bones from previous graves to make room for others, Shakespeare's remains are still undisturbed.





## WAS SHAKESPEARE ON DRUGS?

South African scientists have analysed fragments of seventeenth century pipes found on the floor of Shakespeare's home and found traces of cannabis, cocaine, and hallucinogenic nutmeg extracts high in myristic acid. If he did use any drugs, he was not the only literary genius to do so.

*Having never seen a pipe before, a servant worries that his master, Sir Walter Raleigh, is about to catch fire and throws water on him.*



(Wikimedia Commons)

## Timeline

Please note that this timeline is offered only as a rough guide as the dates of many of the events are only approximate and speculative.

- **1564** — born in Stratford, England (birthday assumed to be 23 April)
- **1582** — marries Anne Hathaway on 27 November (aged 18)
- **1583** — first child, Susanna, is born
- **1585** — twins, Judith and Hamnet, are born
- **1587-88** — heads to London (aged 22) and starts his theatrical career
- **1589-92** — establishes his career and begins to make a name for himself — writes *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Richard III*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Titus Andronicus*
- **1593** — writes *Venus and Adonis*, and begins writing *The Sonnets*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*
- **1594** — founding member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men (an acting company)
- **1596-97** — Hamnet dies; purchases New Place, a large house in Stratford, and writes *Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard II* and *Romeo and Juliet*
- **1598-99** — writes *As You Like It*, *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Much Ado About Nothing*
- **1599** — Globe Theatre is built (Shakespeare is a shareholder); writes *Troilus and Cressida* and *Twelfth Night*
- **1601** — Shakespeare's father dies; writes *Hamlet*
- **1602** — writes *All's Well That Ends Well*
- **1603** — The Lord Chamberlain's Men become The King's Men and perform regularly at court
- **1604** — writes *Measure for Measure* and *Othello*
- **1606** — writes *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra*
- **1608** — Shakespeare's mother dies; The King's Men begin playing at the Blackfriars; writes *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens*
- **1609** — *The Sonnets* are published
- **1609-1611** — writes *Cymbeline*, *Pericles Prince of Tyre*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*
- **1612** — retires from the theatre (aged 48) and returns to live in Stratford
- **1612-1616** — works on new plays with his friend, John Fletcher; they write *Cardenio*, *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*
- **1616** — dies on 23 April

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# Themes, motifs and symbols

The central subject or topic in a work of literature (or art) is referred to as its theme. A sophisticated work will usually explore several, interrelated themes. A motif is a recurring idea or contrast examined in a work of literature and these will usually relate to the themes being explored. There are several major themes and motifs in *The Tempest*.

## Sea journeys

*The Tempest* is a Romance and a key motif in the play is the voyage. This can take the form of exile; remember that Prospero and Miranda were cast out of Milan. We also know that Shakespeare was inspired by accounts of European travellers to the so-called 'New World' across the Atlantic Ocean. To the European imagination, these were voyages of discovery, but, in most cases, they directly or indirectly contributed to colonial conquest, occupation, exploitation and theft in the 'discovered' lands.

In *The Tempest*, the royal party headed by King Alonso is shipwrecked on its return to Naples from the wedding of Alonso's daughter Claribel to the King of Tunis (Tunisia). It seems that this marriage was part of a political strategy: if Alonso was trying to forge an alliance with a north African kingdom, this was probably an attempt to secure his position as the ruler of one of various competing Italian states, or to expand his domain across the Mediterranean sea. *The Tempest* thus encourages us to think in geographical or cartographical terms — that is, in terms of maps and map-making. We should ask: what were the historical and political circumstances (both in Shakespeare's world and 'the world of the play') surrounding the action that takes places on the island?



© courtneyuy (DeviantArt)



© Drew Brophy

The sea journey also has more archetypal associations. It is perilous, but it presents opportunities to those who undertake it: knowledge, wealth, a new identity, perhaps even redemption. This is the meaning of the idiom a 'sea change'. Among the shipwrecked travellers in *The Tempest*, Sebastian, Antonio, Stephano and Trinculo are lured by opportunity and a desire for power; Ferdinand gains love; Alonso receives forgiveness. As Ferdinand exclaims when he discovers that his father is alive: 'Though the seas threaten, they are merciful. / I have cursed them without cause.' (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 178-179)

Travel by sea brings together groups of people — individuals, communities, cultures — that have previously been separated. Families and old friends are reconciled. Yet more commonly the encounter is one of novelty, as expressed by Miranda's excitement at the 'brave new



world' (Act 5, Scene 1, line 183) represented by the group of travellers she sees. Prospero immediately points out her naivety, and the irony of what she has just said, since included among the 'goodly creatures' (Act 5, Scene 1, line 182) she admires are would-be murderers and successful usurpers.



## THE END OF CHINESE MARITIME EXPLORATION... AND THE RISE OF EUROPEAN MARITIME DOMINANCE

Improved technologies of travel made it possible for European explorers to cover 'uncharted' oceans — specifically, the Indian and Atlantic — in the early modern period (from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onward); however, this is only one part of the story. It should also be noted that, prior to the travels of Bartolomeu Dias, Vasco da Gama or Christopher Columbus, Chinese admiral Zheng He (portrayed in the sculpture below, in Malaysia) had traversed the Indian Ocean in multiple naval expeditions for the Yongle Emperor of the Ming Dynasty. Zheng He died in 1433 and, soon after this, the new emperor decided to end the ambitious Chinese programme of maritime exploration.

*An artist's impression of admiral Zheng He returning to China after exploring the eastern coastline of Africa.*



© Chris Odukwu



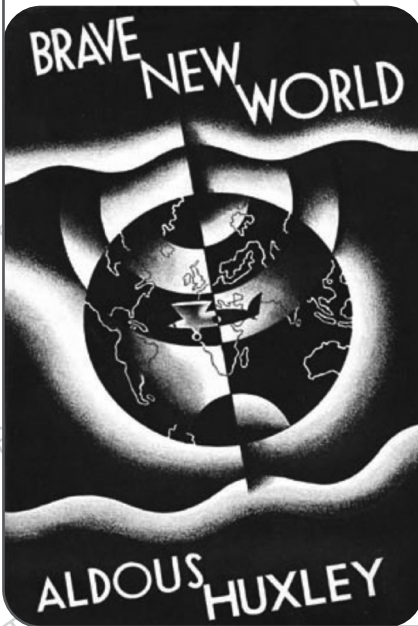
## BRAVE NEW WORLDS

Miranda's words have been taken up by numerous authors, dramatists, film-makers and other artists. Perhaps the most influential of these is Aldous Huxley, whose novel *Brave New World* (published in 1932) has in turn inspired dystopian and science fiction spin-offs on the page and the screen. Huxley imagines a world, five centuries into the future, in which scientific advances have resulted in a highly controlled society; everyone is 'happy' and distracted with pleasurable diversions, but no-one is free.

*The Tempest* has been a significant point of reference for various iconic science fiction and fantasy narratives, from the 1956 movie *The Forbidden Planet* to episodes of *Star Trek*. In these instances, the sea voyage is replaced by journeys across space and time.

© Pyrosity (DeviantArt)

© Bruce Cooke



## Noble savagery?

The transferral of Italian power struggles to the island — the plots of Antonio and Sebastian, and Stephano and Trinculo — is ironic because Shakespeare allows some of his characters to espouse what was then the common notion that travelling to far-away lands allowed Europeans to escape the corruption and vice of their cities and courts.

This appears to be at the heart of Gonzalo's speech in Act Two, Scene One, in which he imagines the creation of a utopian 'commonwealth' on the island: a society in which everyone is equal and free. His speech is full of contradictions, and what he imagines seems impossible — a place in which no-one has to work, yet there is an abundance of food and natural wealth. It seems based on the popular conviction at the time that there were places in the world where the inhabitants enjoy a 'prelapsarian' existence — in Judeo-Christian terms, that they lived as Adam and Eve did before 'The Fall' (the first sin).



© Wangechi Mutu

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## THE TEMPEST

Shakespeare wrote Gonzalo's speech by borrowing from an English translation of French essayist and philosopher Michel de Montaigne's famous account of 'the Cannibals' — the Tupinambá people of Brazil. Montaigne wanted to challenge his European readers not to think of the Tupinambá as barbaric or uncivilised, even though they were cannibals; in fact, their society is depicted as ideal, because it is free of the deceit and violence that underlies European 'civilisation'. Montaigne was philosophically interested in cultural relativism: the idea that different beliefs and practices are not 'good' or 'bad' in themselves, and only seem to be so if they are viewed through one (narrow) cultural lens. Yet his essay appealed to a growing image in the European imagination: of people who lived far away, across the seas, in societies that were more innocent and honest, more in touch with nature and uncorrupted by urban life, money and tainted politics.



*In this engraving by Theodor de Bry from 1590, a Native American or 'Indian' man is portrayed as a 'noble savage' figure.*



*Modern day members of the Tupinambá people of Brazil continue to fight to protect their territory and the forests they consider their sacred companions against loggers and farmers.*

Out of this developed the concept of the 'noble savage', an idea which had positive and negative implications. 'Noble savages' may have been celebrated as innocent, but, by implication, they were also childlike and in need of protection. This perception justified one argument for colonialism, which was that 'advanced' Europeans needed to oversee the 'development' of native peoples, while also signalling that they were vulnerable and the resource-rich lands they occupied were open to exploitation. Furthermore, while 'noble savages' were admired because they were untouched by the greed and excess of so-called 'civilisation', they were, therefore, barbaric and (contradictorily) had to be 'civilised' by force. They were closer to nature, but could, therefore, be treated like animals — they were sub-human.

The relationship between Prospero and Caliban explores these dynamics. Caliban complains that he welcomed Prospero to the island and, as many 'noble savages' did for European explorers, helped him to survive: 'I loved thee / And showed thee all the qualities o'the'isle, / The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile' (Act 2, Scene 1, lines 337-339).



## THE MYTH OF THE NOBLE SAVAGE

The myth of the noble savage is one of the predominant narratives of the modern world. It has inspired countless works of fiction and art, from *Tarzan* and *Conan The Barbarian* to *Pocahontas* and *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*. Other famous movie adaptations of the myth include *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, *Dances With Wolves* and *Avatar*. The enduring popularity of the myth hints at how disturbed we remain by its central question: what do we lose as human beings as we become increasingly reliant on the complex systems that make technologically advanced modern civilisations possible?



© donk50t (DeviantArt)

*The film was a commercial success, but it should be emphasised that the treatment of Xi and other characters was caricatured and problematic.*

*The Gods Must Be Crazy* tells the story of Xi, a hunter-gatherer in the Kalahari Desert and member of the San peoples. When his tribe discovers a glass bottle dropped from an airplane, it is coveted as a gift from their gods and fought over. Xi decides to end the conflict by making a pilgrimage to the edge of the world and disposing of the divisive object. His journey brings him into contact with the modern world for the first time.

Set in 2154, *Avatar* tells the story of the attempted colonisation of a lush alien world called Pandora to mine a mineral needed to solve a dire energy crisis on Earth. To begin extracting the mineral, the mining operation needs to relocate the indigenous population, the Na'vi — a species of 10-foot tall blue humanoids whose technology is limited to basic tools and primitive weapons, but who are deeply

spiritual and live in harmony with nature. As is often the case in noble savage narratives, the main character begins as a member of an advanced 'civilization', but becomes enamoured with certain aspects of the pre-technological society and, as a consequence, is drawn into conflict with unscrupulous people who wish to use their superior technological capabilities to subjugate the indigenous population.



© TsaoShin (DeviantArt)

Despite his ability to sympathise with Caliban's oppression, Shakespeare nonetheless betrays a European bias: Caliban recalls how Prospero 'educated' him. Prospero, for his part, sees Caliban as a rapacious and violent creature — like an animal, he is unable to control his sexual urges and he tried to rape Miranda. Stephano and Trinculo make much of Caliban's physical form; he is, to them, like a sea-creature. Shakespeare appears to be parodying Europeans who see only what their prejudice tells them they should expect: a monster.



© Henry Fuseli (1789)

*'Thou most lying slave,  
Whom stripes may move, not kindness, I have used thee,  
Filth as thou art, with humane care.'*

(Act 1, Scene 2, lines 345-347)

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## Europe and its 'others'

This binary opposition of 'civilised Europe' and 'uncivilised elsewhere' — for instance, Africa, North or South America, Asia — is both an ancient prejudice and, as Shakespeare reminds us, historically short-sighted.

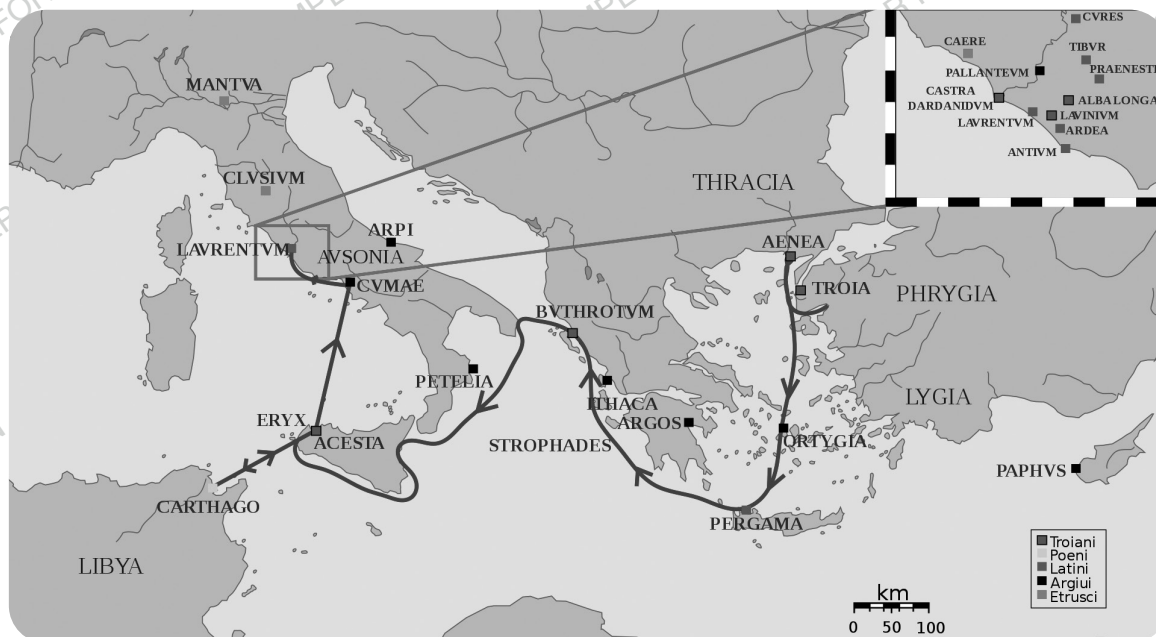
In *The Tempest*, while Gonzalo is discussing the recent trip to Tunis with Sebastian and Adrian, they quibble over the phrase 'widow Dido' (Act 2, Scene 1, line 77). Gonzalo has to explain to them that 'This Tunis, sir, was Carthage' (Act 2, Scene 1, line 84) — a Phoenician city-state founded, according to legend, by Queen Dido.

The Romans had fought in various battles against the Carthaginians, and the myth of Aeneas and Dido was portrayed as the primary cause of this enmity. But the fact is that, over many centuries, from the time of Alexander the Great (fourth century BCE) to the early Roman Empire (first century CE), territories across north Africa along the southern Mediterranean coast were sites of contestation and conquest by Greek and Roman armies. In Sebastian and Adrian's refusal to connect 'Tunis' and 'Carthage', we see the tendency of the early modern European imagination to forget this ancient trans-Mediterranean history and to a preference for viewing 'Europe' and 'Africa' as opposites.



### THE TRAVELS OF AENEAS

According to legend, and as depicted in the epic *The Aeneid* written by the ancient Roman poet Virgil, the hero Aeneas escaped from the city of Troy (in present-day Turkey) when it was destroyed by the Greek army around 1200 BCE. He travelled across the Mediterranean and eventually settled in Italy, where he founded what would become Rome.



Aeneas took refuge in Carthage ('Carthago' in the pictured map) and fell in love with Queen Dido. He wanted to stay, but was visited by the god Mercury and told that he had a duty to fulfil. He sailed from Carthage at night without saying goodbye to Dido; in despair, she killed herself and cursed Aeneas' descendants.

## Land, language and liberty

Although Shakespeare was writing towards the beginning of what we might think of as the colonial era, Caliban is given lines that speak powerfully to the experience of many people around the world who would subsequently be oppressed by European colonisers. Central to this experience, and consequently still a controversial subject in many countries — including South Africa — is the displacement of colonised peoples from their land.

Historical land theft raises the question of land restitution: restoring the land to its rightful owners, or to their descendants. As Caliban says: ‘This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou takest from me’ (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 332-333). Of course, Caliban’s claim raises other questions: how did Sycorax take control of the island? Was she ‘better’ or ‘worse’ than Prospero? (Questions explored in further detail in the ‘Parents and children’ section on page 92.)

Another aspect of the colonial paradigm is the link between language and power. Colonisers bring with them a language that becomes economically and culturally dominant — and that is imposed on those who are colonised. Phrased in its most extreme terms, this means that ‘The language of the conqueror on the lips of the conquered is the language of slaves’. In South Africa, some might see Afrikaans as such a language; but, in the longer history of the country, and if we view our own history in a wider global context, it is perhaps English that is ‘the language of the conqueror’ — the language shaped by Shakespeare, and the language with which he is most often associated, although that needn’t always be the case.



© John Merritt

*‘This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother,  
Which thou takest from me.’*

*(Act 1, Scene 2, lines 332-333)*



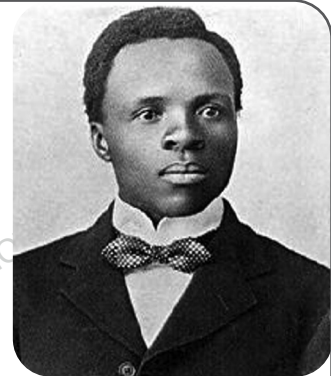
### SHAKESPEARE-IN-TRANSLATION

Did you know that Shakespeare’s plays have been translated into languages other than English for almost 400 years? Some of them may even have been adapted for performance in Germany while Shakespeare was still alive.

For much of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Shakespeare-in-translation was a European affair: in addition to German, there were hundreds of Dutch, French, Italian and other translations in circulation. In South Africa, there are records of Shakespeare-in-translation stretching back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The person who is credited with the first published translation of Shakespeare into an African language is Sol Plaatje, the founding secretary general of the African National Congress and one of the most important historical figures in South Africa.

Plaatje was a political activist and public intellectual, a journalist and historian, as well as a linguist. He was passionate about advancing the cause of Setswana — preserving its heritage as a language while also innovating and creating with it. As part of this project, he translated a handful of Shakespeare’s plays into Setswana. Sadly, only two of these translations have survived; but Plaatje started a tradition that was continued by other South African writers, translators and theatre makers. There are dozens of translations of Shakespeare’s plays into isiZulu, isiXhosa, Afrikaans, Sesotho, Sepedi and Xitsonga.

So, ‘Shakespeare’ does not *have* to mean ‘English’.



Solomon T. Plaatje (1876-1932)





© Dorothy Zhu

'You taught me language, and my profit on 't  
Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you  
For learning me your language!'

(Act 1, Scene 2, lines 364-366)

Caliban expresses the paradoxical relationship that colonised peoples have to the languages of colonisation: 'You taught me language, and my profit on 't / Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 364-366) English is a global *lingua franca* — a language shared by many people — but, although speaking English is empowering and leads to opportunity, the dominance of English is also devastating to other languages. This leads many people who learn English as an additional language to experience a crisis of identity in relation to their 'home' languages. At the same time, many writers and artists have used the English language to critique 'English' colonialism. This has also occurred with other European languages such as French; in the 1960s, Aimé Césaire, a poet and political activist from the island of Martinique (a French colony in the Caribbean), wrote a famous French adaptation of *The Tempest*, *Une Tempête*, as a way of engaging with French colonialism.



## THE 'AFRICAN' TEMPEST

In 2009, the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town and the Royal Shakespeare Company collaborated on a production of *The Tempest* directed by Janice Honeyman, starring John Kani as Caliban and Antony Sher as Prospero. Bright costumes and giant puppets were used to convey the spectacle and magic of the island.

This production emphasised the play's 'colonial' aspects, which seem to make so much sense in a South African context. Yet responses to the production also cautioned against the idea that *The Tempest* is a play that 'works' in 'Africa' — because making this claim seems to essentialise Africa as a place in which the 'spiritual' or 'supernatural' is more at home than in 'secular' Europe.

This version of the play also used Kani's statesman-like presence to give the impression that, in the end, Caliban (representing black people) 'absolves' Prospero (representing white people); in other words, Prospero is forgiven for persecuting and exploiting Caliban.

Do you think Shakespeare's text makes this interpretation feasible? And what are the implications of this interpretation for reconciliation between people of different races in post-apartheid South Africa?



John Kani as Caliban (left), Antony Sher as Prospero (centre) and Atandwa Kani as Ariel (right) in the 2009 Baxter Theatre / RSC 'African' Tempest, directed by Janice Honeyman.

© Baxter Theatre / RSC

## Masters and slaves, rulers and subjects

*The Tempest* explores many of the contradictions, or contrary forces, that emerge when we consider the rules according to which a society operates, and the roles performed by its citizens. Gonzalo suggests that, in the ideal society he would like to build, there would be 'no sovereignty' — that is, there would be no absolute ruler, like a monarch or dictator (Act 2, Scene 1, line 157). In other words, his **utopia** would be democratic and egalitarian (based on the principle of all people being equal). Yet, as Sebastian and Antonio are quick to point out, just a few moments earlier Gonzalo has imagined himself the 'king' of the island; he would make all the laws. Gonzalo admits that his 'commonwealth' is based on 'contraries' — he wants to create the opposite of the social and economic structures that all the European (Italian) characters in the play take for granted.

### What's past is prologue

Was Prospero a poor leader when he was Duke of Milan? He acknowledges that he became so involved in his 'books' that, '[t]hose being all my study, / [t]he government I cast upon my brother / [a]nd to my state grew stranger' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 74-76). In other words, he neglected his responsibilities and expected Antonio to fulfil them without getting the credit or the title of Duke. Could Antonio be justified in exiling Prospero and taking his office? By this logic, the person who rules should be the one who can do the job best, not the one who inherits the title. Or is it more a case of the person who rules being the one who desires power the most — and who is willing to do whatever is necessary to obtain it? By the time Antonio is shipwrecked on the island, this seems to be his guiding principle, which is why he tries to persuade Sebastian to kill Alonso and take the crown as King of Naples. Antonio is often described as a Machiavellian character. What does this mean?

**Machiavelli** was giving advice both to monarchs who would rule with absolute power and to leaders who presided over republics — societies in which more than one person was in charge. This did not include democracy as we understand it today: representative government in which citizens vote for those who will lead them. England would only experiment with republicanism by deposing a monarch (Charles I) decades after Shakespeare died, but the playwright was extremely interested in different forms of government. In his plays set in ancient Rome, and even in his English history plays, characters discuss how to obtain true freedom — and in *The Tempest*, Caliban and Ariel both seek freedom from Prospero's rule. Is Prospero a tyrant on the island, cruelly controlling his 'subjects'? Or does he use his magic to be a kind of 'benevolent dictator'?

### UTOPIA: A NO-PLACE?

The word 'utopia' — used to describe an ideal or perfect society — was coined by Thomas More as the title of a book he published in 1516. More's book was intended as a satire that would criticise aspects of life in 16<sup>th</sup> century England; but the island of Utopia that he describes has its own quirks and foibles. The point is that a perfect society is impossible, as suggested by the word *utopia* itself: translated from Greek, it means 'non-place' or 'no-place'.



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**Niccolò Machiavelli** (1469-1527) was an Italian diplomat and political philosopher whose book *The Prince* helped to shape Renaissance thinking about leadership. *The Prince* (1513) distilled Machiavelli's advice to rulers, emphasising political strategies rather than questions of morality — although, arguably, the Machiavellian principle that 'the ends justify the means' (certain cruel or violent acts may be necessary in order to achieve an outcome that is beneficial to one's subjects) entails debates about moral action. Machiavelli's name has, perhaps unfairly, become associated with unscrupulous politicians and with the politics of deceit and corruption.



Crucial to questions about who rules and who is ruled in any society is the problem of labour. Gonzalo imagines that 'nature' will produce everything his utopian society needs, so there will be no 'sweat or endeavour' (Act 2, Scene 1, line 161). If no-one is required to work because of the abundance of nature, it is much easier to say that there will be no commerce or trade ('traffic', line 149), no laws, no gap between rich and poor, no servants, no private property, and no crime. Is this possible? Who will do the work? What is the 'value' of labour? How should workers be paid? Who 'owns' what workers produce? These economic and ethical questions lead to fundamental debates about what have subsequently been defined as the competing models of socialism and capitalism.

Ariel, Caliban and Ferdinand offer different expressions of the meaning and value of labour in *The Tempest*. Perhaps the most obvious is Caliban's enslavement to Prospero. 'We cannot miss him,' says Prospero to Miranda (Act 1, Scene 2, line 312) — in other words, we can't do without him — because Caliban does all the menial work: 'He does make our fire, / Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices / That profit us' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 312-314). Interestingly, in Act Three, Prospero gives Caliban's task of carrying wood to Ferdinand as a kind of test. Is Ferdinand willing to subject himself to Prospero's authority for the sake of Miranda? If he temporarily undertakes a role below his 'status' as a prince — a person who would not ordinarily undertake manual labour — he will be 'rewarded' with Prospero's approval and can marry Miranda.



© cut-box (DeviantArt)

*'If thou neglect'st or dost unwillingly  
What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps,  
Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar  
That beasts shall tremble at thy din.'*

(Act 1, Scene 2, lines 369-372)



*'There be some sports are painful, and their labour  
Delight in them sets off; some kinds of baseness  
Are nobly undergone; and most poor matters  
Point to rich ends. This my mean task  
Would be as heavy to me as odious, but  
The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead  
And makes my labours pleasures.'*

(Act 3, Scene 1, lines 1-7)

## Parents and children, brothers and sisters

Prospero is the ultimate paternalistic or patriarchal figure — his claim to authority rests on his identity as a father: to Miranda, but also indirectly to Caliban ('this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine', Act 5, Scene 1, lines 275-276), to Ariel and even to his future son-in-law Ferdinand. As father to Miranda, Prospero seems to be kind and gentle, but he also exercises strict control over her. He can be condescending towards her, even though he is the one responsible for her naivety and ignorance about the world. He seems especially to want to protect her 'honour' (Act 1, Scene 2, line 349) and her 'virgin-knot' (Act 4, Scene 1, line 15), and to be uncomfortable with her sexuality — partly, perhaps, because this means she is growing (or has already grown) from a girl into an adult.

Hovering in the background of the play are absent mother-figures. We know nothing about Miranda's mother, or Ferdinand and Claribel's mother. We are, however, told a little about Caliban's mother Sycorax. Unsurprisingly, there are competing accounts.

Caliban claims ownership of the island through inheritance: 'This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother' (Act 1, Scene 2, line 332). Yet, according to Prospero, Sycorax also arrived as a kind of coloniser on the island, having been expelled from Argier (or Algiers, the capital of present-day Algeria — in other words, not far from Tunis/Carthage) while she was pregnant with Caliban. There are thus strong parallels between Prospero and the 'foul witch' Sycorax (Act 1, Scene 2, line 258), although Prospero insists that there is no comparison between his own 'art' or magic and the 'mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible' committed by Sycorax (Act 1, Scene 2, line 264). When Prospero wants to scold Ariel for asking for freedom, he recalls how Sycorax imprisoned Ariel







© Metropolitan Opera

Joyce DiDonato as Sycorax in the Metropolitan Opera's *The Enchanted Island*, a 2011 adaptation of *The Tempest* that re-introduces Sycorax into the narrative.

Prospero's dukedom. This introduces a different set of axes by which we can understand the relationships in the play: not between parents and children, but between siblings. The royal brother and sister, Alonso's children (prince) Ferdinand and (princess) Claribel, have been separated. One of them has been married off, the other is thought dead — and so Antonio encourages Sebastian to kill his own brother and become king. The Antonio/Prospero and Sebastian/Alonso stories are reminiscent of the biblical brothers, Cain and Abel.

*'If this prove  
A vision of the island, one dear son  
Shall I twice lose.'*

(Act 5, Scene 1, lines 175-177)

inside the trunk of a pine tree because Ariel refused to obey her 'abhorred commands' (Act 1, Scene 2, line 273) — so Prospero, according to this account, is a liberator. Do we believe what he says about Sycorax? Does this mitigate our opinion of the way in which he has oppressed Caliban?

The other parent-child pairing in the play is Alonso and Ferdinand. It is clear from the way this father and son grieve for one another at the beginning of the play — each thinking that the other has drowned — that theirs is a tender relationship. Yet Alonso has an ambiguous past; he was one of those who helped Antonio to steal



© Anna Carl

## Creation/creativity and divinity

There are various other biblical allusions, and direct quotations from the Bible, in *The Tempest*. Early on in the play, Caliban reminds Prospero that when he first came to the island they cooperated; Prospero taught Caliban 'how / To name the bigger light, and how the less, / That burn by day and night' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 335-337). This reference alludes to the Biblical creation story when God made the sun and the moon. In the Bible, the book of Genesis depicts God 'naming' his cosmic creations and then teaching humans to give names to the earthly animals he has created.



© gekitsu (DeviantArt)



© Kuffy-Sark (DeviantArt)

Fusing these associations together, Prospero becomes like God — or, at least, a god. Although Prospero uses the language of the Judaeo-Christian spiritual realm (for example, when he describes the baby Miranda as a ‘cherubin’ that helped to save him from drowning at sea after he was exiled from Milan), the spirits he commands on the island seem to fit into a ‘pagan’ theology. And, of course, he summons the ancient Greco-Roman goddesses Juno, Ceres and Iris to perform the masque for Miranda and Ferdinand. So Prospero blurs the lines between the Christian

and the pagan, which would probably have been both subversive and familiar for Shakespeare's audience members — many of whom still held on to traditional ‘pre-Christian’ beliefs (even though these were frowned on by the authorities) alongside their professed Christianity.

At the end of the play, Prospero takes it upon himself to forgive everyone — again adopting the role of the Judaeo-Christian God. Yet he also resigns his magical powers, thus shifting from a god-like figure to a modest (indeed, frail) old man.

## Magic and meta-theatre: Prospero as Shakespeare

King James is well-known for overseeing a translation of the Bible. For people who are familiar with what is nowadays referred to as the King James Version of the Bible, this is a useful point of reference in the encounter with early modern English — ‘Shakespeare's English’. Yet he was also fascinated by magic, and black magic in particular; he wrote three books on subjects ranging from witchcraft to demons and other supernatural figures like werewolves and vampires. Shakespeare consulted these while he wrote *Macbeth*, a few years before he wrote *The Tempest*.



© Anna Carli

In this woodcut illustration from King James' three-part volume *Daemonologie* (1597), the author is shown endorsing the punishment of a group of women accused of witchcraft. James may have been obsessed with magic and sorcery, but he certainly did not approve. He was actively involved in witch hunts and witch trials before he became King of England (he was already King of Scotland).

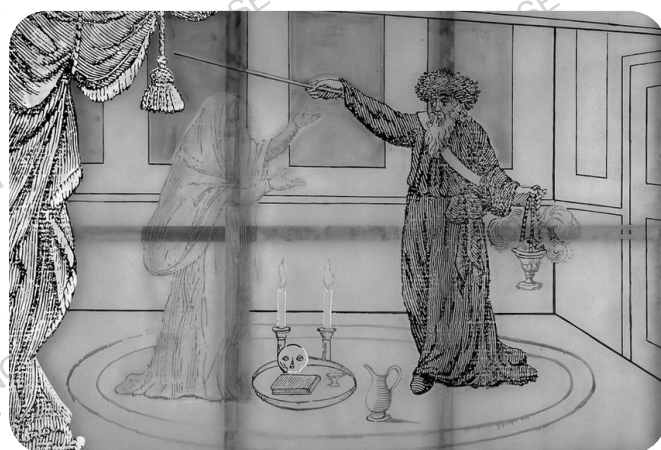
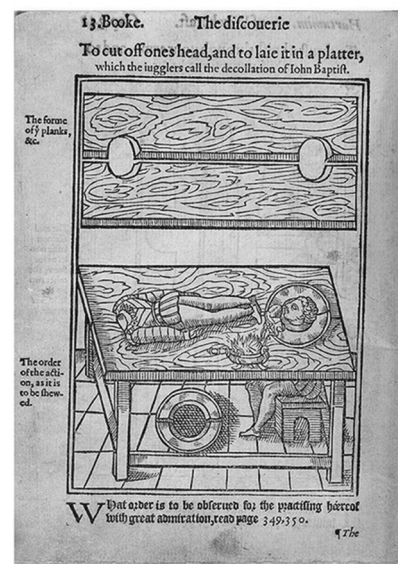
Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that Shakespeare knew that the ‘art’ of Prospero and Sycorax — their powers as conjurers, whether used for good or ill — would appeal to the imagination of his royal patron. Remember that Shakespeare's theatre company was re-named The King's Men when James was crowned after Queen Elizabeth's death; Shakespeare's plays were intended for the public but were also performed privately as commanded by the monarch.





## A DIFFERENT VIEW ON WITCHCRAFT

In 1584, before King James produced his studies on enchantment and dark magic, Reginald Scot published a book titled *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* — ‘discovery’ in this instance meaning ‘debunking’. Scot demonstrated that so-called magic was little more than a visual illusion (a ‘trick of the eye’) and that belief in the supernatural was just that: a psychological phenomenon rather than an experience of something ‘real’. This image from Scot’s book shows how one can fake a beheading. James, as King of Scotland and subsequently as King of England, suppressed Scot’s book and — according to some accounts — ordered copies of it to be burned.



© Signar Polke (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art)

As noted in the section on ‘Literary context’, towards the end of Shakespeare’s career (when he was writing *The Tempest*) the colourful pageants known as masques were very popular — primarily because they were promoted by King James’ court. It seems clear that Shakespeare was also catering for the king’s preference for spectacle.

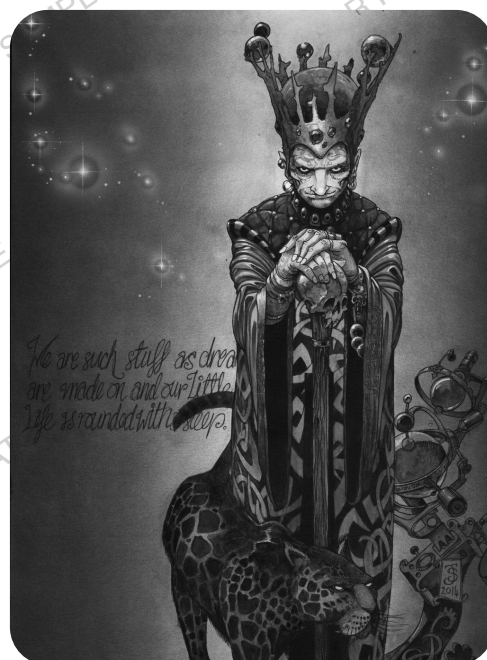
These two royal interests — magic and spectacle — are fused in *The Tempest*. Shakespeare exploits the blurring of the lines between the supernatural and the

artificial illusion to encourage his audience to reflect on the experience of watching a play *while they are watching a play*! This is called meta-theatre: theatre about theatre. Shakespeare makes some bold claims about the power of theatre, and this also leads to some profound questions about the nature of human existence.

We are constantly reminded that characters’ perceptions, even if these are inaccurate, become their reality. If Ferdinand thinks his father is dead, then his father is dead (although the audience knows otherwise). Ariel, as a supernatural presence, or an illusion — a voice heard ‘inside’ Ferdinand’s head? — seems to influence or confirm this perception on Ferdinand’s part in the song ‘Full fathom five thy father lies’ (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 397-402).

‘My high charms work,  
And these mine enemies are all knit up  
In their distractions. They now are in my power;  
And in these fits I leave them.’

(Act 3, Scene 3, lines 88-91)



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Under the influence of alcohol, another potential cause of hallucination or illusion, Stephano thinks he sees (or smells) a fish and so, to him, Caliban must be a sea-creature. As noted earlier, his European brain has also been conditioned to see racial 'others' as monstrous (a different form of illusion, or rather delusion).

## Reality is what we believe it to be

Is it not the case that, if we are persuaded that something is real, then we believe that reality? Within the world of the play, there are actual supernatural forces in operation that make the impossible into the possible, or that warp reality. Outside the play — that is, in the 'real world' of the theatre, where people have gathered to watch a play — it is clear that these supernatural



© Teatro Tribuene

forces are imitations; they are 'fake'. The actor playing Caliban 'pretends' that he is being physically tormented by Prospero's spirits. We call this pretence performance, and it is no different to the actors playing Ferdinand and Miranda 'pretending' to be in love, or Antonio and Sebastian 'pretending' to be villains. In addition to acting as a form of illusion, we have the tricks of staging: sound and lighting effects to create a storm, perhaps a flying rig or the use of animation to convey Ariel as an 'airy spirit'.

Thus, Prospero as magician controlling the world of the island — conjuring storms, manipulating or commanding other characters, causing and resolving confusion, creating magical pageants — is no different from Shakespeare as playwright controlling the world he has created.

Shakespeare did not have any digital or virtual-reality technology on which to call, although he and his colleagues did use some basic special effects, props, and costuming to make their theatrical illusion seem 'realistic'.

With *The Tempest*, especially when it was performed indoors, they would have followed the fashion for spectacle set by King James and his enthusiasm for masques. Yet Shakespeare's audiences used to say that they went to 'hear' a play, not to 'see' it. It is through his words alone — and not through either masques or magic — that Shakespeare, like Prospero, has:

- controlled the weather ('bedimmed / The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds, / And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault / Set roaring war', Act 5, Scene 1, lines 41-44);
- created and destroyed landscapes ('to th' dread rattling thunder / Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak / With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory / Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up / The pine and cedar', Act 5, Scene 1, lines 44-48);

and

- brought the dead to life ('graves at my command / Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth / By my so potent art', Act 5, Scene 1, lines 48-50).







© Psico Teatro



© Peter Kogler

There is a kind of unspoken contract between theatre makers and their audiences. Members of the audience need to agree to be susceptible — to be fooled into temporarily experiencing the play-world as a real world — in order to be transported into the world depicted on stage. We call this act the ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ and it allows the audience to share the experiences of the actors on stage — to gain insights and empathetic understanding by experiencing the depicted events and emotions vicariously.

If the audience has been spellbound by Shakespeare’s conjuring trick, and has accepted that reality is perception and vice-versa, then how meaningful is our certainty that the world outside the theatre is any more ‘real’ than what we have seen on stage? In this ‘real’ world, too, there is plenty of pretending, performance, and illusion — and ‘reality’ is only what we perceive or believe it to be.

## Musical motifs

The word motif is, of course, first and foremost a musical term. It refers to a series of notes or a musical ‘phrase’ that is repeated in different ways throughout a longer piece of music. In this way it creates a musical ‘theme’ — something that recurs throughout the composition. Music is a theme in its own right in *The Tempest*: there are a handful of songs, as is the case in most of Shakespeare’s plays, but characters also speak *about* music, and music is part of the island’s magic.

We have already referred to Ariel’s song early in the play (*‘Full fathom five thy father lies’*), which seems to comfort Ferdinand as he grieves the loss of his father, but also casts a spell over him. When he reappears on stage, Ferdinand is following the sound of Ariel’s song *‘Come unto these yellow sands’* (Act 1, Scene 2, line 376).

Indeed, most of Ariel’s interventions in the play include some form of song or music. In Act Two, Scene One, Ariel sings into Gonzalo’s ear to wake him up and prevent Antonio and Sebastian’s murderous plans; he presumably directs the music and song of the masque in Act Four; and in Act Five, as he prepares to help Prospero one last time before being released, he sings *‘Merrily, merrily shall I live now...’* (Act 5, Scene 1, line 93).



© Dorothy Zhu

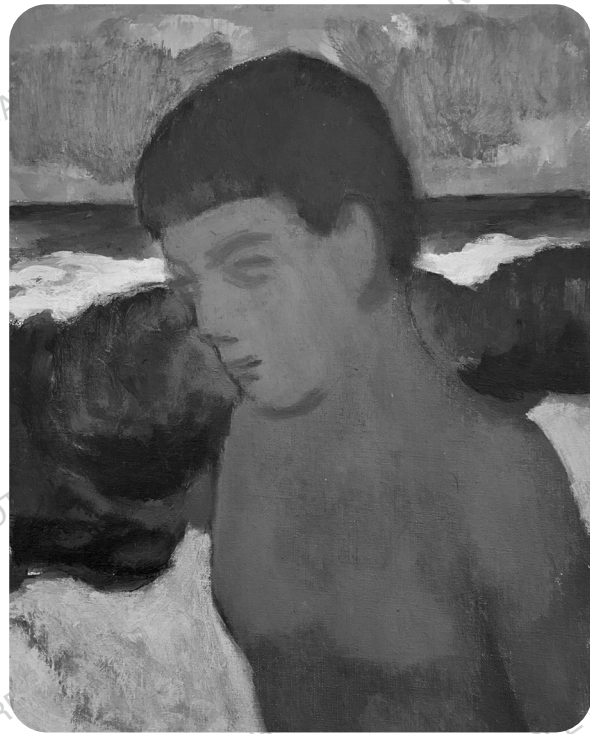
*‘While you here do snoring lie,  
Open-eyed conspiracy  
His time doth take.  
If of life you keep a care,  
Shake off slumber and beware.  
Awake, awake!’*

(Act 2, Scene 1, lines 301-306)

Stephano and Trinculo, by contrast, sing crude sailors' songs when they are drunk. Their 'bad' music is, in turn, contrasted with Caliban's sincere celebration of the soothing musical sounds of the island: 'The isle is full of noises, / Sounds, and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not. / Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments / Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices ...' (Act 3, Scene 2, lines 135-138).

*'Where should this music be? I' th' air, or th' earth?  
It sounds no more; and sure it waits upon  
Some god o' th' island. Sitting on a bank,  
Weeping again the King my father's wrack,  
This music crept by me upon the waters,  
Allaying both their fury and my passion  
With its sweet air. Thence I have followed it,  
Or it hath drawn me rather. But 'tis gone.  
No, it begins again.'*

(Act 1, Scene 2, lines 388-396)



© Akos Biro

*The Tempest* has been described as Shakespeare's most musical play. Many composers over the years have embraced the challenge of writing new melodies for the songs. Stage and screen productions often make use of musical motifs to weave the narrative and the setting into a 'soundscape'.

## Symbols

### Ships and islands

There are only two settings or 'locations' in *The Tempest*: the ship (although it is thought to have sunk and disappears after Act 1, Scene 1) and the island (although there are plenty of other places 'offstage', where action has taken place in the prehistory of the play, such as Milan, Naples, Tunis/Carthage and Argier/Algiers).

The ship and the island would appear to be very different spaces, literally and figuratively. The ship moves, the island is fixed; the ship is vulnerable to wind and storm, the island offers refuge. Through the coloniser-colonised lens or dynamic, the ship is arguably associated with the adventurer/explorer/settler and the island with the native/indigenous/dispossessed person.

In other ways, though, the ship and the island are similar. They are both self-contained, isolated spaces. They both host micro-societies, small groups or mini-communities that are usually governed by fixed rules: on a ship, there is a clear chain of command and on Prospero's island there is a strict hierarchy. In *The Tempest*, as is common in Shakespearean romances and comedies, this order is disrupted and there is contestation over who is in charge.



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A boatswain, who is the senior member of the crew on a ship but is still subordinate to the captain and other senior officers, would not be expected to insult and instruct a group of aristocrats — yet in the first scene, the Boatswain declares that there is no place for the expected social conduct of respect and politeness when you're fighting a stormy sea: 'What cares these / roarers for the name of king?' (Act 1, Scene 1, lines 16-17) Likewise, the shipwreck means that life on the island becomes a series of challenges to authority: Caliban, Stephano, Trinculo, Sebastian and Antonio all plan revolutions.



### THE RED DRAGON — SHAKESPEARE PREMIERES IN AFRICA?

On the subject of ships as stages ... there are only a few stories about performances of Shakespeare's plays that occurred during his lifetime, but one of the most vivid — although it is likely a fabrication — involves a group of sailors on board a merchant ship called the *Red Dragon*.

The story told is that in 1607, while the ship lay at anchor off the west coast of Africa (near present-day Sierra Leone), Captain William Keeling urged his crew to rehearse and perform *Hamlet* to keep them from 'idleness and unlawful games, or sleepe'. It is possible that he repeated this strategy a year later, this time with a production of *Richard II* off the east coast of the continent (near the island of Socotra).

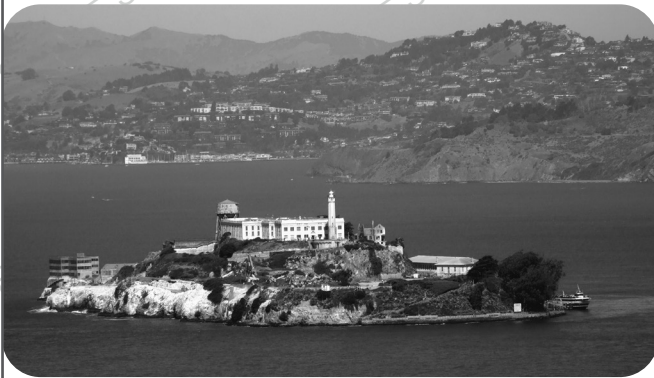
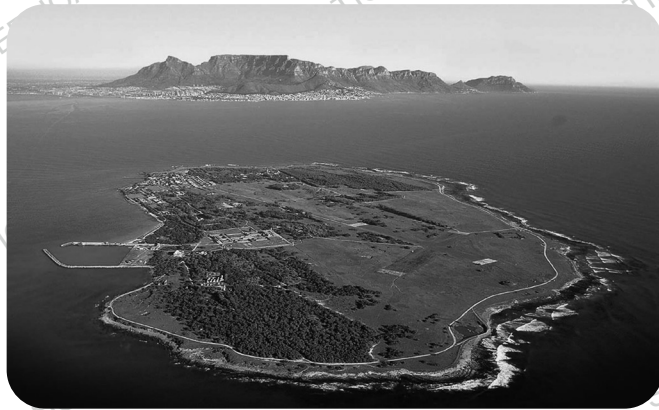
If these events occurred, it is significant that the performances took place not on African soil but at sea — and, more specifically, on board a ship in the service of the East India Company. Keeling's onboard theatrics can be seen as part of the long story of Shakespeare's co-option into British imperialism.

The ship and the island likely held the same appeal to Shakespeare: they are good settings in which to conduct some 'social experiments'. In this way, they are both like theatre stages as well: they are confined areas in which the action of a story will be played out and resolved in one way or another.



## THE ISLAND AS A PRISON

Many islands around the world have been used as prisons and the connotation of 'island' with 'prison' is a strong one for South Africans because of Robben Island. Located 6.9 kilometres off the coast of Bloubergstrand, north of Cape Town, Robben Island has been a leper colony, an animal quarantine station and, famously, a prison for political activists. The island is known for being the place former South African president Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 18 of his 27 years in jail. It has since been declared a World Heritage Site and converted into a museum as a reminder of the power of the human spirit, the importance of freedom, and the victory of democracy over oppression.



© Matt Campbell (Corbis)

Other famous prison islands include Alcatraz Island, located 2 kilometres off the coast of San Francisco in California. The US Army built a fort on the island in 1858 and it began being used as a military prison three years later. Nicknamed 'The Rock', the island became a federal prison in 1934 and the penitentiary has famously claimed that not one of the 1 576 prisoners it held during its 27 years of operation escaped successfully.

Older than Alcatraz is the tiny tropical island prison of Fort Jefferson. The island is located off the coast of Florida, 109 kilometres west of the island of Key West, and was operated as a prison between 1861 to 1889. At the time, being sent to Fort Jefferson was considered to be a fate worse than death. It meant hard labour in the blazing sun, with little food and a scarcity of fresh water. It also meant facing swarms of mosquitoes, ferocious tropical storms and hurricanes, and bouts of malaria and yellow fever. Each prisoner dragged around a 13kg iron ball chained to his ankle while working day and night to build the enormous brick structure.



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## The staff and the book

Along with his robe or 'mantle', Prospero's staff (a long stick, which he uses as a kind of wand) and his book/s are the symbols of his magical power. There is some ambiguity in their symbolic associations, nonetheless.

The staff could also be seen as a source of physical — rather than 'metaphysical' or spiritual — power. In productions of the play, he often uses it to beat Caliban, evoking the violence of colonial rule: in these instances, the staff functions like the whip or the sjambok. If Prospero is the parent/master and Caliban is the child/slave, according to the mentality of colonial paternalism, then Prospero's rule seems to be 'spare the rod and spoil the child' (although he doesn't apply this to Miranda).



© L. Jagi Lampighter

Prospero refers both to his 'books' and his 'book'. His 'books' seem to be the texts that he studied in Milan as he became distracted from his responsibilities as duke; these could have been books of history, poetry, science, philosophy, fiction ... what do you think Prospero's books contained? They helped to shape his world view, for better and for worse.

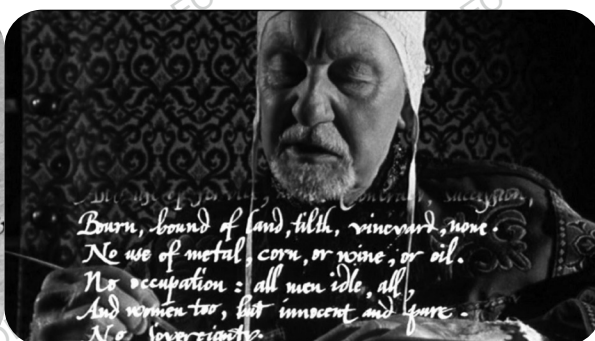
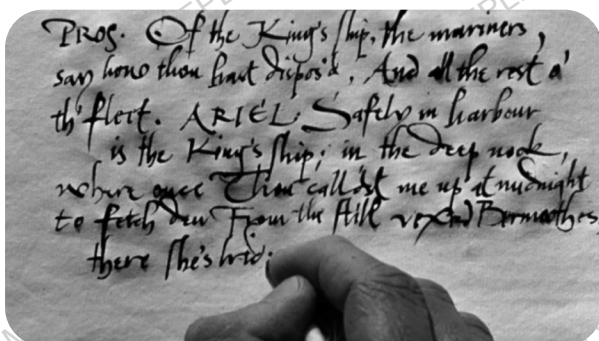
In the late medieval and early modern periods, 'science' (in Latin, *scientia* = knowledge) blurred with the 'art' of magic. At some point, Prospero's reading shifted from scholarship to the supernatural. Along the way, his books — a metonym for education and knowledge — became merged into one 'book', which stands for his ability to wield supernatural power.

When Prospero was exiled from Milan, Gonzalo helped him by giving him provisions to survive at sea and, 'Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me / From mine own library with volumes that / I prize above my dukedom' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 166-168). By the time the action of the play starts, Prospero has only one book and, ultimately, he returns to Milan without it: 'I'll break my staff, / Bury it certain fathoms in the earth, / And deeper than did ever plummet sound / I'll drown my book' (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 54-57).



### REMEMBER FIRST TO POSSESS HIS BOOKS

*Prospero's Books* (1991), directed by Peter Greenaway, is one of many film adaptations of *The Tempest*. It explores, through various visual cues, the complex symbolism of Prospero's books in Shakespeare's play. One possibility it suggests is that Prospero is also producing a book, writing the script for his own story — another way of comparing Prospero and Shakespeare.



© Saskia Boddeke & Peter Greenaway Projects

## Goddesses: Ceres, Juno, Iris

© Imogen Cunningham (Feminist Art Museum)



The masque that Prospero conjures for Ferdinand and Miranda is heavy with symbolism. Spirits perform the roles of three ancient Greek/Roman goddesses: Iris, Juno and Ceres. Iris is the messenger for Juno — the queen of the gods — so it is appropriate that she appears first. She summons Ceres, the goddess of agriculture, to give her blessing to the couple. There are various possible connotations in this case.

*'A contract of true love to celebrate,  
And some donation freely to estate  
On the blest lovers.'*

(Act 4, Scene 1, lines 84-86)

Ceres represents healthy soil, a bountiful crop and a good harvest; she is therefore associated with fertility, and so bears the promise of the couple conceiving and having a child after they are married. An abundance of crops also stands for wealth. A more sinister symbolism might be identified if we remember that the island evokes the plantations in the 'New World' of the Americas, where the economy was based on forced labour for agricultural produce that could be sent back to Europe.

*'Who with thy saffron wings upon my flowers  
Diffusest honey drops, refreshing showers;  
And with each end of thy blue bow dost crown  
My bosky acres and my unshrubb'd down...'*

(Act 4, Scene 1, lines 78-81)



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Juno also wishes the couple riches and 'increasing' (having a family — in other words, creating royal heirs to the throne of Naples and the dukedom of Milan). In addition, she emphasises honour. This partly echoes Prospero's concern about Miranda's sexual 'honour' and his warning to Ferdinand not to have sex with her until they are married. 'Honour' is also associated with power; Juno is herself a queen, at the top of the hierarchy of the gods, and so she is a symbol of authority. In ancient Rome, she was the patron goddess of the city and the state and she stood for law and order. She may be 'chosen' by Prospero as one of the figures blessing Ferdinand and Miranda to remind them that their marriage will help to restore the social order and achieve greater political stability.

## The Great Globe itself

Finally, then, we come to Prospero's famous speech, which he utters after the comforting illusion of the wedding masque has been shattered and which includes the immortal lines:



© Max Stock Photo (Shutterstock)

*'[T]he great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind.'*

*(Act 4, Scene 1, lines 153-156)*

Not too long before Shakespeare's time, it was still widely held that the earth was flat. Those in power had even persecuted geographers who said that it was round. Consequently,

there was still an element of excitement about 'the globe' — the world as a sphere — in early modern England. This had many implications. Imagining the Earth as a planet, only one among infinite celestial objects, had the potential to change the way humans saw their place in the cosmos and their relationship with the divine. At the same time, a spherical earth could more readily be explored, mapped and understood.

A 'planetary consciousness' should, we know, create a sense of shared experience and mutual obligation among its inhabitants; this may, indirectly, have informed the development of Renaissance humanism, although Europeans still tended not to think in universal humanist terms (they saw themselves as distinct from 'others' who lived in exotic locations across the seas). So, the globe simultaneously symbolises knowledge, exploration and wonder on the one hand, and fear, conquest and control on the other.

Christian theology teaches that the world will experience an apocalypse; it will be destroyed, in one way or another, and a 'new Earth' will replace it. So, even though Prospero is using hyperbole to make a point — that nothing lasts forever, and everything is ephemeral, like the temporary illusion of a masque or a play — there is also an 'end of times' ring to his vision of the globe itself dissolving. Moreover, in our era of climate change and the threat of ecological collapse, this vision takes on a new meaning.



## The Globe Theatre

Prospero-Shakespeare, winking at the audience, also had another ‘globe’ in mind: the Globe Theatre. *The Tempest* would likely have been performed there; it would also have been performed indoors at the Blackfriars Theatre nearby, but even in that setting the Globe’s renown would have given Prospero’s lines a double meaning.

The Globe, with its circular construction, offered the intimacy of an audience seated or standing around the thrust stage. It was its own sphere, but also offered an obvious metaphor: the entire world was contained ‘inside’ the Globe because the actors could set their story anywhere on earth.

### What did the theatre represent then?

What did the Globe Theatre represent to Elizabethan and Jacobean society? For some, perhaps, it was a symbol of creativity and exalted dramatic poetry. To others, it was a form of popular entertainment — after all, next door you could go and watch bear-baiting or cock-fighting. Among the more puritanical, it stood for sin and depravity; prostitutes solicited clients there, actors could speak foul language onstage, diseases could spread, and immoral behaviour was encouraged. The twin associations of being unhygienic and being subversive meant that the Globe and theatres like it were regularly closed.

In the end, Prospero’s words were prescient: the Globe did not dissolve, but on 29 June 1613, it burned to the ground after the thatch roof caught alight as a result of the firing of a stage cannon. It was rebuilt the following year, and there were three more decades of playmaking there, but, in 1642, it closed permanently when theatres were banned by a disapproving parliament. The physical structure of the Globe Theatre, like the towers, palaces and temples listed by Prospero, proved to be as transient as the temporary worlds created on its stage.

### What does Shakespeare’s theatre symbolise today?

The Globe Theatre was reconstructed and reopened as ‘Shakespeare’s Globe’ in 1997. What does it symbolise today? London as a tourist destination? English cultural capital? The two meanings of ‘the great globe’ were on display in 2012 when, in the year of the London Olympics, the Globe to Globe Festival brought theatre makers from across the world to Shakespeare’s Globe, where they put on 37 productions in 37 languages. This was a demonstration of the global appeal of Shakespeare’s work, and the fact that he belongs to ‘the whole world’ — not just to England and to English. At the same time, however, it was an act of tribute: a pilgrimage or homecoming, bringing Shakespeare back to the imperial ‘centre’ (the British Empire was, after all, the main reason that his plays spread across the globe in the first place).

In 2020, as theatres and cultural institutions around the world felt the impact of COVID-19 — no audiences and no income — Shakespeare’s Globe announced that it would have to close down if it did not receive some form of government funding. So perhaps, in this light, the Globe is not an ‘English’ or ‘British’ symbol. Instead, it symbolises the possibilities and the precariousness of theatre-making everywhere.



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The South African contribution to the Globe to Globe Festival in London in 2012 was *uVenas noAdonisi* by the Isango Ensemble. This adaptation of Shakespeare's narrative poem 'Venus and Adonis' was performed in multiple South African languages. Sadly, it has not appeared on South Africa's stages.



## Key Facts:

- **Full title:** *The Tempest*
- **Author:** William Shakespeare
- **Type of work:** Play
- **Genre:** Romance
- **Language:** English
- **Composed (time and place):** England, between 1610 and 1611
- **Published:** 1623 (in the First Folio)
- **Tone:** playful, magical, threatening, hopeful, mischievous, chaotic
- **Setting:** A remote and mysterious island
- **Protagonist:** Prospero
- **Antagonists:** Caliban, Antonio, Sebastian, Stephano, Trinculo
- **Conflict:** Prospero is seeking revenge on the men who betrayed him 12 years before. He orchestrates a storm to have them shipwrecked on the island. Caliban wants his freedom from Prospero and encourages Stephano and Trinculo to help him murder the sorcerer.
- **Rising action:** Miranda and Ferdinand meet and fall in love. Prospero tests their relationship and feelings by obstructing their romance. Antonio and Sebastian plot to kill Alonso and Gonzalo as they sleep. Ariel wakes them just in time. Caliban meets Stephano and Trinculo and decides to worship them as gods.
- **Climax:** Miranda and Ferdinand decide to marry. Caliban persuades Stephano to kill Prospero in his sleep and take Miranda as his bride. Prospero arranges a phantom banquet for Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian. Ariel, disguised as a harpy, admonishes them for what they did to Prospero and makes the banquet vanish.
- **Falling action:** Prospero consents to Miranda and Ferdinand's marriage, and delights the lovers with a vision of goddesses. Prospero sends spirits in the form of angry dogs to chase Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo. Prospero forgives Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian. Prospero's dukedom is restored to him and the group plans to leave the island so that Miranda can marry Ferdinand in Naples and Prospero can return to Milan.
- **Foreshadowing:** The Boatswain's disregard for the king in the opening scene foreshadows the disruption of normal social hierarchies that takes place on the island; Prospero's recounting of the events that preceded his arrival on the island foreshadows how quickly the fortunes of characters can change, and Miranda's wish to meet Gonzalo foreshadows the reunion that follows; the individual reactions of Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian to Ariel's condemnation and the loss of the banquet foreshadows their individual responses to Prospero's attempts at forgiveness and reconciliation; Prospero's admission that his obsession with studying magic cost him his dukedom foreshadows his decision to renounce magic and be restored as the Duke of Milan, and his decision is also considered as foreshadowing Shakespeare's own retirement from the theatre.
- **Themes and motifs:** sea journeys/voyages of discovery; the myth of the noble savage; Europe and its 'others'; land, language and liberty; masters and slaves, rulers and subjects; parents and children, brothers and sisters; creation/creativity and divinity; magic and meta-theatre; music.
- **Symbols:** ships and islands; the staff and book; goddesses, and the globe.



# Summaries and analyses

## Using this section

*Working through the play act by act ensures that solid foundations of knowledge are laid and then gradually and effectively built on. Learners are not required to deal with the whole play until they have worked through it step by step. In this section, each act is broken down into its constituent scenes, each of which is summarised and analysed separately. Learners are then required to engage with each scene directly through scene-specific questions that require them to refer to the text closely.*

At the end of each act, learners will find essay questions pertaining to that act, accompanied by a selection of enrichment tasks. In the 'Literary essay' section that follows these summaries, there is also a wide selection of rigorous, intertextual essay topics, ensuring that students also tackle the play in its entirety. (The marking rubrics for the enrichment tasks and essays can be found on the companion CD.)

## Act One

### Summary of Act One

The play opens with a boat caught in an fierce storm. The king, Alonso, and his son Ferdinand are aboard the ship along with other members of the royal court. After the boatswain chastises them for getting in the way of the crew, the passengers all return below deck to pray. Three of the nobles – Sebastian, Antonio and Gonzalo – return to the deck. Sebastian and Antonio argue with the boatswain while Gonzalo tries to persuade them to join the king below deck. The ship splits and they all rush to the king's side.

Meanwhile on a nearby island, Miranda watches the boat sink. Prospero, her father, reveals that he created the storm to benefit her, and none of the passengers were harmed. Prospero then reveals the full story of how they came to be on the island. He was once the Duke of Milan but became engrossed in his studies of magic. He trusted his brother, Antonio, to take care of his duties in his stead, but Antonio betrayed him and stole his dukedom. Prospero and Miranda were forced to flee Milan, but Gonzalo was able to give them supplies and some of Prospero's books before they left. These helped them to survive on the island, as well as provide an education for Miranda.



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*'Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea/ for an acre of barren ground' (Act 1, Scene 1, lines 65-66).*

Gonzalo wishes to be on dry land as the boat splits and begins to sink.

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Prospero lulls Miranda into a magical sleep. His faithful spirit-servant, Ariel, appears. It is revealed that Ariel was responsible for the storm and ensured the safety of the passengers. Prospero praises him for his good work, and they have a short argument about when Ariel will be set free. Ariel is reminded of how Prospero saved him from the tree in which the evil witch Sycorax had imprisoned him for not following her commands. After Prospero threatens to return him to the tree, Ariel agrees to continue assisting Prospero in his plans. Prospero orders Ariel to become like a sea nymph – invisible to everyone except him.

Prospero wakes Miranda and says they must visit Caliban, Sycorax's son whom Prospero has kept as a servant. Ariel returns and Prospero whispers instructions into the spirit's ear. Ariel departs and Caliban arrives. Caliban immediately begins insulting Prospero. It is revealed that Prospero and Miranda taught Caliban how to speak their language and in return he showed them how to survive on the island. According to Prospero, they all lived together amicably until Caliban tried to rape Miranda. Prospero tells Caliban to collect firewood and threatens him with physical pain if he refuses or does the tasks grudgingly. Caliban agrees to cooperate and leaves to undertake the tasks.

Ariel returns, still invisible, singing a song. Ferdinand is following the sound of the music as it was soothing him after the apparent death of his father. Prospero points Ferdinand out to Miranda, who believes that she is seeing a god as she has not seen such a

handsome person before. Ferdinand sees Miranda and also assumes that she is a goddess. She tells him that she is not a goddess but a girl. He tells her that he is now the King of Naples as his father perished in the shipwreck and that if she is a virgin, he will make her his queen. Prospero decides that if their experience of falling in love is too easy they will not value it highly enough and so he will put a few obstacles in their way. Prospero tells Ferdinand he will be locked up. Miranda does not understand why her father is treating Ferdinand in this way. Ferdinand says that he would not need freedom if he could look through his prison window and see Miranda.

*'All hail, great master! Grave sir, hail! I come/ [t]o answer thy best pleasure. Be 't to fly, [t]o swim, to dive into the fire, to ride/ [o]n the curled clouds, to thy strong bidding task/ Ariel and all his quality'* (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 189-193).

Ariel, Prospero's loyal spirit servant, assists Prospero with all of his plans on the island.



*'If by your art, my dearest father, you have / [p]ut the wild waters in this roar, allay them'* (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 1-2).

Miranda, watching the shipwreck from the island, begs her father to save the people on the ship.





## Act One: Scene One

### Summary: A raging storm

A ship is caught in an immense storm. The crew tries to keep the ship afloat. There are a number of royal figures and their servants aboard the boat, including: Alonso, the King of Naples; Sebastian, Alonso's brother; Antonio, the Duke of Milan; Ferdinand, the son of Alonso; and Gonzalo, a councillor and advisor to Alonso. The passengers flock to the deck of the ship to see if they can assist the sailors but are advised to return below deck as they are only making the situation worse. The passengers listen to the crew and return to the cabins to pray. Antonio and Sebastian return to the deck and exchange terse words with the boatswain, who chastises them as the boat splits and begins to sink. The passengers are all separated in the water.



*Prospero's storm batters the boat and terrifies those on board that the vessel is sinking.*

### Analysis

This initial scene introduces and explores the theme of class and class roles. The ship's passengers are members of the nobility, while the boatswain and crew are considered commoners. During the crisis of the storm, the passengers do not accede to the authority of the boatswain; they are used to having authority themselves. When the king, Alonso, seeks out the master, the boatswain chastises him for getting in their way and tells them to go below deck. Gonzalo tells the boatswain to remember who his passengers are, but he tells Gonzalo to 'use [his] authority' (Act 1, Scene 1, line 23) to tell the storm to stop, and if he cannot do that, to go down into the cabins and stay out of the crew's way. The boatswain is aware of his authority and position on board; at the same time, it is his duty to protect the passengers and crew. Sebastian and Antonio seem to resent the boatswain's authority on the ship and proceed to insult him when he questions why they have returned to the deck. Gonzalo tries to persuade them to return to the king and pray with him. When the boat splits, Sebastian and Antonio hurry below deck to sink with their king, while Gonzalo prays for land. This brief interaction gives us a small insight into these characters and how we can expect them to behave throughout the play. Gonzalo seems to be a middleman – he tries to keep the peace – while Sebastian and Antonio appear to be aggressive and self-serving. What do you think will be revealed about these characters as the play unfolds?

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## Questions:

1. What are your first impressions of Sebastian and Antonio? Quote from the text to support your answer. (2)
2. Why is the Boatswain annoyed with the men? (2)
3. Summarise lines 65-68 in your own words. (2)

## Act One: Scene Two

### Summary: It's time you learned who we are...

On an island, Miranda – who had been watching the sinking ship – asks her father, Prospero, whether he was the one who had created the storm with his magic. She tells her father that she felt the pain of the people caught in the wreck. Prospero tells Miranda not to worry as none of the people were harmed and that he created the storm to benefit her. Prospero decides that it is time to tell Miranda their family history, something which she notes he has tried to tell her before but decided the time was not yet ripe. Prospero promises that she will hear the full story this time.



*'O, I have suffered/ [w]ith those that I saw suffer!' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 5-6).*

Prospero asks his daughter if she remembers anything before their time on the island. He expects Miranda to confirm that she remembers nothing, as they arrived on the island when she was only three years old, but she surprises her father by saying she remembers four or five women who used to wait on her. Prospero confirms that this is true and then reveals that 12 years before he had been the Duke of Milan. Miranda questions whether it was foul play or a blessing that brought them to the island. He tells her that it was both and begins to explain the events that ended with them living on the island. When Prospero was the Duke, he appointed his brother, Antonio, to govern the state while he busied himself with his books.

Antonio, drunk with power, conspired with the King of Naples to have Prospero ousted and become the Duke himself. Thus, in the dead of night, Prospero and his daughter were ejected from Milan and sent out to sea on a boat that was not equipped for a journey and that even the rats had abandoned. Prospero suggests to Miranda that it was her smile that gave him the strength to survive, and how a man loyal to him, Gonzalo, gave them the supplies that they would need to



survive the voyage – as well as some of the most treasured books from Prospero's library. These books allowed Prospero to give his daughter an education on the island far better than any other princess would receive. Miranda asks Prospero to explain why he caused the storm and he says that his enemies from the story he has just told her were all aboard the ship. He tells her that the stars are aligned in his favour and then lulls her into a magical sleep to prevent her from asking further questions.



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*The government I cast upon my brother/ [a]nd to my state grew stranger, being transported/ [a]nd rapt in secret studies' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 75-77).*

Prospero tells Miranda how he passed his responsibilities as Duke of Milan on to his brother as his focus shifted to studying magic.



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*'Thou best know'st/ [w]hat torment I did find thee in' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 286-287).*

Prospero reminds Ariel how he found the spirit imprisoned in a pine tree.

island. Originally from Argier (Algiers), she was banished to the island as a result of her malicious witchcraft. She was pregnant when she was banished and bore a son whom she named Caliban. Ariel was originally a servant to Sycorax but she imprisoned him inside a pine tree when he refused to carry out her terrible commands. Sycorax died and left Ariel imprisoned in the tree, until Prospero arrived on the island and heard the spirit's moans. Prospero freed Ariel from the tree, promising that he would eventually free him from his servitude .

Prospero threatens to imprison Ariel inside a tree once more but Ariel promises to do his bidding. Prospero assures Ariel that his services are only required for two more days and instructs him to take the shape of a sea nymph, but to be invisible to everyone except to Prospero himself. Ariel leaves and Prospero awakens Miranda, telling her that they need to visit Caliban as he has a task for him.

Once Miranda is asleep, Prospero calls on Ariel, a spirit and his loyal servant. It is revealed that Ariel was responsible for the storm. At Prospero's instruction, Ariel had transformed himself into flames and leapt through each cabin in the ship until all the passengers jumped into the water to escape the flames. Ariel ensured that everyone was safe and washed up at different points on the island. He made sure that Ferdinand, the King's son, was on his own. The ship was safe and stored in a nearby harbour while the crew had been placed under a sleeping charm. The remaining ships in the fleet were on their way back to Naples under the impression that the King's ship had sunk, and the King had perished in the wreck.

Prospero approves of Ariel's work but says there is more work yet to be done. At this, Ariel is upset as he was hoping Prospero would set him free after this task was completed. Prospero angrily reminds Ariel of the conditions in which he found the spirit. There was once a witch called Sycorax who inhabited the

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At this point, Ariel returns as a water nymph and Prospero whispers instructions into his ear before he leaves once more.

Caliban then enters and laments that he was once the sole inhabitant of the island. Prospero taught Caliban how to speak his language, and in exchange Caliban showed Prospero all the riches of the island. Caliban says that he regrets showing these things to Prospero as he is now forced to live in harsh conditions while Prospero and Miranda have full run of the island. Prospero calls Caliban a liar and claims that Caliban is treated in this way because he tried to rape Miranda. Prospero commands Caliban to collect firewood and threatens to inflict pain on him should he not obey the command. Caliban insults Prospero and leaves to collect the firewood.

At this point, Ariel (still invisible) returns, leading Ferdinand with a song. Ferdinand was weeping on the beach – he thought his father was dead – when he heard Ariel's song. The song alleviates his grief and he follows it. Miranda sees Ferdinand and asks her father if he is a spirit. Prospero explains that Ferdinand is a person just like them, and that he was one of the people from the shipwreck they witnessed earlier, and in his grief, he must be searching for other survivors. Miranda thinks that Ferdinand is the most beautiful thing she has ever seen.

Ferdinand sees Miranda and declares her to be a goddess and asks whether she is a 'maid' (unmarried and a virgin). She responds that she is. Ferdinand explains that he is now the King of Naples as his father died in the shipwreck. He says that he wants to marry Miranda and make her his Queen.

Prospero is pleased as this is part of his plan; however, he is worried that if they fall in love too easily, they will not take their marriage vows seriously. He decides to accuse Ferdinand of being a spy and attempting to steal the island away from Prospero. Miranda, now thoroughly in love, defends Ferdinand. Prospero tells Miranda not to defend him and tells Ferdinand that he will be imprisoned on the island. Ferdinand draws his sword to fight, but Prospero uses magic to freeze him on the spot. Ferdinand declares that prison will be worth it if he is able to see Miranda just once a day. Prospero praises Ariel's work and says that he will be free soon but he must still follow a few more orders.



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*Prospero found both Ariel and Caliban on the island.*

## Analysis

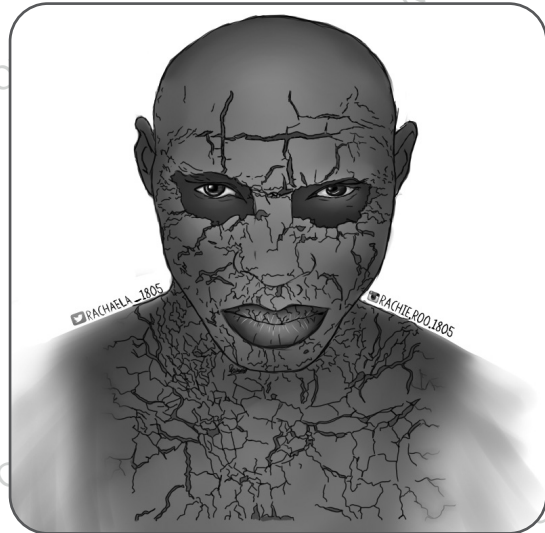
When Prospero tells Miranda about their past, the story not only explains how they came to be on the island, but it also informs the audience of Prospero's motivation for his revenge and for creating the storm. This history creates some sympathy for Prospero – and, for some audience members, it also justifies his treatment of Ariel and Caliban, which would otherwise come across as harsh and unfeeling. Yet we also learn that Prospero was at least partly responsible for his own exile, because he had neglected his duties as Duke.

This scene touches on the theme of colonisation. Caliban, although he is an antagonist in the play, has good reason to resent Prospero and Miranda for coming to his island. Before they came, he says, he was the only inhabitant and did as he pleased. He is now a servant to Prospero and no



longer has freedom. Miranda calls him a 'savage' and says that despite her initial care for him, he remained 'vile' – and this is why he was enslaved. Caliban retorts that the only benefit of learning their language was learning how to curse; he has not been elevated but, rather, has lost his freedom and autonomy. Prospero uses his power to intimidate and control Caliban.

Ariel seems to be a comparatively willing servant to Prospero but it is soon revealed that he desires his freedom more than anything. While Caliban came under Prospero's rule through colonisation, Ariel was freed from imprisonment only to be subjugated once more by Prospero. Ariel appears to enjoy the tasks that Prospero gives him, but he would rather be free and tells Prospero this. This is when Prospero's treatment and attitude towards Ariel changes from kind and benevolent to that of the cruel master, reminding the spirit of the pain he was in before Prospero freed him and threatening to imprison him again, but in worse circumstances. It is only when Ariel begs for his pardon that Prospero becomes kind once more.



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*'You taught me language, and my profit on 't/ [i]s I know how to curse' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 364-365).*

Caliban resents Prospero and Miranda's presence on the island.

## Questions

1. Read lines 1-13. What are your first impressions of Miranda? (4)
2. How long have Miranda and her father been stranded on the island? (1)
3. What does Prospero mean when he says '[t]he government I cast upon my brother/[a]nd to my state grew stranger' (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 75-76)? (2)
4. Why do you think Prospero removes his cloak while he tells Miranda the story of their past, and puts it on again once he has lulled her into a magical sleep? (4)
5. What did Ariel do to sink the ship? (1)
6. For how long was Ariel imprisoned in the tree? (1)
7. How did Caliban become Prospero's slave? Quote from the text to support your answer. (4)
8. Find a word in the text that means 'to take a position of power or importance illegally or by force'. (1)

## Essay questions on Act One:

1. In Act One, Scene One, we witness conflict between the Boatswain (representing the crew of the ship – its working men) and some of the ship's passengers (members of the nobility). Write an essay in which you analyse this scene in terms of class dynamics. Make detailed reference to the text in your analysis.
2. Summarise what we learn from Prospero's dialogue with Miranda in Act One, Scene Two about the 'prehistory' of the play. Identify and discuss one aspect of this narrative about past events that might be interpreted differently by another character who is mentioned in the story.

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## Enrichment task for Act One

This task is an oral and visual presentation. Your presentation should be a speech of 4-5 minutes in length, to be delivered in front of the class. You should make liberal use of visual materials, such as DVD or YouTube footage (movie clips), Power Point Presentations, posters and diagrams, to make points clearer to your audience. You may work singly or in pairs. Choose from one of the tasks below:

### Option 1: 'Tis time I should inform thee further'

There have been several film adaptations of *The Tempest*, including: Fred Wilcox's 1956 sci-fi hit, *Forbidden Planet*; Peter Greenaway's 1991 avant-garde interpretation, *Prospero's Books*; and Julie Taymor's 2010 version starring Helen Mirren as Prospero. Each of these directors chose to introduce the story in a different way. In your speech, compare and contrast the opening scenes in any two of the above productions, or other film versions you can find. Your focus should be on how the tone of the film is set and how the opening scenes differ from the play text. Consider how effective (or not) they are as introductions to the tale and also how closely they relate to the atmosphere created in the first two scenes of Shakespeare's play. Take into account the following aspects: camera angles and shots, editing, lighting, setting, *mise-en-scène*<sup>1</sup> and any other features you might like to include. Your presentation needs to be illustrated – so use clips or stills from the films whenever possible to illustrate the points you wish to make.

### Option 2: 'Some noble creature'?

In 2012, director Ang Lee turned Yann Martel's amazing novel, *Life of Pi*, into a movie. The main character, Pi Patel, is a teenage boy who survives a shipwreck only to find himself in a lifeboat with an assortment of animals: a zebra with a broken leg, an orangutan, a spotted hyena and a Bengal tiger. Pi later explains the symbolic significance of these animals; the hyena, for instance, represents the violently aggressive ship's cook. Your task is to find animal equivalents for the following characters: the Boatswain, Gonzalo, Sebastian, Prospero, Miranda and Ferdinand. The visual element of this exercise will entail finding appropriate images of these central characters and then pairing these up with visuals of the animals that you believe represent them best. In your speech, you need to present and justify your selection of images.

### Option 3: 'Your tale, sir, would cure deafness'

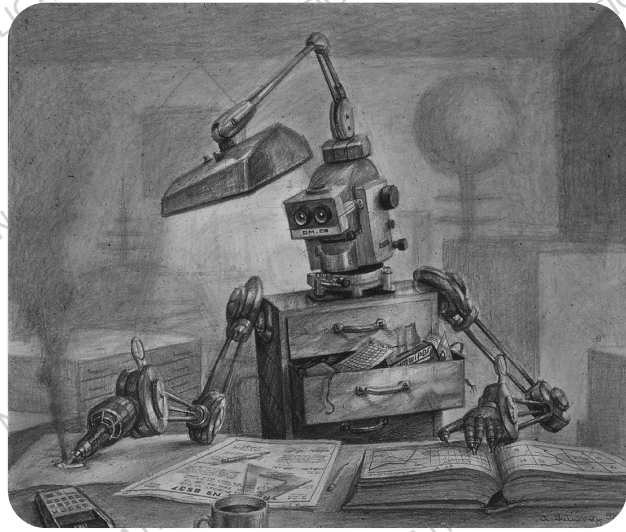
The public loves a good scandal involving greed, ambition and betrayal; we also love stories about survival against the odds. If you heard gossip about a man who stabbed his brother in the back, or a father and daughter who made a dangerous ocean voyage in a lifeboat, would you find it easily believable? In your speech, you need to discuss how Prospero's story of love, loyalty and betrayal is still relevant today. The visual element of this exercise will entail finding appropriate images of contemporary examples (from soap operas, reality television shows and movies to real life news stories). You will need to present and justify your selection of images. To do this, you should compare the deeds of the characters in the play with your contemporary examples.

<sup>1</sup> When applied to the cinema, *mise-en-scène* refers to everything that appears before the camera and its arrangement, for example, composition, sets, props, actors, costumes and lighting. The term also refers to the positioning and movement of actors on the set, which is called 'blocking'.



# The literary essay

An essay is a short piece of writing that presents and develops an idea. The purpose of writing an essay is two-fold. The first reason is to demonstrate an understanding of the text in question. The second is to show that you can write about a topic in a focused and sustained way. In other words, an essay is not a rambling, disjointed collection of your thoughts regarding a topic, but an integrated and interconnected discussion that develops a clear, convincing argument. This section offers some basic guidelines on writing a literary essay, two annotated examples from which to learn, and a selection of essay topics that you can use to practise essay writing.



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## Guidelines

- Keep your writing direct, simple and unpretentious — avoid over-complicated sentence structures and unnecessarily wordy descriptions.
- Literary essays should be written in the present tense using the active voice. This helps to ensure your argument is more immediate and convincing.
- Use a formal tone and register (avoiding slang, colloquialisms, jargon and abbreviations) as this is a piece of academic analysis, not creative writing.
- Present your essay in a neat and tidy manner — sloppy work makes a poor impression and can cost marks.
- Any statements you make must be supported with concrete, plausible examples and evidence from the text.
- Pay attention to the required word length, if stipulated. (In Grade 12, your essay should be approximately 600 words in length.) There is no need to include a word count at the end of your essay. You should keep your response as concise as possible, as you may be penalised if your argument strays off the topic.

## Planning your essay

It is important to plan your essay thoroughly before you start writing your response. Doing so will improve your marks by helping you to clarify your ideas and to structure your argument logically. If you plan your essay properly, it can feel as if it almost writes itself.

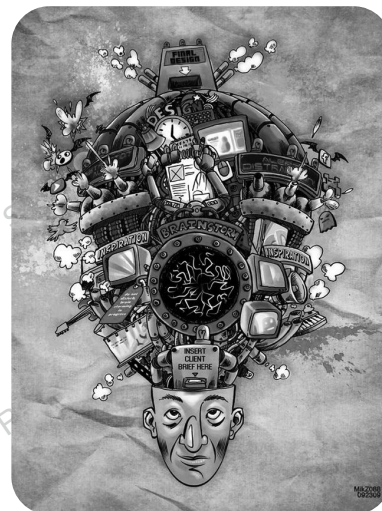
## Step 1: Analyse the question

The most important thing to do when writing an essay is to read and analyse the question carefully. You need to make sure you clearly understand what is being asked. This might sound obvious, but many people misread essay questions and end up writing an essay that is not relevant to the topic.

The first step is to identify the **task word** or words (i.e. the instruction) in the question. Let's look at the following example:

*'The rarer action is / [i]n virtue than in vengeance' (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 27-28). Explore Prospero's motivations for forgiving those who wronged him and consider whether his attempts at reconciliation are successful or not.*

In the example above, the task word is 'explore', which means that you are being asked to consider an idea or topic broadly, searching out related and/or particularly relevant, interesting or debatable points. Other common task words include 'identify', 'discuss', 'assess' and 'analyse'.



The following list includes some of the more common task words used in essay questions and a suggestion of how to interpret them. These suggested definitions are only a guideline and your response should always be tailored to the requirements of a specific question.

**analyse:** break down the issue into its component parts and discuss how each issue interrelates with the other issues and/or a central theme

**assess:** account for the value or importance of something and its relationship to a central issue or theme

**argue:** provide a logical case to prove a particular point or opinion

**compare / contrast:** identify the similarities and differences between two things in order to prove a central point

**discuss:** evaluate or weigh up the available evidence and come to a logical judgement or conclusion based upon it

**examine:** provide an in-depth investigation of a particular point and its implications

**explain:** describe how something works or show clearly how a particular conclusion is logically reached

**identify:** pick out what you feel are the central characteristic(s) of a particular issue and show clearly why you reached this conclusion

**illustrate:** similar to 'explain', but with a focus on specific examples from the text

**summarise:** outline the most important points without providing any superfluous detail

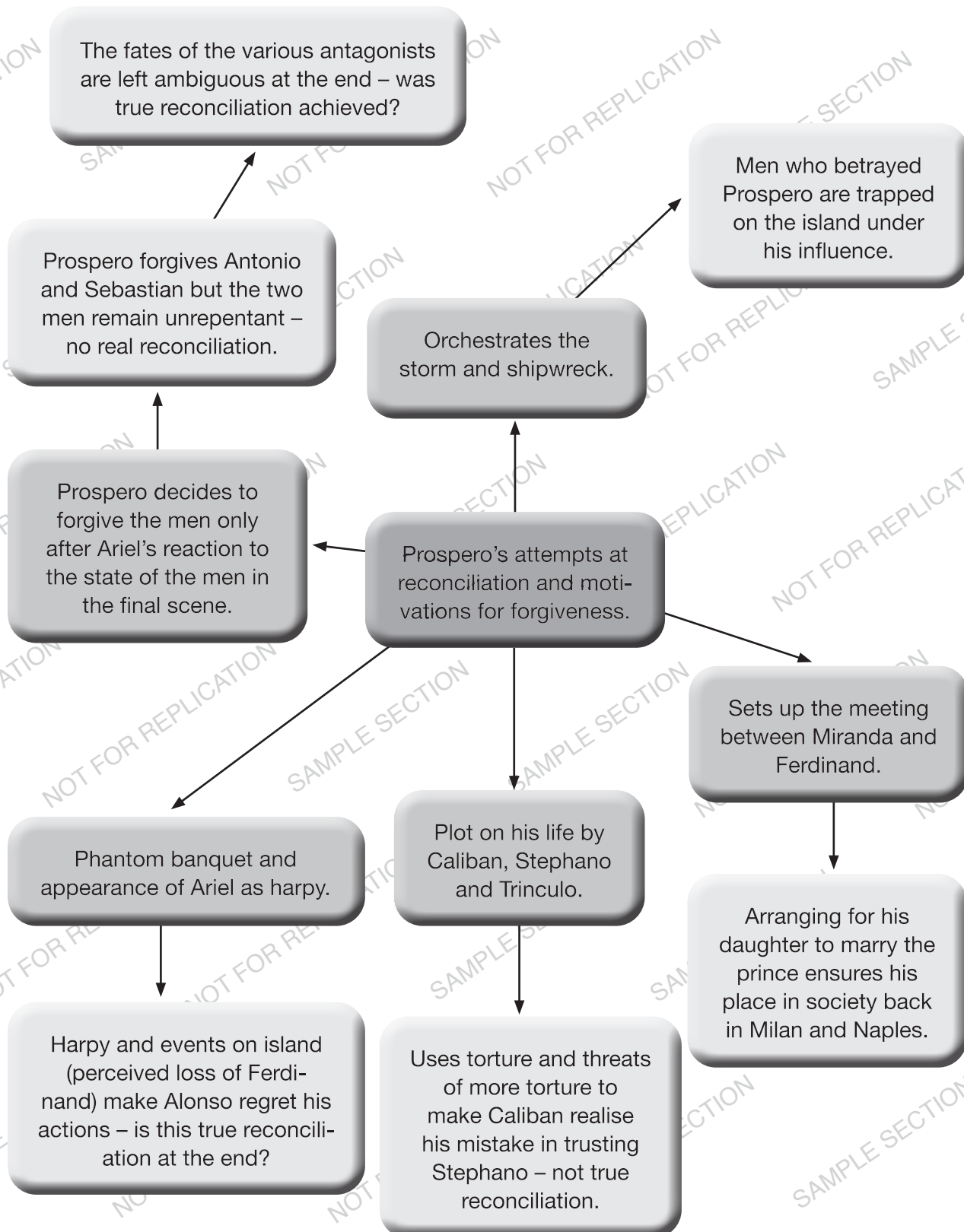
Once you have identified the task word, look closely at the **topic** of the essay. The topic tells you the theme or subject matter on which to focus. Common topics include the characters in the text, their psychological motivations and relationships, the themes and motifs that inform and illuminate the text, and the author's use of language and dramatic techniques.

In the preceding example, the topic focuses on the character Prospero and his motivation for his forgiveness and requires that you evaluate whether his attempts at reconciliation were successful or not. You will need to focus specifically on Prospero and his actions throughout the play and determine whether these actions have achieved reconciliation among the characters or not.



## Step 2: Mapping your answer

You are no longer required to submit a plan with your essay and no marks are awarded for doing so; however, it is still highly recommended that you plan your response adequately. Plan your essay using any method you prefer. 'Mapping out' your response has been shown to be an effective way of generating, clarifying and linking ideas. An effective technique to use is a **concept map**. The following is a model concept map for the example question.



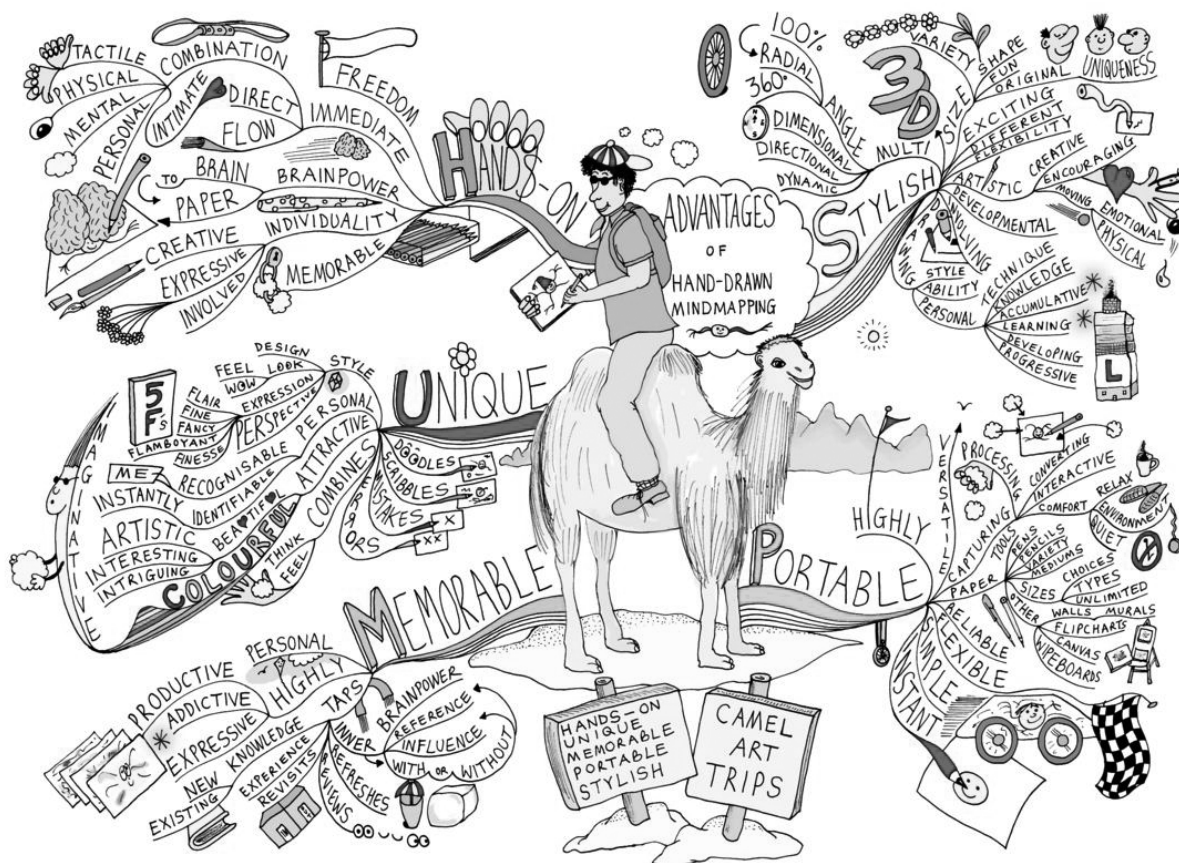
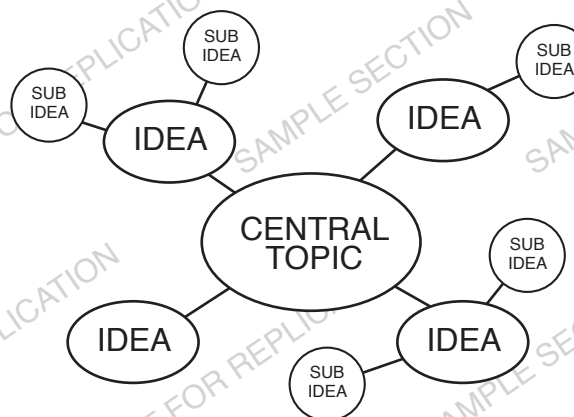
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**Concept maps** or spider diagrams are a way of visualising your ideas and linking these together. The slight difference between the two techniques is that, technically, mind maps are used to freely associate ideas and spider diagrams to organise and structure ideas into hierarchies. This minor difference makes mind maps particularly useful for generating or brainstorming initial ideas while spider diagrams are best suited to linking related ideas together and planning the argument of your essay. In practice, though, people use either of these techniques to accomplish their goals.

Both are easy and quick to make. You start by writing down your fundamental question or topic in the centre of a piece of paper and drawing a bubble around it. Next, write down the first idea that comes to mind (related to the main topic) in a space off to the side of the paper, draw a bubble around it and a line linking its bubble to the bubble around the main topic.

If your next idea is connected or related to that idea, write it down close to your first idea and draw a line between them. If the idea is not directly related, write it in a different space off to the side of the paper, and keep repeating this classification process with each idea you have.

By structuring and linking your ideas in this manner, you will create a visual map of them that you can use to plan the argument of your essay, prioritising the points you wish to make in each paragraph.





## Step 3: Formulate your thesis statement

Once you have mapped your response, it is time to formulate your **thesis statement**. Your thesis statement is the most important part of your essay. It tells your readers how you will be answering the question and what your argument will be. Put simply, your thesis statement is how you might answer the essay question in one sentence. The rest of your essay should then argue the validity of your thesis statement convincingly. Your thesis statement should be included in both your introduction and your conclusion.

Let's say you have just mapped your response to the previous example question about Prospero's motivations for forgiveness and whether reconciliation has been achieved and decide that **while Prospero forgives the men who betrayed him at the end of the play, this was not necessarily his initial plan and so true reconciliation is not achieved**. This is your thesis statement.

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A **thesis statement** should accomplish three things:

- refer to the main topic (*Prospero's motivations for forgiveness*);
- state the main point/thesis (*forgiveness was not his initial intention*); and
- outline the body of the essay (*true reconciliation has not been achieved*).

## Step 4: Link your ideas together

Once you have completed your brainstorming and formulated your thesis statement, you are ready to structure your essay by linking your ideas together to form a logical, convincing argument.

Your concept map/plan should already highlight the links between your ideas. Now you need to prioritise them and decide in what order to present them. A simple way to do this is to number each idea on your plan. Depending on how many ideas you have, you may need to select only the most relevant.

Once you have prioritised and linked your ideas, you can structure your argument and essay. There are three distinct parts to an essay that you should keep in mind when structuring: the introduction, the body and the conclusion.

### The introduction

First impressions count! A strong, well-written and attention-grabbing introduction is critical. Your introduction should tell your reader what to expect from your essay. You need to state (i) what you will be arguing and (ii) how you will be arguing it. Be sure to include your thesis statement and a short 'preview' of what you will be covering in the body of your essay.

It is often a good idea to use key words from the topic question in your introduction as this shows that your argument is focused and relevant, but avoid copying the wording of the question too closely because this suggests a lack of imagination.

Although your introduction is the first thing your marker will read, it doesn't have to be the first thing you write. It helps to write the body of your essay first so that you know what needs to be previewed when you write your introduction.

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## The body

The body of your essay will be where you convince the reader of your argument by substantiating your thesis statement with analyses and examples from the text. The body will consist of several paragraphs (depending on your word count), each of which contains one point, which you then explain and support with textual evidence.

When constructing the body paragraphs, it is useful to keep the **T-E-A model** in mind:

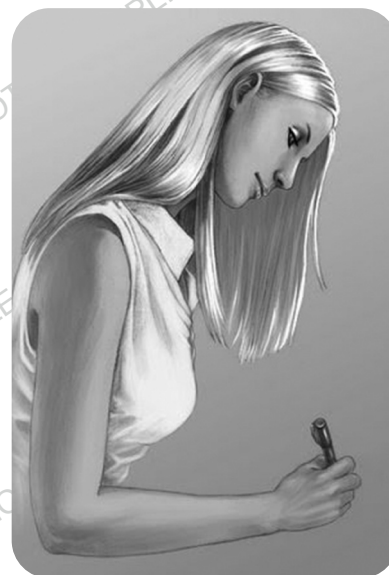
- **'T'** stands for the **Topic** sentence of your paragraph. Just as a thesis statement summarises the main argument of your essay, a topic sentence summarises the main point of that particular paragraph. Remember, you should only be making *one point per paragraph*.
- **'E'** stands for **Evidence**: the examples you use from the text to support the point you are making. You shouldn't rely on your examples to make your argument for you, however. These should rather illustrate or prove a point you have already made. Evidence can take the form of paraphrased examples in your own words or direct quotations from the text. If you choose to quote, make sure you do so accurately (*see next section*).
- **'A'** stands for **Analysis**: the explanation of how your point is relevant to your thesis statement and how it is illustrated by your examples. Keep asking yourself: *Is the point I am making relevant to my argument? Have I made it clear to my reader how this point relates to my thesis statement?*

Another important consideration to keep in mind is the linking of your paragraphs. Ensure that each paragraph follows on from the last in a logical manner and try to avoid jumping from one point to another, as this can be very jarring and negatively impact on the readability and flow of your essay.

## The conclusion

Your conclusion should provide a summary of your argument. Review the main points of your essay (perhaps considering the topic sentences of each of your paragraphs) and write three or four strong sentences that show how these points have proven the validity of your thesis statement.

Your conclusion should not simply restate your introduction. You need to show how your argument has progressed. Your conclusion is the last thing your marker will read before scoring your essay, so it should leave a good impression.



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## How to quote correctly

Quoting correctly is a tricky skill to master, but should not prove too difficult with a bit of practice. If you are ever uncertain about quoting, you can also paraphrase (use your own words) examples from the text. This option will ensure that you still support your argument with examples from the text, but avoid losing marks because of quoting incorrectly (especially in an examination context).

If you do choose to quote from the text in an essay or exam, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Quoting from the text is meant to support or illustrate your argument (the point you are trying to convey). Do not rely on the quote to make your argument for you. You need to be very clear on the significance of your quote and how it supports the point you are making.



- It is essential that you integrate your quote so that the entire sentence reads smoothly and coherently, and is grammatically correct.
- Your quote must be copied accurately from the original text. Indicate where your quote begins and ends with the correct form of quotation marks and, if you have to make slight changes to the quote so that it fits in grammatically with your own sentence, indicate this with the use of square brackets.
- Use short quotations and only as much of the quote as necessary to support your argument. If you have to leave words out of the quote, indicate this with the use of ellipses (...) where you have omitted words.

## Proofread your essay

When you have spent a lot of time on an essay, the last thing you feel like doing is reading through it again. Silly errors, spelling mistakes and typos really undermine the quality of your essay, however, and can lead to the loss of many marks.

Always make sure you proofread your essay before handing it in. If you don't correct avoidable mistakes, this tells your marker that your attitude is careless. In the classroom context, you can even ask someone else to read through your essay for you, with fresh eyes and a fresh perspective. During an examination, make sure that you leave a few minutes at the end of your allotted time to read through your essay one last time before handing in your paper.



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### i

## LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES

Before you begin writing, look at your past essays and take note of any mistakes or advice from your marker(s). Keep these pointers in mind when writing your essay and actively try to improve on these areas. Before you start writing an examination, reflect on what has gone wrong in the past or on bad habits your marker has identified.

### i

## USING ONLINE INFORMATION

When planning your essay, you may be tempted to search online for ideas and inspiration. Think twice before you do this, though, as anyone can post their ideas on the internet and these ideas may not necessarily be useful or even correct. In fact, more often than not, the information you can find on the internet about literary texts is very poor; moreover, your marker is interested in what you think of the topic, not what a random internet source says.

Keep in mind that if you use secondary sources in your essay, either in the classroom context or the examination context, you need to reference these correctly. If you do not reference ideas that are not your own, you will be guilty of plagiarism, a form of intellectual theft that is very likely to lose you marks and is a serious legal offence.

# Annotated essay examples

## Essay topic:

*'The rarer action is / [i]n virtue than in vengeance' (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 27-28). Explore Prospero's motivations for forgiving those who wronged him and consider whether his attempts at reconciliation are successful or not.*

(Question 17 of the Practice essay questions on p.161)

### INTRODUCTION

At the end of the play, Prospero decides that '[t]he rarer action is / [i]n virtue than in vengeance' (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 27-28). **While Prospero forgives the men who betrayed him, this was not necessarily his initial intention and so reconciliation is not achieved.**<sup>1</sup> Prospero's actions throughout the play indicate that he was out for revenge rather than reconciliation.<sup>2</sup>

**In Act 1, Scene 2, we learn that Prospero himself orchestrated the shipwreck that occurred in the first scene of the play, and that while the shipwreck seemed fatal, not a soul aboard was harmed.**<sup>3</sup>

He reveals to Miranda that the men on board the ship are the very men that betrayed them twelve years before (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 178-180). The very nature of this shipwreck suggests that Prospero is seeking vengeance, not reconciliation — the men are separated upon the island, with King Alonso thinking that his son has died, and Ferdinand thinking the same of his father. Leaving the men abandoned on the island in such a piteous state ensures that they are vulnerable to Prospero's magic and influence. Prospero even makes certain that the remainder of the King's fleet continues home thinking that the King and his men have died (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 235-237). This leaves open the possibility that Prospero's plans include terrible fates for the men trapped on his island and under his charms.

**As the play progresses, the men wander aimlessly around the island. They are tired and all sense of hope seems to have left them**<sup>4</sup>, with Alonso telling Gonzalo that he is himself 'attached with weariness / [t]o th' dulling of [his] spirits [...] [he] will put off [his] hope' (Act 3, Scene 3, lines 5-7). It is in this vulnerable state that Prospero decides to strike: he arranges the banquet to tantalize them and as they are ready to eat, he has Ariel, disguised as a fearsome harpy, enter and make the food disappear while admonishing them for their roles in Prospero's betrayal. This extreme act does not support the idea of reconciliation — it is rather an act of revenge designed to push the already hopeless men further in their despair. The King is left frantic, declaring that he is being punished with the death of his son, and will join him in the depths of the ocean (Act 3, Scene 3, lines 100-103).

Topic

Evidence

Analysis

### BODY

1 This is the thesis statement for our essay. It sums up the entirety of our argument.

2 This is the introduction of our essay. Its purpose is to introduce the ideas that we are going to expand upon in the rest of the essay.

3 This is the topic sentence for this paragraph. It summarises what we are going to argue in the paragraph.

4 This is the topic sentence for this paragraph. It summarises what we are going to argue in the paragraph.



## BODY

**Prospero only seems to decide to forgive the men at the end of the play.**<sup>5</sup> In his exchange with Ariel in Act 5, Scene 1, lines 1-31, Prospero is moved by Ariel's reaction to the state in which the men have been left after their experiences on the island. It seems that Prospero is only moved to forgive the men when the spirit expresses empathy. While Prospero forgives the men, reconciliation is not necessarily achieved. Alonso restores his dukedom, but that may reflect how shaken he remains by his experiences on the island rather than true remorse. Similarly, he forgives Antonio and Sebastian for their actions, but the two men remain sullen and remorseless. One may argue that true reconciliation is not achieved if both parties do not equally forgive and feel remorse.<sup>6</sup>

## CONCLUSION

**At the end of the play, it is doubtful that Prospero has achieved true reconciliation. He forgives the men for their actions, yes, but in order for reconciliation to be reached, the other men also need to want it.** Alonso's actions are driven by his experiences on the island — the perceived loss of his son and the vision of Ariel as the harpy are both constructs of Prospero's magic. Antonio and Sebastian remain unrepentant and their fates after the play has concluded are left open. Their lack of remorse leaves it impossible for Prospero to have achieved reconciliation and with their fates left ambiguous at the end of the play, the audience can only imagine that they still plan to murder the king, and probably Prospero too.<sup>7</sup>

Summary of  
main pointRestatement  
of thesisClosing  
remarks

Words: 657

<sup>5</sup> This is the topic sentence for this paragraph. It summarises what we are going to argue in the paragraph.

<sup>6</sup> Paragraphs two, three, and four make up the body of our essay. These serve to expand on the ideas introduced in the introduction. Textual evidence is also given for claims made in the introduction.

<sup>7</sup> This is the conclusion of the essay. The purpose of a conclusion is to summarise the argument we have made, highlighting the most important elements of our argument.

# Act One

## Scene One

(A ship at sea.)

(A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard.)

(Enter a Shipmaster and a Boatswain.)

MASTER Boatswain!

BOATSWAIN Here, master. What cheer?

MASTER Good, speak to th' mariners. Fall to 't yarely, or we run ourselves aground. *Bestir, bestir!*

**5** BOATSWAIN Heigh, *my hearts!* Cheerly, cheerly, my hearts! *Yare, yare!* Take in the topsail. *Tend* to th' Master's whistle. (*To the storm.*) Blow till thou burst thy wind, if *room enough!*

(Enter Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo, and others.)

ALONSO Good boatswain, have care. Where's the master?

**10** BOATSWAIN *Play the men.*

BOATSWAIN I pray now, keep below.

ANTONIO Where is the master, boatswain?

BOATSWAIN Do you not hear him? *You mar our labour.* Keep your cabins! You do assist the storm.

**15** GONZALO Nay, good, be patient.

BOATSWAIN When the sea is. Hence! What care these *roarers* for the name of king? To cabin! Silence! Trouble us not.

GONZALO Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard.

**20** BOATSWAIN None that I more love than myself. You are a *councillor*<sup>1</sup>; if you can command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will not *hand* a rope more. Use your authority. If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so *hap*. —Cheerly, good hearts! —Out of our way, I say!

(He exits.)

*What news? What shall I do?*

*My good man; quickly*

*Hurry up!*

*my brave men!; With a good will*

*Quickly; Attend to*

*As long as the ship has sea room (i.e. no rocks or sandbanks)*

*Act like men.*

*You are getting in the way.*

*waves*

*handle*

*happen.*

1 One of the King's council who is supposed to keep the peace. The boatswain is being sarcastic.



GONZALO I have great comfort from this fellow.  
*Methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him. His complexion is perfect gallows*<sup>2</sup>. Stand fast, good fate, to his hanging. *Make the rope of his destiny our cable, for our own doth little advantage*<sup>3</sup>. If he be not born to be hanged, our case is miserable<sup>4</sup>.

(*He exits with Alonso, Sebastian, and the other courtiers.*)

(*Enter Boatswain.*)

BOATSWAIN Down with the topmast! Yare! Lower, lower! Bring her to try wi' th' main course.

(*A cry within.*)

35 A plague upon this howling! They are louder than the weather or our office.

(*Enter Sebastian, Antonio, and Gonzalo.*)

Yet again? What do you here? Shall we give o'er and drown? *Have you a mind* to sink?

SEBASTIAN A pox o' your throat, you bawling, blasphemous, incharitable dog!

40

BOATSWAIN Work you, then.

ANTONIO Hang, cur, hang, you whoreson, insolent noisemaker! We are less afraid to be drowned than thou art.

45 GONZALO I'll warrant him for drowning, though the ship were no stronger than a nutshell and as leaky as an *unstanched wench*<sup>5</sup>.

BOATSWAIN Lay her *ahold*, ahold! Set her two courses. Off to sea again! Lay her off!

(*Enter more Mariners, wet.*)

50 MARINERS All lost! To prayers, to prayers! All lost! (*Mariners exit.*)

BOATSWAIN What, *must our mouths be cold*?

GONZALO The King and prince at prayers. Let's assist them, for our case is as theirs.

Keep as close to the wind as possible

All of us sailors at work

give up

Do you wish to

May a plague cause sores in your throat

I promise you he is not about to drown

Bring the ship into the wind; steer away from the shore.

must we drown? (he probably has a swig of rum)

situation

2 Gonzalo refers to a proverb that says that a man destined to die by hanging will not drown.

3 A pun on the rope used in hanging someone, the thread of life controlled by the Fates in Greek mythology (the rope of destiny) and the rigging of the ship.

4 If his destiny is to hang, we will not be drowned; if he is not to be hanged in future, we have no hope now.

5 Gonzalo's misogynistic simile here is crass – 'unstanched' could mean either 'leaking' (as in not plugged up) or immoral, and the phrase could refer either to a girl or woman who is menstruating or to a prostitute.

# THE TEMPEST

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ACT 1 Sc 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SEBASTIAN I am out of patience.

55 ANTONIO We are *merely* cheated of our lives by drunkards.  
This *wide-chopped* rascal—would thou  
mightst lie drowning *the washing of ten tides*<sup>6</sup>!

(Boatswain exits.)

GONZALO He'll be hanged yet, though every drop of  
water swear against it and *gape at wid'st to glut him*.

(A confused noise within: )

60 'Mercy on us!' — 'We split, we  
split!' — 'Farewell, my wife and children!' —  
'Farewell, brother!' — 'We split, we split, we split!'

ANTONIO Let's all sink wi' th' King.

SEBASTIAN Let's take leave of him.

(He exits with Antonio.)

65 GONZALO Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea  
for an acre of barren ground: long *heath*, brown  
*furze*, anything. The wills above be done, but I  
would *fain* die a dry death.

(He exits.)

*utterly*  
*loud-mouthed*  
*May ten tides wash over you!*

*even if the sea opens its  
mouth wide to swallow him.*

*heather*  
*gorse – a kind of flowering  
plant*  
*prefer to, would rather*

6 Pirates were hanged at low tide. They were taken off the gallows after three high tides had washed over them, thus ensuring that they were dead.



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is a Poem

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