



Set Text Guide: The Tempest

AS and A Level Drama and Theatre

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced GCE in Drama and Theatre (9DR0)

**Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in
Drama and Theatre (9DR0)**

GCE Drama 2016: The Tempest

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Summary

Act One

Scene 1

On board the ship

A wild storm rocks Alonso's ship. Confusion ensues on board, as the sailors and passengers frantically deal with a sinking ship.

Scene 2

The island

Miranda, having just witnessed the shipwreck, is worried that people may have been hurt. Her father, Prospero, assures her that no one was hurt. He tells her that this is finally the moment to reveal to her who she is and where they came from, before living on this desert island. He explains that he was once duke of Milan, but as he became more and more dedicated to his studies, his brother Antonio took advantage and usurped him, with the help of Alonso, the king of Naples. Prospero and Miranda escaped with the aid of Gonzalo, a loyal old councillor, and came to this island with some of Prospero's most prized books.

Prospero then explains that good fortune has brought his brother and the king to the shores of this island. Suddenly, Miranda falls asleep, seemingly under a spell of her father's. Prospero calls forth Ariel, his magical spirit. We learn that they magically orchestrated the storm which brought about the shipwreck. Ariel has done exactly as his master demanded, with the ship's passengers strewn across the shores of the island. He has brought the boat safely ashore, with the mariners having been put to sleep on board.

Ariel reminds Prospero of his promise to take a year off his service to him should he perform this task well. Prospero does not take kindly to this, and reminds him of his former mistress, the witch Sycorax, who imprisoned him. Prospero threatens to imprison Ariel for 12 years in an oak tree if he does not continue to carry out his bidding for two more days, after which he will release him. Ariel agrees to comply, and makes himself invisible to everyone but Prospero.

Prospero wakes Miranda, then calls forth Caliban, Sycorax's son. Caliban curses Prospero, complaining that the island was all his before Prospero arrived. Prospero threatens to give him cramps in the night as punishment for his impudence, reminding him that he has educated him and taught him to speak. Caliban cleverly points out that it is because of this that he can curse. He is sent away to collect firewood with a renewed threat of cramps.

Ariel enters, playing music which is luring Ferdinand. On seeing Ferdinand, Miranda falls immediately in love with him. She has never seen any humans other than her father and Caliban. Ferdinand reciprocates the feeling, and tells her that he is the prince of Naples. Prospero is happy to see this, but fears they have fallen in love too soon, and so accuses Ferdinand of lying about his position. Prospero puts him under a spell to take him prisoner. The scene ends as Prospero thanks Ariel for his work, and again promises he will soon be free.

Act Two

Scene 1

A different part of the island

King Alonso and his party are in a different part of the island, searching for Ferdinand. Alonso is in a defeated mood, and Gonzalo tries to reassure him. Antonio and Sebastian mock Gonzalo, and eventually Alonso snaps at his loyal councillor. Ariel enters, playing

solemn music, which sends everyone to sleep except Antonio and Sebastian. Antonio then tries to persuade Sebastian to murder his brother while he sleeps, thus making himself the likely heir to the throne. Sebastian is eventually convinced, and they both draw their swords. At this point, Ariel sings a song to wake the sleepers. When they wake, Alonso questions why their weapons are drawn. They hastily fabricate that they had heard a strange sound, which may have been a herd of lions. Gonzalo does not seem convinced, though he does not challenge the men on it. They all continue on their way to search for Ferdinand.

Scene 2

A different part of the island

Caliban is cursing his master, Prospero. Trinculo enters, causing Caliban to hide under his cloak. Trinculo sees him and, as the storm is raging, he decides to hide himself under the cloak too. Next Stephano enters, drinking wine. Seeing the four legs sticking out of the cloak he assumes it to be a monster, and continues to drink. Caliban begins to drink too, and discovering the joy of intoxication, decides to worship Stephano as his new master. This is a comedic scene, and the farcical nature of the situation might be explored with the staging of Caliban and Trinculo hiding under the cloak.

Act Three

Scene 1

Another part of the island

Ferdinand is working hard for Prospero, hoping to impress him. Miranda enters and tries to persuade Ferdinand to take a rest, but he is dedicated to the work. Prospero is observing the scene unseen. Miranda and Ferdinand declare their love for each other, before she proposes marriage. He agrees and they part ways for now. Prospero emerges and is not overly excited by this union, but only as he already knew it would happen.

Scene 2

A different part of the island

Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano enter, drunk. They order their 'servant monster' to drink more and more, which Caliban is more than happy to do. They quarrel with each other in their jovial drunken states. Caliban tells them of his plot to kill his former master Prospero. Just as he does so, Ariel enters, unseen. He stirs trouble by calling out 'thou liest', confusing the conspirators. Eventually this mischief leads to Stephano hitting Trinculo. This scene should be very funny, as not only are the men intoxicated, but Ariel's misdirection is an example of dramatic irony, as only the audience is in on the joke with Ariel. At the conclusion of the scene the men are decided in their plot to kill Prospero, and they follow Ariel's music.

Scene 3

A different part of the island

We re-join the king and his courtiers, who are tired and hungry. Prospero watches them, and conjures music while strange shapes bring in a 'banquet'. The food seems to tease the men, and they debate what to do. Just as they decide to eat, Ariel enters as a harpy to a symphony of thunder, making the banquet vanish. He has total power over them, and they struggle to draw their swords as he has made them heavy. He accuses them of driving Prospero out of Milan, and tells Alonso that as punishment his son, Ferdinand, has been taken from him. He vanishes again, and Prospero, still unseen, commends his servant's work. In his despair, Alonso goes to drown himself. Antonio and Sebastian chase off to fight with the spirits. The level-headed Gonzalo advises the others to follow them to make sure they don't do anything rash.

Act Four

Scene 1

A different part of the island

Prospero blesses the union of Miranda and Ferdinand, though warns them not to break his daughter's virginity before the marriage is official. Ferdinand promises to do so. Prospero instructs Ariel to summon the spirits to perform a masque for the young lovers. As Ariel goes, he asks his master whether he loves him, to which Prospero answers 'dearly', though he hurries Ariel to continue in his bidding.

Next the masque begins, consisting of three goddesses: Juno (queen of the gods), Iris (Juno's messenger and goddess of the rainbow) and Ceres (goddess of agriculture/fertility). They bless the watching couple, wishing them riches, honour and prosperity. Ferdinand is taken with the masque, and declares he would like to live on the island forever. Iris calls forth more nymphs to perform a country dance. No sooner has this started than Prospero calls a halt, remembering Caliban's plot to kill him, and that such time fast approaches. He sends the spirits away and tells Miranda and Ferdinand that it was merely an act. He then delivers a monologue about the act, which works on a meta level about the play itself. He might be thought of as the direct voice of Shakespeare here, talking to the audience through one of his characters.

The young lovers leave, and Prospero immediately summons Ariel, questioning why he did not remind him of the plot before the masque. There might be comedy in the way Prospero treats his servant with such disdain, but this comedy will be born out of the truth of this harshness. He seems satisfied by the response, and asks Ariel to fill him in on the men's whereabouts. Prospero thanks him, and they both go about laying the trap. They hang beautiful apparel on a clothesline for the men to attempt to steal. Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo enter, dripping wet. Stephano and Trinculo are immediately distracted by the clothing and want to steal it. Caliban urges them to be patient and follow through with the plan to murder Prospero, promising them that the rewards will be greater. Here we see a greater level of intelligence in Caliban than in his new masters. Stephano and Trinculo begin to take items off the line and try them on. Prospero and Ariel drive in spirits in the shape of dogs and hounds, who chase off the would-be conspirators.

Act Five

Scene 1

The same

Ariel informs Prospero that it has reached the sixth hour, the time at which he has promised Ariel his freedom. Prospero acknowledges this, but skims over it as he is fully engrossed in his plan now. He asks where the king and his followers are, and we learn from Ariel that they are imprisoned in a grove, as instructed. The king, Antonio and Sebastian are going mad, and Gonzalo is crying. Prospero sends Ariel to release them. At this point, the old sorcerer is left alone. He is now in complete control of all. He delivers a famous soliloquy in which he declares that he will give up magic once this is over.

Ariel returns with Alonso and his followers, who are under a spell. There are numerous ways in which this can be achieved on stage, but one option might be the use of still-image. Prospero addresses them, condemning the king and his brother, and praising Gonzalo for his loyalty. He then sends Ariel to fetch the robes he wore when he was duke of Milan. As Ariel helps him put the robes on, Prospero again promises him his freedom, but first sends him to fetch the boatswain and the other sailors.

Ariel goes and Prospero releases the men from the spell. He says he forgives Antonio but demands his dukedom back. Interestingly, Antonio does not respond verbally, and in fact barely says another word for the remainder of the play. This allows for some freedom of

choice between the actors and directors as to what causes this silence. Is Antonio struck by sheer shock for the rest of the play, or is he perhaps plotting something else?

Alonso tells Prospero that he has lost his son. Prospero replies that he has lost his daughter. By this point, Prospero is revelling in the power he now holds, and he eventually draws back a curtain to reveal Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess. The king is overjoyed, though he worries it may simply be another vision on the island. Comedically, Miranda marvels at the sight of more men. Alonso welcomes this union, and begs Miranda to forgive the treacherous events of twelve years ago. Alonso continues to apologise, but Prospero cuts him short and insists that all is now reconciled.

Ariel returns with the sailors, who announce that the ship is found. Prospero sends Ariel away to fetch Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano, which he does quickly. Prospero tells Caliban to go with his new companions and decorate his cell. Caliban does so, and grovels for his master's forgiveness. Prospero invites the others to join him for the night in his cell. In the morning, he will have Ariel return them to their ship. After this, he says, Ariel will be free.

Epilogue

Prospero delivers the epilogue, in direct address to the audience. He tells how his magic is now lost. He asks the audience to release him from the stage with applause. Though, as is usually the case with an epilogue, he appears to be addressing the audience as an actor, he stays in character as Prospero. This is an interesting indicator of the parallels which can be drawn between Prospero's magic and the art of the theatre.

Characters

Alonso

The king of Naples. A partner in the political coup that overthrew Prospero.

Sebastian

Alonso's younger brother. He is easily influenced by Antonio.

Ferdinand

Alonso's son. He assumes that his father has drowned, and that he is now king of Naples.

Antonio

Prospero's younger brother and the usurping duke of Milan.

Gonzalo

An honest old councillor. He is loyal, and is eventually praised for being so by Prospero.

Adrian and Francisco

Two shipwrecked lords.

Trinculo and Stephano

A jester and a drunken butler, both greedy and opportunistic. They are a comedy duo, providing contrast to the usurping noblemen and their hypocritical power struggles.

Prospero

The rightful duke of Milan. He studies the art of magic, and has perfected his skills during his twelve years on the island. He is a complex character, as although he has been wronged, he exacts plenty of revenge, and holds Ariel and Caliban as prisoners on the island. There is a great deal of humanity in him, both good and bad.

Miranda

Prospero's daughter. She has no knowledge of other humans, having been marooned on the island with her father since the age of three. She is innocent, though she becomes aware of her sexuality as the play develops, and she sees a man for the first time.

Ariel

An airy spirit, held prisoner by Prospero. Ariel can take any shape, and performs wondrous magic. His relationship with Prospero is fascinating: he continually asks for his freedom, yet always carries out his master's bidding. Finally, he is freed.

Caliban

A savage and deformed slave. He is the son of Sycorax, the witch who inhabited the island before Prospero. He rebels against his imprisonment, though at the end he kneels before his master and asks for forgiveness.

Iris, Ceres, Juno

Respectively, messenger of the gods, goddess of fertility and queen of the gods.

Social, cultural and historical context

William Shakespeare is widely considered the greatest English dramatist of all time. Born on 23 April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, he went on to write at least 38 plays. Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway at the age of 18. She was eight years older than him. They had three children: Susanna, and twins Hamnet and Judith. Information about his life after his marriage is sparse, but he is thought to have spent most of his time in London, writing and performing in his plays. Between 1585 and 1592, he began a successful career in London as an actor, writer, and part-owner of a playing company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as the King's Men.

Shakespeare produced most of his known work between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were mainly comedies and histories, and these works are still regarded as some of the best work produced in these genres. He then wrote mainly tragedies until about 1608, including *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, considered some of the finest works in the English language. In his last phase, he wrote tragicomedies, also known as romances, and collaborated with other playwrights.

Shakespeare's plays remain highly popular today and are studied, performed, and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world.

The Tempest was written around 1610, and was first performed by the King's Men in 1611.

It is most likely the last play that Shakespeare wrote alone, and it is unusual in that the plot is entirely original.

It is worth remembering that although the play features magic and, of course, a tempest, when it was first performed it included little in the way of special effects. The magic would have been created by the actors and in the minds of the audience.

Though it may seem as though the play is Shakespeare's swan song, he did go on to write a few more plays as collaborations. However, it does seem rather romantic that one of his final works is about an old magician giving up on his magic.

Themes

Justice / injustice

The action of the play was set in motion by the usurpation of Prospero by his brother. Thus, Prospero seeks revenge and this is what drives the narrative. There is also the imprisonment of Ariel and Caliban. In many ways, due to the absolute power Prospero wields, he is judge, jury, and executioner.

Art / theatre

There can be drawn a great many parallels with the magic of Prospero and the art of theatre. At times, Prospero sounds almost as the voice of Shakespeare, the author. In conjuring up the tempest, he uses Ariel and the spirits almost as theatre makers. The epilogue blurs the lines between the two.

Men and monsters

Caliban is half-man/half-monster. He claims to have treated Prospero and Miranda kindly and that their oppression has made him brutish. They see it otherwise though, and feel their education has made him more civilised and human-like. It is interesting to notice how the men of the play often behave like monsters, in their usurping and power-hungry ways. Might Prospero himself be viewed as a monster?

Power

The largely uninhabited island proves an alluring prospect to all who land on it. Prospero was previously robbed of his power in Milan, and has now seized power on the island from Caliban. He exerts this power over Caliban and Ariel, but also over the shipwrecked party, who after all are shipwrecked because of Prospero's sorcery. All the men who land on the island are tempted by the prospect of being king.

Coming of age

Miranda is fifteen at the time of the play, and discovers her sexuality on meeting Ferdinand. The masque is an exploration of marriage, and would have been a more comfortable way of dealing with the subject matter at the time the play was written.

Storm

As the play's title suggests, the tempest is a major theme in the play. The struggle for power proves to be a tempestuous one. Though the tempest itself happens at the beginning of the play, the theme of water runs throughout, as characters are often wet, and we hear thunder through the magic of Prospero and Ariel.

Resources

Recommended edition

The Tempest: Cambridge School Shakespeare

ISBN: 9780521618786

Further reading

1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare by James Shapiro

ISBN: 978-0571214815

1606: William Shakespeare and the Year of Lear by James Shapiro

ISBN: 978-0571235780

Online resources

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/nov/18/the-tempest-review-simon-russell-beale-rsc>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2014/apr/15/prospero-the-tempest-shakespeare-reading-group>

Useful soundtracks to use in the classroom

Full Fathom Five – The Stone Roses

Full Fathom Five – Various/ traditional

Practical exploration activities

Actors

The following exercises are designed to help theatre makers practically explore some of the key characters, themes and ideas that are central to *The Tempest*. Some of the exercises may help actors to consider how key roles might be communicated and realised from 'page to stage'.

Off-text improvisation is a useful explorative technique to consider the 'before and after' life of the play. You might explore moments from the play that are alluded to but not seen, for example:

- Antonio plotting to usurp his brother's dukedom
- Prospero escaping from Milan with his books and his daughter
- Caliban with his mother, Sycorax
- What happens that evening, after the epilogue?

Hot-seating is a valuable and exciting method to develop characterisation. It helps actors to 'flesh out' their understanding of the characters. Using their imagination and the information provided in the given circumstances will allow the actors to consider the voice, attitude and physicality of the character they are exploring.

A more theatrical way to explore hot-seating might be to combine this exercise with an off-text improvisation. For example, following on from the examples above, after we have watched a scene play out, we could immediately interview the character and ask them probing questions to discover thoughts the actor may not have considered.

Exploring accent and dialect can also help actors to consider character choices. It is not clear exactly where the island is, so there is freedom in the choices one can make here. How might Caliban speak, given that he is native to the island? Is there a certain way in which Ariel speaks as a spirit that is different from the humans?

Non-verbal communication is often a highly effective way to explore character, subtext, tension and silence. How does each character behave in moments of silence? For example, you might see how different characters behave when they are on their own. Does this differ from how they behave when they are around other characters? How?

Key scene work / alternative viewpoints

Another useful exercise to consider involves **staging and rehearsing a key scene with a particular focus** and then trying it in an alternative style. For example, the actors might explore status in conjunction with the director. The director calls out numbers from 1 to 20 for the actors in the space: 1 is the lowest status, that of a slug, if you will; 20 is the highest status, the king perhaps. By playing this game we can begin to discover how bodies in space can signify status, and this might give us a good indication of how to stage certain pivotal moments in the play, where status plays a crucial role. This is particularly useful for exploring the power that Prospero has on the island, and how he exerts this over both his slaves and his prisoners.

Designers

The following exercises and ideas are designed to help theatre makers explore some of the opportunities, themes and ideas that are central to *The Tempest*. Some of the suggestions may help designers to consider how key aspects of the play might be communicated and realised from 'page to stage'.

It might be useful to set up a **production meeting and pitch** for your student designers, as this will help them to consider the play as a whole and root their practical ideas in aims and intentions. Remember that audience impact is key, and that setting up small groups of potential theatre makers might help students to consider the text in a

holistic way. For example, a group could consist of a set, costume, sound and lighting designer. Smaller groups simply take on more than one area of responsibility. It is important that each designer questions the aims and intentions of the others, so that each member of the production team is able to think in a holistic and collaborative way. The design 'pitch' could then be offered to the teacher (producer). This is a useful discussion exercise that also lends itself to research, images and presentations. It can work at the start of a scheme of work to initiate ideas/contextualise themes and key moments, or at the end of a scheme of work as a way of ensuring all aspects of production are considered. It would also make an excellent 'active' revision session in time for the exam. TIP – each member of the production team should justify their ideas with key moments from the play.

Creating a model box of a potential set design is a useful exercise and can be as simple or as elaborate as required. It is often useful for students to see how each scene will be played in a potential space, and by creating a model box they will be able to refer more easily to their ideas in a specific space. *The Tempest* takes place on a non-specific island, so there is plenty of scope for creativity here. Remember that scenes often flow quickly into the next, and are often in similar locations. Therefore it may be useful to have a set that is versatile and in which we are able to change scene smoothly.

Exploring different music and sound effects for key scenes is another effective way of considering how design can play an important role in the development of a key idea or theme. When developing a sound design, don't just think in terms of music, maybe work from the sounds of nature and the tempest itself. A soundscape could be built for the whole play from a simple starting point. For example, how might the realistic sound of thunder be modified in order to allude to magic?

How can lighting help to create shadow and suspense? **Look at previous productions and lighting designs** to see how they have used lighting to create impact. If you don't have access to lighting, you might want to consider the effect of torches or candles. (Safety first!) Though the play is set in one place, consider how light might change the space, both literally in term of the time of day, but also metaphorically as the climax of the play approaches. Remember that the play was initially performed at The Globe in daylight, in the open air, so you don't need incredible technology to achieve spectacular results.

Another useful exercise that helps to build the world of the play and develop ideas for performance is **sourcing and designing potential costumes**. Research is key, and will help students who are initially daunted about the thought of 'designing'. They don't have to be great artists to create great designs. The main thing is that they approach the design of the production in a holistic way. Is their costume design expressionistic, representational, or more naturalistic? What is their aim and intention? Does their costume design root the production and performance in a particular time period or style? Often, characters are said to be wet; think about how this might be achieved, as it may not be possible to have water on stage.

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ALWAYS LEARNING

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