

THE TEMPEST

- WRITTEN BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE IN 1610-11 FOR A MARRIAGE.
- IT IS HIS LAST KNOWN PLAY, INSPIRED BY A REAL SHIPWRECK.
- SET IN NAPLES/MILAN, ON AN MYSTERIOUS, MAGICAL AND ISOLATED ISLAND IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA IN A FAIRY-TALE WORLD OF THE IMAGINATION
- THE PLAY TAKES PLACE OVER 3 HOURS.
- CRITICS AND READERS DETECT A MELANCHOLIC FEELING OF RETIREMENT, WITHDRAWAL FROM LIFE AND WISTFUL RESIGNATION
- WROTE LINES IN TWO WAYS TO COMMUNICATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHARACTERS TO THE ACTORS, TO DIFFERENTIATE CHARACTERS (HOW THEY SOUND), TO ADAPT THEIR LANGUAGE TO NEW SITUATIONS (LIKE IN REAL LIFE)

Prospero:

The rightful Duke of Milan, is usurped by his brother Antonio as he engaged in a life of learning rather than ruling. Prospero and his daughter Miranda were set aboard a wrecked craft, yet landed safely on the island. Prospero gains control of the spirits of the island, and uses his vast knowledge and control over the spirits to direct acts of magic as he pleases; taking control of the island from its rightful heir, Caliban. Makes Alonso's ship wreck on the island to get his revenge on his brothers for their wrongdoing. His name is possibly an anagram of "oppressor".

Alonso:

King of Naples. Involved in a plot to overthrow Prospero, and gave Prospero's dukedom to Antonio.

Sebastian:

Brother to Alonso, Sebastian is easily tempted by a plot for the crown made by Antonio.

Antonio:

Usurped the dukedom of Milan from his brother Prospero, while Prospero was absorbed in study. He is the originator of another plot to take the throne from Alonso through murder.

Miranda:

Prospero's only daughter, she has not seen anyone except her father and Caliban. She falls for her father's plan, and becomes infatuated with Ferdinand willingly.

Ferdinand:

Alonso's son, and heir to the kingdom of Naples. Prospero's plot to have Miranda and Ferdinand married is his key to reclaiming his power in Italy. Ferdinand is lovelorn and presumed dead by his father because they are separated during the shipwreck.

CHARACTERS

Ariel:

Spirit of the island, servant of Prospero after he ousts Sycorax (Caliban's mother). Source of Prospero's magical powers, causing the tempest and many of the conspiracies in the play. Freed by Prospero for his devoted service.

Gonzalo:

The honest and old councillor to the king. Helped Prospero and Miranda survive Antonio's plot to have them murdered.

Adrian and Francisco:

Noblemen, and companions of Alonso who are shipwrecked with the rest.

Caliban:

A native of the island from whom Prospero steals control of the island, becoming his only subject/slave. Tries to rape Miranda, and is shunned in turn. All who encounter Caliban regard him with contempt/repugnance because of his different looks and strange ways. Caliban does have a capacity for poetry and understanding beauty (most poetic, beautiful lines of the play). His name is possibly an anagram of "cannibal".

Trinculo:

Alonso's drunken jester, a fool mostly, providing a good deal of comic relief. Become a part of Caliban's plan to murder Prospero and take over the island.

Stephano:

Trinculo's friend and a drunken butler. Caliban takes him on as a new master, thinking that he has some magical powers. He agrees to Caliban's plot to make him ruler of the island, and gain him the favors of Miranda.

Master of a Ship. Mariners:

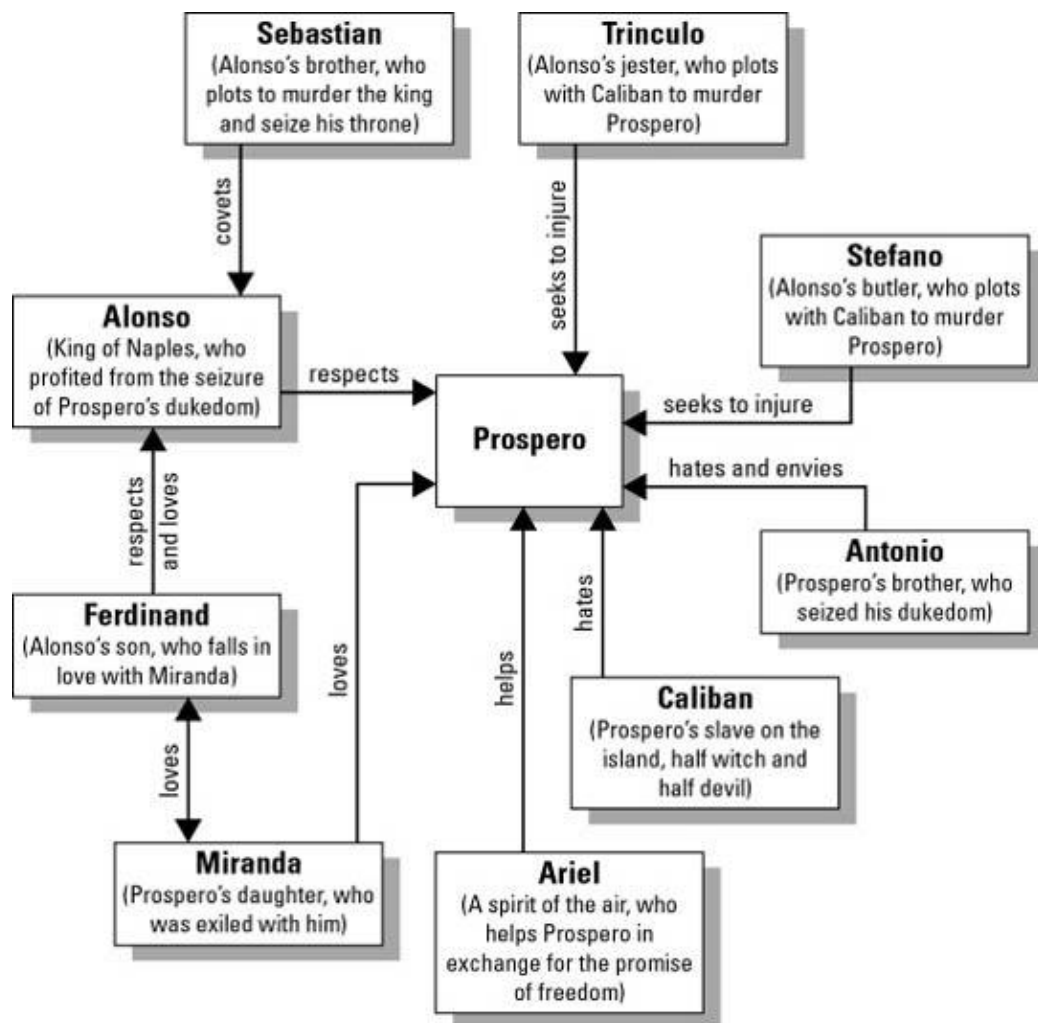
The master tries to get the sailors to sail the boat through the storm. Ariel's spells makes them lose heart and abandon ship.

Boatswain:

Right hand to the ship master, in control of the workings of the ship. Antonio and Sebastian try their best to pick a fight with him in the first act, and basically keep him from doing his job.

Iris, Ceres, Juno, Nymphs, Reapers:

Figures that appear in Prospero's betrothal masque/play for Miranda and Ferdinand. Iris, Ceres, and Juno are goddesses from Roman myth; Iris is goddess of the rainbow, Ceres presides over agriculture, and Juno is queen of the gods. The parts are all performed by spirits, with Ariel performing the part of Ceres.



Act 1: Prospero orchestrates a storm to wreck a ship with a royal party on board. He tells Miranda the story of their past. Ariel demands his freedom. Miranda and Prospero go see Caliban. Miranda meets Ferdinand and they fall in love.

Act 2: The royal party (except Ferdinand, though thought to be dead) is gathered and divided between comfort and cynicism. Sebastian blames Alonso. Ariel puts them to sleep; Antonio and Sebastian plot to usurp the king. Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano meet on the slave's rock and get drunk.

Act 3: Ferdinand and Miranda flirt. Prospero's scheme to push them together inconspicuously is successful. The drunk trio plots to usurp Prospero off the island (comically mirrors the other plot, a comic parody). Ariel warns Prospero. The royal party searches for Ferdinand but finds a magical banquet during which Ariel appears to accuse them of being sinners (Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian).

Act 4: Prospero offers Miranda to Ferdinand as his wife. Mini-play in celebration of the engagement. Prospero and Ariel (+ spirits) ambush the drunk trio and they flee. Ariel is promised to be freed.

Act 5: Ariel reveals to Prospero that Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio are remorseful. They are forgiven. Prospero promises to give up his magic. Ferdinand and Miranda's relationship is exposed to the royal party as they find each other. They find the boat in the harbor. The drunk/conspirator trio is punished. Prospero is freed from the island and can sail back to Milan to be the rightful Duke.

DEVICES

Iambic pentameter: a line with 10 syllables divided into 5 units of meter called feet (2 syllables per foot), the main rhythmic structure of Shakespeare's verse.

Prose: often for lower class characters, not very wealthy and uneducated (in disguise, when not able to speak in verse, in private)

Verse: often for upper class characters/nobility, wealthy, formally educated or experiencing a strong emotion (love, respect, in public). Every line starts with a capital letter, lines all have different lengths, there is a metrical structure.

Imagery: created by vivid words and phrases to conjure up mental pictures or associations, providing insight into characters and deepening the dramatic impact of particular moments or moods.

- The many themes present in the play echo, reinforce and comment on each other; they are a tangle of ideas.
- Shakespeare is portrayed through Prospero: he who has control over everyone and everything, as if playing chess, is like the playwright constructing the storyline and plot, writing the characters' lines. Prospero delivers two important soliloquies which may be considered as the closest autobiographical voice of Shakespeare. In act 4, scene 1, Prospero's speech has a lot of theatrical associations. The meaning conveyed is his abandonment of his art (whether it is magic or knowledge) but it is also a metaphor for the impermanence of life. (he has a reflective tone, depicting an existential crisis, and uses a negative diction referring to his resignation)

"all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and entrances"

- A parallel can be drawn between Miranda and Caliban: their naivety regarding the world as they have lived on the island, isolated, for their entire life; both have never seen another man or woman apart from their parent; one is the epitome of moral goodness and virtue while the other is a savage and vile slave.