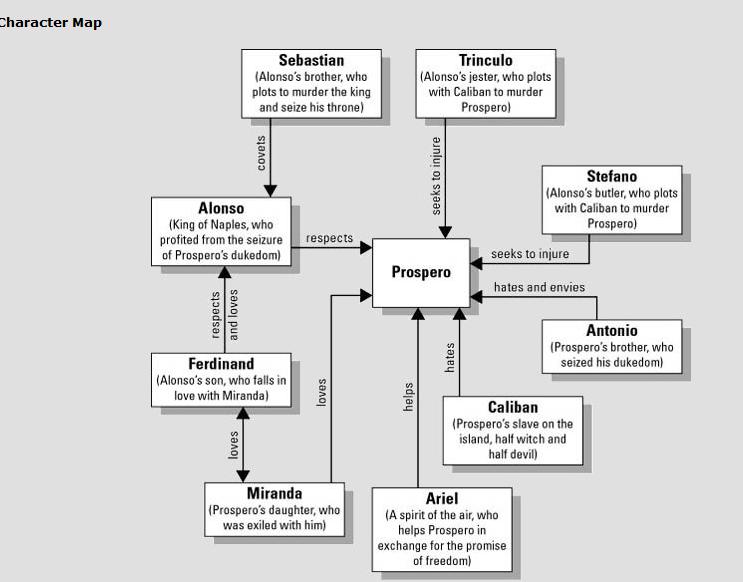
**THE TEMPEST**





**THE TEMPEST – FOCUS ON THE CONCEPT OF DISCOVERY**

* Blue: Discovery
* Pink: Quotes and Techniques
* Yellow:

**Shipwrecked was planned and storm created by Prospero**

**Places And The Concept Of Discovery**

In The Tempest Shakespeare directly addresses the link between notions of place and the broader concept of discovery. The opening lines of the play express the Master’s fear that the tempest will ‘run ourselves aground’ (Act 1, Scene 1, line 3) and lead to disaster for the ship’s crew. Indeed, the deposed Duke of Milan and Prospero and his realm of spirits, subjects and shipwrecked castaways all experience an unsettling chain of discoveries in their unwanted new land: insights, intuitions and new understandings by turn physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual.

It is the very exile of these characters from their homelands and imprisonment in a foreign place which creates the stage for the play’s continuous and revelatory process of discovery.

**Prospero’s Plan For The Role Of Discovery**

The island is a place where the sudden and alarming discoveries of the shipwrecked characters are expressed either in terms of wonder (in the case of Ferdinand) or else as despair (in the case of his father, King Alonso). Ferdinand is led through the island by the invisible laying and singing of Ariel. He asks rhetorically, here should this music be? I’ th’ air or th’ earth?’ (Act 1, Scene 2, line 387). His discovery is grim. Ariel forms him ‘Full fathom five thy father lies’ (Act 1, Scene 2, line 396). The alliteration of the fricative consonants creates a poetic rhythm that mirrors the sinking depth of his father’s dead body. ‘Fricative consonants’ refers to the **repetition** of the ‘f’ sound in this passage.

King Alonso is similarly led to believe the falsehood that his son and heir is dead:

O thou mine heir Of Naples and Milan, what strange fish

Hath made his meal on thee?’

(Act 2, Scene 1, lines 106—108)

The **metaphor** of the ‘strange fish’ alludes to the biblical of Jonah and the whale, a tale in which the Hebrew god Jehovah causes Jonah to be thrown) overboard from a ship during a tempest and swallowed fish. That is, Shakespeare draws upon biblical **symbolism** to indicate the power of Prospero to create a or his enemies upon which they will discover aspects of their sinful natures on a grand and epic scale.

The island is the stage upon which Prospero will engineer the transformation of his enemies, at once taking revenge upon his conspirators and creating a Neapolitan throne for his daughter Miranda. He achieves all this while simultaneously teaching his enemies an unforgettable lesson in earthly magic, divine power and human forgiveness.

**The Island And Discovery**

The island is the central setting of the play and important to the concept of discovery for the very reason that it is a **symbol** for territorial discovery itself, and a land whose ownership is in heated dispute: ‘This island’s mine by Sycorax my mother/ Which thou tak’st from me’ (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 333—334).

Caliban’s language to Prospero is direct and accusatory, continuing a broader theme in the play linking discovery to theft.

The audience learns in Prospero’s backstory to Miranda that the island was chanced upon following their joint forced exile from Milan, where ‘th’ winds, whose pity, sighing back again / Did us but loving wrong’ (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 150—151). Prospero’s use of oxymoron in his description of the elements (‘loving wrong’) expresses the **paradoxical** elements of pain, confusion and relief in his forced exile to the island.

The audience learns that Sycorax has previously endured the island in her own forced exile from Algier, and lorded over it; that King Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian, Adrian, Ferdinand, Stephano, Trinculo and Gonzalo have separately ‘discovered’ the island in the aftermath of the tempest when returning from Queen Claribel’s wedding in Tunis; and that the demi-devil Caliban now claims ownership over the isle via his mother, Sycorax.

**Place And Language Techniques**

Shakespeare’s use of language techniques in reference to discovery and place is notable in the parallel plots of Antonio and Sebastian and Trinculo and Stephano, four usurpers of land and title. The dry and caustic wit of the aristocratic Antonio and Sebastian is underscored by the use of **pun**, **irony**, **personification** and **stichomythia** (or contradictory retorts):

ADRIAN: It must needs be of subtle, tender, and delicate temperance.

ANTONIO: Temperance was a delicate wench.

SEBASTIAN: Ay, and a subtle; as he most learnedly deliver’d.

ADRIAN: The air breathes here most sweetly.

SEBASTIAN: As if it had lungs, and rotten ones.

ANTONIO: Or, as twere perfum’d by a fen.

(Act 2, Scene 1, lines 41—47)

The drunken language of Stephano and Thnculo in Act 2, Scene 2 is similarly witty and caustic in their mocking of Caliban, but verges on the absurd after the ‘strange fish’ convinces them to usurp kingship of the isle, and the audience experiences dramatic **irony** in recognition that the two men are deluded in their desire to seize the throne, as seen when Stephano declares ‘I prithee now, lead the way without any more talking./Trinculo, the king and all our company else being drown’ d,/ we will inherit here’ (Act 2, Scene 2, lines 150—152).

Shakespeare would seem to mock the European notion of ‘discovery’ and ownership of foreign land, especially in relation to disputed islands chanced upon and seized as a result of accidental conquest. Should responders adopt this point of view they would be ascribing to the so-called ‘post-colonial’ view of the play (explored later in this chapter).

**The Island As A Theatrical Place**

Shakespeare knowingly employs the island as a type of **symbolic** (or meta-theatrical) device to represent his own control of the stage. As a playwright who composed for large audiences, Shakespeare manipulated the events of the stage in an analogous manner to Prospero ‘playing’ with the moods and events of his friends and enemies on the isle.

It is tempting to think that Shakespeare conceptualises the island as a **meta-theatrical device** not only for the colonial experience of Englishmen abroad in Africa, and the newly-discovered Americas, but as the island of Great Britain itself (as King James contemporarily named it): a small and isolated land once simultaneously occupied by Romans, Celts and Druids. ‘All the world’s a stage’ Shakespeare told us in his 1599 comedy As You Like It.

In any event, the play appears to express the clear notion (despite a school of post-colonial theorists who virulently argue otherwise) that it is ultimately not important who rightfully lays claim to the discovery and sovereignty of a contested territory, but rather how we individually take the opportunity for personal discovery and growth upon our arrival in a strange, new land.

**Place And Symbolism**

In **symbolic** terms, the island’s purpose is to act as a sort of stage for discovery: responders witness the intellectual, emotional and spiritual discovery of all the main characters. The island is also a stage to which Prospero has been exiled, but one that he has learnt to master given his inordinate patience and skill to weave magic and control his delicate spirit Ariel (trapped in a cloven pine for twelve years by Sycorax and set free upon Prospero’s arrival).

The audience remembers that each character in the play is somehow displaced from their original homeland. They are alternately stranded, shipwrecked, wandering in circles of grief and lost on the foreign island or, in the case of Caliban, enslaved in their native land. Prospero’s design is that each of the main characters will discover something about themselves in the time and place he has created for their redemption. As a place of discovery then, the island is a location which every character is ultimately unwilling to enter and all eventually choose to leave, except native Caliban. Thematically, the island is a place of punishment, exile, imprisonment and introspection. **Paradoxically**, it I is also a place of freedom, wonder and spiritual discovery for those willing to embrace the lessons of their exile.

**Events And The Concept Of Discovery**

In the following set of events and their subsequent discoveries in the play, a responder might consider how the well-known academic theories about The Tempest are relevant to the concept of discovery. These academic theories are later explored in detail in the section on Ideas and the concept of discovery. It is also vital to consider the **representation** of events with regards to their accompanying language techniques. On occasion, the particular discovery of a given character might be emotional, creative, intellectual, physical or spiritual.

**Act 1**

**The Shipwreck Itself**—that is, the ‘drowning’ of the mariners and the exile of the wandering crew upon the isle after the tempest (Act 1, Scene 1). One of the many **symbols** of the sea-storm is that of Prospero’s, anger: the elements are conjured to send down his wrath upon Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian. The **metaphor** of birth is used in the event of the shipwreck, an idea explored in more detail later in the chapter.

Consider a handful of quotes which support the **symbolism** of the shipwreck as a birth in the fifty-eight lines of Act 1, Scene 1: ‘Blow till thou burst thy wind, if room enough!’; ‘You mar our labour’; ‘What cares these roarers for the name of king?’; ‘... make the rope of his destiny our cable’; ‘If he be not born to be hanged, our case is miserable’; ‘... as leaky as an unstanched wench’; ‘Lay her a-hold, a-hold’; ‘We split, we split, we split!’. The **imagery** of pregnancy, labour and delivery aptly **foreshadows** the birth of emotional and spiritual understanding Prospero’s enemies will experience during their three-hour sojourn on the isle (the Shakespeare as dramatist interpretation of the play).

**Miranda’s Journey**— Prospero places Miranda on a journey of discovery about the fate of the crew. It produces the desired effect within her of compassion: ‘O I have suffered with those that I saw suffer!’ (Act 1, Scene 2, line 5). Prospero recounts their perilous voyage to the enchanted isle.

**Prospero’s Intentions**— Ariel reports the sinking of the ship in the tempest to Prospero (Act 1, Scene 2, line 217). When Prospero asks whether or not the mariners are safe, the airy spirit replies, ‘Not a hair perished’. The **biblical allusion** to Christ (Luke 21:18: ‘not a hair of your head shall perish’) effectively **foreshadows** that Prospero’s intentions are grand, epic and ultimately benevolent (the revenge to forgiveness interpretation of the play).

**Ferdinand’s Discovery**— Ferdinand is approached by Ariel and discovers that his father has drowned, a troubling but false discovery, as it later transpires: ‘Full fathom five thy father lies/Of his bones are coral made/Those are pearls that were his eyes’ (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 396—398). Ariel’s song softens Ferdinand’s emotional discovery about the transformation of his father’s body deep at sea, beginning a **structural motif** in the play: song, which is employed by Ariel to variously comfort, tease, frighten and warn the shipwrecks and alternately employed in the subplot with Stephano and Trinculo to suggest the drunken and lascivious mood of the isle’s would-be usurpers (the Shakespeare as dramatist interpretation of the play).

**Ferdinand And Miranda**—Miranda discovers and lays eyes on Ferdinand and declares him ‘a thing divine’ (Act 1, Scene 2, line 417). Prospero’s reply, ‘No, wench, it eats, and sleeps, and hath such senses as we have, such’ (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 411—412) is a deliberate attempt to disguise his true purpose to bridge the two in marriage. His language here is notable for the way it reverts to monosyllables and effectively breaks the **rhythmic iambic pentameter** with a **prose**-like rebuke of harsh, base words. The effect of this language shift is to emphasise Ferdinand’s supposed coarseness and vulgarity as a usurper of a title.

**Discovery Of Love**— Prospero charms the ‘traitor’ Ferdinand and imprisons him. The purpose of his actions is to create an emotional discovery of love within his daughter for the wandering stranger (Act 1, Scene 2)

**Act 2**

**The Sea**— Gonzalo attempts to console Alonso with the discovery that their garments were not so fresh when they were first worn, and fails: ‘You cram these words mine ears, against the stomach of my sense’ (Act 2, Scene 1, lines 101—102). The **imagery** begins a set **nautical metaphors** in the play, notably with Alonso’s next lament for his missing son: ‘what strange fish hath made his meal on thee?’ (Act 2, Scene 1, lines 108). Later, Shakespeare positions the sea as a type vine digestive tract in Antonio’s declaration to Sebastian, ‘we were all sea-swallowed’ (Act 2, Scene 1, line 247), and Ariel’s explanation to Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian: ‘The never-surfeited sea hath d to belch up you’ (Act 3, Scene 3, lines 55—56). The effect of this **extended** **metaphor** is to position Prospero as the Hebrew god Jehovah and the sea, as the devouring whale in the biblical story of Jonah. It **alludes** to the idea that Prospero’s enemies have been stranded by destiny until they repent for their crimes (the revenge to forgiveness interpretation of the play).

**A New Age**— Gonzalo attempts to have the lords imagine they have discovered a new golden age, a commonwealth without riches or poverty, greed or hunger, and fails: ‘I’th’commonwealth I would by contraries/Execute all things’ (Act 2, Scene 1, lines 144—145). Gonzalo’s speech is analysed in a later section of the chapter but it is worth noting briefly that the **irony** of the utopian declaration begins with his promise to ‘execute’. The verb **puns** on the contrary attitude of the other shipwrecks in the subplot, who literally plot the execution of Prospero and more broadly **alludes** to the psychological dominance felt by all colonials who inhabit a foreign land (the post-colonial interpretation of the play).

**Temptation**—Antonio tempts Sebastian to discover his own buried desire to be king while Alonso sleeps: ‘My strong imagination sees a crown/Dropping upon thy head’, persuading him to join in the killing of Alonso and Gonzalo (Act 2, Scene 1, lines 204—205).

**Alonso’s Journey**— having awoken to the drawn swords of Sebastian and Antonio, Alonso leads the party on a journey of discovery to retrieve ‘my poor son’ (Act 2, Scene 1, line 321).

**Opportunities**—Stephano and Trinculo discover Caliban, a ‘most poor, credulous monster’ (Act 2, Scene 2, line 124). Stephano imagines he has discovered a four- legged beast (actually Caliban and Trinculo beneath a gabardine) and speculates that he will profit by taking the ‘monster’ back to Naples: ‘He’s a present for any emperor that ever trod on neat’s leather’ (Act 2, Scene 2, lines 62—63). Discovery is presented in this **context** as an opportunistic money-making venture for the wicked colonial exploiting the native ‘strange fish’. The stage directions for Trinculo to hide under Caliban’s cloak add a further layer of **irony** and **humour**: the ‘beast’ itself is not Caliban (or the native) but rather the exploitative invaders themselves, horribly entangled in a confusion of greed, theft and murder (the post- colonial and Shakespeare as dramatist interpretations of the play).

**A Physical Journey** — Caliban leads Stephano and Trinculo on a physical journey to discover ‘every fertile inch o’ th’ island’ (Act 2, Scene 2, line 125) and partake of the isle’s crabs, pignuts, sea birds and ‘clust’ring filberts’ (Act 2, Scene 2, line 148).

**Act 3**

**Ferdinand’s Journey**— Prospero places Ferdinand on a journey of physical discovery while carrying logs. Miranda’s insistence that he cease is an element of Prospero’s design: her witnessing his discomfort builds empathy for Ferdinand’s experience and a growing desire for marital companionship: ‘If you’ll sit down I’ll bear your logs the while’ (Act 3, Scene 1, line 25). Miranda’s discovery—Miranda relates her discoveries of other men and women to Ferdinand, unsuccessfully trying to imagine ‘a shape besides yourself, to like of’ (Act 3, Scene 1, lines 57—58). The **biblical allusion** here to Adam and Eve is instructive: for those who perceive discovery as a thing of wonder (such as Gonzalo), the isle is a veritable Eden and fecund paradise with Prospero at its centre, a god-like figure wandering through the garden and eavesdropping on his creatures.

**Ariel’s Accusations** — Ariel enters invisible and sounds hostile accusations—’thou liest’—to inspire Stephano to strike Trinculo (Act 3, Scene 2, line 56). Caliban places Stephano on a journey of imagination and discovery that he will be lord of the island and populate it through Prospero’s daughter if they can ‘brain’ the sleeping man, ‘having first seized his books’ (Act 3, Scene 2, lines 80—81). Later in the stage directions ‘Ariel plays the tune on a tabor and pipe’ (Act 3, Scene 2), a physical discovery causing Trinculo to speculate that a devil is upon them and furthermore, the mock-repentant exclamation of ‘O, forgive me my sins!’ (Act 3, Scene 2, line 123). Caliban consoles Stephano and Trinculo in turn: ‘Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises’ (Act 3, Scene 2, line 127).

Alonso promptly declares of his missing son ‘He is drowned’ (Act 3, Scene 3, line 8). A vital element of Prospero’s intention is that Alonso’s assumption and ‘discovery’ will lead to empathy and understanding for what he has perpetrated upon the exiled Duke of Milan (the revenge to forgiveness interpretation of the play).

**Intellectual Discovery**—sweet music fills the air and ‘several strange shapes’ (Act 3, Scene 3) bring in a banquet before the weary lords, prompting Sebastian’s acceptance of supernatural phenomena such as unicorns and the phoenix throne. Gonzalo is prompted to recall the scepticism of his youth about the existence of ‘mountaineer’s dewlapped like bulls’ (Act 3, Scene 3, lines 44—45), a discovery of the intellect which challenges the characters’ and responders’ rational assumptions. The banquet furthermore inspires Gonzalo to speculate whether the people of Naples would believe their account of the islanders: ‘Who though they are of monstrous shape, yet note/ Their manners are more gentle, kind, than of/Our human generation you shall find’ (Act 3, Scene 3, lines 31—33). Discovery is presented in this **context** as a process of identification with broader society or, in post-colonial theory, the ‘other’: the untouchable native strangers who populate the colonial’s acquired territory.

**Self-Discovery**—-Ariel enters as a harpy, removes the viands and announces that Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian are ‘three men of sin’ (Act 3, Scene 3, line 53), prompting Alonso to speculate that his own son is certainly drowned. He experiences overwhelming guilt for his actions against Prospero: ‘The name of Prosper; it did bass my trespass’ (Act 3, Scene 3, line 99). Thus Prospero has fulfilled a vital element of his grand design: creating understanding within the Neapolitan king via discovery for the wickedness of his actions twelve years earlier.

**Act 4**

**Ferdinand’s Discoveries** — Prospero informs Ferdinand that he has won his endurance trials and is permitted to marry Miranda. Ferdinand’s range of physical, emotional and spiritual discoveries has formed the greater part of Prospero’s plan for the elevation of his daughter to the Neapolitan throne (Act 4, Scene 1).

**Discovery Of A Crime**—the masque begins and is interrupted by the plot upon Prospero’s life in the shape of Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo, whose would-be victim discovers their intentions. Prospero ends the masque in anger at the discovery of Caliban’s plot to murder him, informing Ferdinand ‘We are such stuff as dreams are made on’ (Act 4, Scene 1, lines 156— 157), and placing Ferdinand and the audience on a journey of intellectual discovery concerning the ontology of human beings. Prospero employs **theatrical** **metaphors** (‘actors’, ‘baseless fabric of this vision’, ‘the great globe itself’, ‘insubstantial pageant faded’) to emphasise the way that the stage offers its audience manifold intellectual and spiritual epiphanies in the course of a play.

**Ariel’s Lead**—Ariel describes how he led Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban through thickets by means of a tabor to discover a filthy ‘mantled pool’ and left them in the stink up to their chins (Act 4, Scene 1, line 182). The jester and the butler—Caliban urges Stephano and Trinculo to murder Prospero but the butler and jester are distracted by their discovery of ‘glistening apparel’ (stage direction, Act 4, Scene 1) and squabble over the gowns. Trinculo’s language is full of **mock exclamations**: ‘O King Stephano, O worthy peer, O worthy Stephano!’ (Act 4, Scene 1, line 220). The drunken worship of the jester is a feature of **dramatic irony** and **humour**: the audience recognises that the murderous plot is doomed to fail and mirrors the failed plot of Antonio, Sebastian and Alonso.

**A Physical Discovery**— Prospero and Ariel set ‘diverse spirits in shape of dogs and hounds’ (Act 4, Scene 1) upon Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban, a distinctly sensory or physical discovery for the three insurgents. Prospero’s language in this Scene displays his bitter, vengeful and malevolent temperament when faced with a conspiracy: ‘Fury, Fury! There, Tyrant, there! Hark, hark!’ (Act 4, Scene 1, line 251). The dogs’ names aptly **symbolise** his inner ferocity for his would-be murderers.

**Act 5**

**Prospero’s Choice**—Prospero informs Ariel that he will soon forgive his enemies and afterwards declares to the spirits that ‘I’ll drown my book’ (Act 5, Scene 1, line 57). Prospero’s overly-measured **iambic pentameter** achieves a near-staccato rhythm which conveys his anger at the assumptions of Ariel. His speech is broken into multiple enjambments and caesuras (or run-over thoughts and comma breaks half-way through the lines) to **symbolise** the overwhelming nature of thoughts ‘flooding’ his mind—the fierce divisions within his thinking about whether or not to forgive his enemies— and provides a perfect mirror of the mercurial, neurotic magician who previously lost concentration at the masque to focus on revenging the foul plot upon his life:

ARIEL: Your charm so works ‘em

That if you now beheld them, your affections

Would become tender.

PROSPERO: Does thou think so, spirit?

ARIEL: Mine would, sir, were I human.

PROSPERO: And mine shall. Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling

Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,

One of their kind, that relish all as sharply

Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?

(Act 5, Scene 1, lines 17—24)

**Coming Full Circle**—Prospero draws a magic circle around his enemies who, to their astonishment, discover the former Duke of Milan standing in their midst (Act 5, Scene 1). The stage direction for ‘Prospero traces out a circle on the stage’ (Act 5, Scene 1) strongly conveys the high **symbolism** of the moment: the ‘revolution’ against the Duke of Milan has come ‘full circle’. Prospero has entrapped his enemies in a circular ‘isle’ analogous to his own island prison. The men are trapped within a **metaphorical** womb of time and soon [to be delivered, reminding responders of the multiple **imagery** of pregnancy, labour and birth in the opening Scene of the sea-storm (the Shakespeare as dramatist 4nterpretation of the play).

**Discovery And Rediscovery**—Prospero forgives his enemies and discovers that Antonio is not penitent. Alonso rediscovers Ferdinand and sees him playing chess with Miranda (Act 5, Scene 1). The stage direction is a further element of **symbolism** and **irony**: it is Prospero who has ‘played chess’ with his enemies and brought them to within one square of their figurative checkmate, remembering that his grand design is to advance the awn’ Miranda to the queen of Naples. Miranda discovers the king and courtiers and stands amazed: ‘O wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here/How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world/That as such people in’t!’ (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 1—183).

Miranda’s awe is almost too plainly **ironic** in that she actually beholds her father’s enemies, yet her heartfelt, ecstatic declaration **contrasts** the hollowness of Trinculo’s earlier drunken worship of Stephano and underscores her essential humanity, despite her father’s wry retort, ‘Tis’ new to thee’ (Act 5, Scene 1, line 184).

**The Epilogue**—Prospero sets Ariel free and asks the audience to ‘release me from my bands with the help of your good hands’ (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 9—10). His words are ambiguous upon a closer reading of the text: Prospero may be genuinely set free from the isle by play’s end or else left stranded to dwell on the bare island. The Epilogue might, in fact, form a plea for forgiveness to the courtiers who have already exited and thereby left him with Caliban (Act 5, Scene 1). Such a reading would be regarded either as a post-colonial or Shakespeare as dramatist interpretation of the play.

**People And The Concept Of Discovery**

**Prospero**

His grand design is to initiate others into a range of physical, emotional, creative, intellectual and spiritual discoveries. He himself is capable of discovery though as seen in the discovery of a buried and forgotten desire in Act 5, Scene 1 to forgive even those who have wronged him, such as Antonio, despite their refusal to demonstrate repentance.

**Miranda**

The daughter of Prospero discovers and falls deeply in love with Ferdinand, her father’s captured ‘spy’, who she spies in his wandering through the isle and later in his imprisonment, a set of discoveries alternately emotional, physical, creative, intellectual and spiritual. Prospero’s daughter learns patience, empathy and strength in preparation for her future role as queen of Naples.

Her own journey begins with her discovery in Act 1, Scene 2 of the evil machinations of her uncle Antonio. Within Miranda, Prospero’s careful tutoring and discovery of the shipwreck has already produced the desired qualities of compassion and empathy (as evidenced by her heartfelt reaction to the shipwreck). He furthermore seeks to enlighten her to the cut-throat and Machiavellian ways of the royal court, which she will soon join in Naples should his plan prove successful. What she ultimately discovers is love, a husband and humanity itself.

**Ferdinand**

The Neapolitan prince’s discoveries and exile on the island prepare him for a just kingship of Naples and prevent him from repeating his father’s mistakes of greed, conspiracy and persecution. Ferdinand is brought to humility and grace via his disconcerting set of physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual discoveries which by their very nature (hard work, loss of father and marriage) transform him into a man. The origin of his first emotional discovery is patently false: his father King Alonso is not dead. The concept of discovery relevant to a responder’s study of Ferdinand is that sudden and alarming discoveries of the emotions and intellect are vital in order to experience empathy and personal growth: ‘There be some sports are painful, and their labour/Delight in them sets off’ (Act 3, Scene 1, lines 1—2).

In bringing Ferdinand to the isle and immediately imprisoning him after his daughter has fallen in love, Prospero invents a courtship which teaches the prince and Miranda that marital love is built upon a gymnast’s fine line of patience, temperance, fidelity and slowly- burning lust: ‘They are both in either’s powers, but this swift business/I must uneasy make, lest too light winning/Make the prize light’ (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 449—450).

Prospero condones Miranda’s filial disobedience, despite his apparent reluctance to celebrate her union to the young prince: ‘So glad of this as they I cannot be/Who are surprised with all; but my rejoicing/At nothing can be more. I’ll to my book.’ (Act 3, Scene 1, lines 94—96).

Ferdinand imagines via Prospero’s planned ‘discovery’ that his father has been lost to the sea, unleashing a sensory grief and speculative frame of mind which tests his maturity and willingness to be monarch. In experiencing what it is to lose a parent, and endure the work of a common log-bearer, Ferdinand is humbled and made empathetic to all who have endured sorrow, adversity and the arbitrary power of a despot. Through such an experience it is intended that he will gain the ‘common touch’ and therefore be a wiser ruler than Prospero, who despite his protestations to Miranda of his local popularity, wholly ignored his Milanese public and unwisely delegated his sovereignty to Antonio in pursuit of scholarly studies.

**Alonso**

The Neapolitan king discovers an overwhelming sense of guilt and empathy for Prospero in his exile, and the heartbreaking belief that his son and heir, Ferdinand, has perished in the sea-storm. Alonso is eventually reconciled to his son and his repentance for his crimes against Prospero creates the circumstances for a stable transition of his regal powers to Ferdinand, and importantly, the necessary conditions for Prospero’s safe return to Milan. The king’s various physical, emotional and intellectual discoveries form the basis of the play’s central plot. Alonso represents the way that painful emotional discoveries centred on guilt and self- recognition may ultimately provide spiritual benefit and redemption for their sufferer: ‘But O, how oddly will it sound, that I/Must ask my child forgiveness!’ (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 196—197).

**Caliban**

Sycorax’s son and demi-devil of the isle experiences a set of discoveries variously physical and emotional, which for some represent the way that the European ‘discovery’ of land robbed African and Caribbean natives of their identity, dignity and territorial rights. In this way, ironically, Caliban shares Prospero’s loss of land and title: ‘This island’s mine by Sycorax my mother’ (Act 1, Scene 2, line 332). Caliban furthermore initiates the physical discovery of the island for Stephano and Trinculo in the play’s second subplot. Caliban’s use of language is alternately sullen, fierce, accusatory and serene. His famous ‘Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises’ speech (Act 3, Scene 2, line 127) captures his natural eloquence, an eloquence ironically learnt at the feet of Prospero via language which he has earlier rejected in Act 1, Scene 2.

**Stephano And Trinculo**

The drunken butler Stephano and court jester Trinculo comically ‘discover’ the island by means of their host, Caliban. The two men are represented as murderous opportunists who literally stumble onto the isle after shipwreck and afterwards experience a range of unsettling and painful physical discoveries in their drunken greed to seize kingship of the island. The pair represent the contemporary savagery and opportunism of Europeans in their exploitation of subjugated foreigners, especially so in Trinculo’s speculation about how he could paint and exhibit his ‘strange fish’ Caliban (Act 2, Scene 2, line 25) for a ‘piece of silver’ in England (Act 2, Scene 2, line 27).

**Gonzalo**

The Neapolitan lord’s reaction to his exile prompts fevered speculations about the utopian possibilities of the isle. He is open-minded to the steep challenge of his predicament and therefore represents the aspect in the rubric which declares ‘discoveries open us up to new worlds’ and ‘discoveries can be fresh and intensely meaningful in ways that may be emotional, creative, intellectual, physical and spiritual’. Gonzalo is innocent of all criminal intent (and was indeed a benefactor of Prospero during his forced exile from Milan), yet gains in metaphysical leaps and bounds through his various discoveries on the isle. His knowledge of the evil ways of the Neapolitan court is bridged to his wondrous speculations about the possibilities for mankind on the isle, and in this way his rapid character arc is a **foreshadowing** device for that of Prospero’s. Gonzalo’s epiphany about the possibilities of the isle is most famously captured in his speech about a commonwealth without services, contracts, agriculture and occupations, essentially the dream of a Christian paradise: I ‘th’ commonwealth I would by contraries

Execute all things. For no kind of traffic

Would I admit; no name of magistrate;

Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,

And use of service, none; contract, succession,

Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none.

(Act 2, Scene 1, lines 144—148)

His speculations are moreover an ironic statement on the miraculous sustenance of Prospero on the isle and the beatific results of his own compassion twelve years earlier, having personally supplied the exiled Duke’s raft with nourishing provisions and his prized books. Gonzalo reacts to his isolation with a continuous discovery of the intellect and emotions which transform his perceptions of others and his broader society. The various language devices of his ‘commonwealth’ speech—**listing**, **inverted syntax** and the **repetition** of ‘no’, ‘not’ and ‘none’—is an effective means of capturing the nature of his perverse epiphany after being stranded, but also the underlying difficulty of his projection. When critics refer to his speech as ‘utopian’, it essentially means that it is idealistic to the point of being impractical. Shakespeare acknowledges this reality in the language of Gonzalo.

**Ariel**

Prospero’s spirit enacts the discoveries of the other characters at his master’s request. He is an agent for discovery and driven by the memory of his own discovery by Prospero which relieved him from imprisonment in a cloven pine by Sycorax: ‘Hast thou forgot/The foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy/Was grown into a hoop? Hast thou forgot her?’ (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 257—258). Ariel furthermore assists his master in the recognition of a far-reaching and transformative discovery for the individual and his broader society: the willingness of Prospero to forgive his enemies (Act 1, Scene 2).

**Antonio**

The brother of Prospero (and usurper of the dukedom of Milan) represents the way that intense, sudden and unexpected physical discoveries do not always effect change upon one’s character. He plots the murder of Gonzalo and Alonso along with co-conspirator Sebastian, an action of criminal opportunism. Prospero fly reluctantly forgives his brother in Act 5, Scene 1 or seizing his dukedom twelve years earlier.

Antonio is unaffected by his sensory experiences and furthermore seeks to opportunistically exploit his exile convincing Sebastian to murder Alonso. This points to an undercurrent of realism in the play but also to the miracle of the contrary experiences of Alonso and Ferdinand: the transformative effects of discovery create the desired measure of humility, empathy and understanding within the Neapolitan king and his heir.

**Relationships And The Concept Of Discovery**

**Prospero**

Shakespeare constructed The Tempest in such a way that the discoveries of the major characters are ‘paired’ to Prospero’s growing discoveries about himself and to our own recognition as responders that Prospero, in part, shares the very character traits of those whom he persecutes. It is a type of intellectual discovery for the responder which informs our response, especially so in regards to the character arc of the protagonist. Prospero’s eventual reconciliation with his enemies is moreover reconciliation to himself. His emotional, intellectual and spiritual discoveries lead him to the point of deciding to abandon his earthly magic—the appeal to a divine power for forgiveness—and return back to Europe an ordinary man, albeit the reinstated Duke of Milan.

Prospero’s grand design is for the revelation, guilt, shame, repentance and forgiveness of his enemies, and a regal marriage for daughter Miranda. Prospero’s focus is therefore centred on repairing his fractured relationships with individuals who have previously wronged him, but also on creating a key relationship between Ferdinand and Miranda by means of a continuous set of physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual discoveries. However, an element of the responders’ discovery is that Prospero’s own character, faults and sins closely resemble those of his enemies and friends: ‘Two of these fellows you/Must know and own; this thing of darkness, I /Acknowledge mine’ (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 273—274). It is arguable from the theoretical standpoint that the play is about Prospero’s journey from revenge to forgiveness, and that his sudden pardon of his enemies is brought about from this inner recognition of guilt and self-recognition as much as his stated compassion for Gonzalo’s suffering.

The recognition of his own human failings and propensity for cruelty creates a means to reconcile himself to his enemies, and to humanity at large. The role of relationships in the play is that through these various pairings with other characters and their planned discoveries Prospero recognises that, despite his years of isolation and study of magic, he is more human than divine: ‘Shall not myself,/One of their kind ... be kindlier moved than thou art?’ (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 22—24).

The point about the role of discovery in the play’s relationships (and relevance to the concept of discovery) is that for Prospero, discovery is confronting and provocative, leading to new worlds and **values** that challenge his widely-held assumptions and beliefs about aspects of human experience:

Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th’quick

Yet, with my nobler reason, ‘gainst my fury

Do I take part. The rarer action is

In virtue, than in vengeance.

(Act 5, Scene 1, lines 25—28)

An analysis follows of the close ties Prospero shares with each of the other major characters in the play, traits which inform the self-discovery of his own humanity and therefore **foreshadow** his eventual desire to re-join broader society by play’s end.

**Ariel And Prospero**

‘Discoveries can emerge from a process of deliberate and careful planning evoked by curiosity, necessity or wonder.’

Prospero is wholly similar to Ariel with regard to their joint desire to coerce and control. An element of Prospero’s plan is to coerce his spirit Ariel with the threat of imprisonment long enough to conjure the various discoveries of his enemies. Both characters wield magic to achieve their own ends, display wilful and temperamental attitudes, and are capable of temporary cruelty: ‘I will rend an oak/And peg thee in his knotty entrails till/Thou hast howled away twelve winters’ (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 294—296). Critically, both characters ultimately yearn for freedom from their imprisonment on the isle.

**Antonio And Prospero**

‘An individual’s discoveries and their process of discovering can vary according to their personal, cultural, historical and social **contexts** and **values**.’

Prospero is wholly similar to Antonio with regards to their joint propensity for the transformation of themselves and others. Prospero’s explanation of his brother’s ride to power in Act 1 reveals that Antonio had the power to cast spells and transform those around him: ‘new created/The creatures who were mine, I say, or changed ‘em,/ Or else new formed ‘em ... to what tune pleased his ear’ (Act 1, Scene 2, lines 81—85), an ironic reference both to Prospero’s magical powers and Ariel’s sweet music. The brothers are wholly similar in respect to their willingness to opportunistically draw upon the power of others to their own advantage. Antonio was the ivy who ‘sucked the verdure’ out of Prospero, just as the exile, in turn, draws upon Ariel’s power to create havoc among the shipwrecked crew (Act 1, Scene 2, line 87).

**Stephano, Trinculo And Prospero**

‘Discoveries can offer new understandings and renewed perceptions of ourselves and others.’

Prospero is wholly similar to Stephano and Trinculo with regards to their collective paranoid and neurotic ways and hubristic propensity to claim kingship. Prospero’s neurotic ways are evidenced in his insistent questioning of his daughter’s attentiveness in Act 1, his obsession about Miranda’s sexual chastity in discussions with Ferdinand, and his abandonment of the masque to quell the conspiracy of Caliban.

The drunken jester Trinculo and butler Stephano are similarly always of the belief that they are suffering persecution. In Trinculo, Prospero encounters a compulsive and highly nervous jester who is a psychological doppelganger (double) of himself. In Stephano, the ship’s drunken butler, Prospero encounters an unsettling reminder of his own life: a servant hostage to a higher power who believes himself king of the isle and is intoxicated on his regency and another who arbitrarily wields his power over Caliban only to eventually relinquish this at the recognition of a higher authority.

**Alonso and Prospero**

‘Discoveries ... can lead us to new worlds and **values**, stimulate new ideas, and enable us to speculate about future possibilities ... The ramifications of particular discoveries may differ for individuals and their worlds.’

Prospero’s experience on the isle is wholly similar to Alonso’s in numerous ways. Alonso knows that owing to his plot twelve years earlier with Antonio, Prospero has lost his dukedom. By ‘losing’ his own kingdom for three hours on the isle, Alonso understands the sensory nature of Prospero’s loss and is able to recognise the immorality of his actions, thereby empathising with Prospero as another who has lost all: kingdom, heir and sense of self.

In Alonso, Prospero has under his spell a foreign ruler who effects the overthrow of another sovereign (as Prospero himself does to Antonio in Act 5, Scene 1), a father and monarch who has lost his heir, and a despairing ruler in the company of desperate and opportunistic lords who seek to topple him. Moreover, Alonso’s similarity to Prospero lies in his affection for Ferdinand and his desire to be with his missing child, as Prospero is similarly prepared to sacrifice his beloved book and drowns it ‘deeper than did ever plummet sound’ (Act 5, Scene 1, line 56) to grant Miranda a second chance at life.

**Sycorax And Prospero**

‘Discovery can encompass the experience of discovering something for the first time or rediscovering something which has been lost, forgotten or concealed.’

Prospero shares the following with Sycorax: a child stranded on the isle; a controversial ability to conjure magic; an accusation of being linked to the devil (Sebastian: ‘The devil speaks in him!’, (Act 5, Scene 1, line 129); and the power to condemn Ariel to a cloven pine. Both are forced exiles at the hands of their countrymen and each has a mysterious reprieve: just as Sycorax’s life is spared for ‘one thing’, Prospero’s is saved by the sole virtue of his popularity (Act 1, Scene 2, line 266).

Furthermore, the exile of Sycorax condemns the marital prospects of her son just as Prospero’s banishment similarly condemns Miranda’s: Sycorax is the only woman besides Miranda who Caliban has laid his eyes upon, just as Prospero is the only man besides Caliban who Miranda has sighted.

**Ferdinand, Miranda And Prospero**

‘Discoveries can be fresh and intensely meaningful in ways that may be emotional, creative, intellectual, physical and spiritual.’

The young prince shares noticeable similarities to the 4 bookish Prospero, who also knows little of the hardships of common men prior to his exile. Prospero leads Ferdinand through a series of physical, emotional and spiritual discoveries and thereby trains Ferdinand to be a hard-working, compassionate and empathetic king through his log-carrying travails (reminiscent of Edgar’s ‘Poor Tom’ experience in King Lear). Moreover, Ferdinand’s thoughtful, articulate and fairly spoken replies to Prospero’s various questions finds a willing listener in the Duke, who recognises a similarity of temperament in the young man, a similarity evident in Ferdinand’s display of endurance and idealism in the face of imprisonment. In Miranda, Prospero has a kindred spirit who is idealistic and naive in her conception of mankind, a trusting soul whose noble purpose is betrayed by Caliban, just as his own is broken by his brother Antonio.

**Ideas And The Concept Of Discovery**

It is important to distinguish between the syllabus notion of ‘ideas’ and a more traditional literary analysis which focuses on ‘themes’. Themes are not necessarily conceptual ideas. That is, responders might reflect that themes of The Tempest include revenge, love, redemption, magic, rebellion and loss but these broader sues are to be distinguished from the more refined articulation of ideas about Prospero’s concept of discovery and its deliberate and planned role in the three hour ordeal suffered by his enemies. Prospero’s purpose for planning, enacting and observing the discoveries of the various characters on the isle is highly complex and suggests the design of a project or grand plan: ‘Now does my project gather to a head’ 125, Act 5, Scene 1, line 1).

The chronological sequence of events on the island is set out in an earlier section of this chapter. An analysis of these events reveals that Prospero has a definite plan and reason for enacting the various discoveries of his shipwrecks, a plan which satisfies the dual purpose of obtaining revenge over his enemies and ensuring the safe marriage and prosperous future of daughter Miranda:

Their understanding

Begins to swell, and the approaching tide

Will shortly fill the reasonable shore

That now lies foul and muddy.

(Act 5, Scene 1, lines 79—82)

Prospero’s marine **metaphor** for his enemies’ understanding highlights various dramatic techniques: the play’s **motif** of water, the figurative ‘swelling’ of guilt within his enemies’ hearts, the sense that Prospero’s injustice has now returned as a tide returns back to shore, and the **symbolic** setting of an isle whose prisoners are stranded in a **metaphorical** ocean of despair.

**The Rationale For Prospero’s Planned Discoveries**

Given that his enemies know what their actions have affected upon the exiled Duke and initially are not contrite, the role of discovery is to generate their self- awareness of their own crimes, draw upon their natural guilt, and ultimately produce their penitence. That is, the several discoveries perpetrated upon his enemies serve to bridge the buried self-knowledge of their crimes to an equivalent sensory experience or discovery of Prospero’s suffering.

**Prospero’s Grand Design For His Enemies And Miranda**

Prospero’s grand design maybe simply stated as a plan to:

* strand his enemies upon the isle after a contrived shipwreck
* cause his enemies to believe they are forever lost and that King Alonso’s son and heir to the Neapolitan throne, Prince Ferdinand, is dead
* create the recognition within his enemies that their suffering is analogous to Prospero’s suffering twelve years earlier
* build empathy within those who cruelly exiled him from Milan with parallel experiences of frustration, exile and loss
* manufacture the courtship and marriage of his fifteen- year-old daughter Miranda to the Neapolitan prince
* ensure the political conditions for his own safe return to Italy
* generate the penitence of his enemies and, therefore, the necessary conditions for his own forgiveness and trust
* return to Milan after drowning the magical powers which hitherto served and protected him on the isle but compromised his previous rule of Milan and indirectly threaten his future rule. For each of the characters, their discoveries are alternately shocking, heartbreaking, testing, painful, rewarding or else designed to create virtue by instilling patience, hard work and empathy.

Prospero draws upon the magic of Ariel to enact the various physical and emotional discoveries of his enemies with song, music, false banquets and hunting dogs and shapes. However, Ariel’s discovery of the havoc wrought upon the shipwrecks causes him to urge Prospero to forgive his enemies in Act 5, Scene 1. Miranda undergoes an alarming set of discoveries under Prospero’s design, including the physical and emotional discoveries of grief after witnessing a drowning ship, learning about her troubled family history, falling in love with a wandering prince, and encountering the ‘brave new world’ of shipwrecks in Act 5.

For Alonso, his experience on the isle is a moral discovery (or emotional and spiritual discovery in rubric terms) after recognising his crimes against Prospero:

O, it is monstrous: monstrous!

Methought the billows spoke and told me of it,

The winds did sing it to me, and the thunder,

That deep and dreadful organ-pipe, pronounced The name of Prosper.

It did bass my trespass;

Therefore my son i ‘th’ ooze is bedded and

I’ll seek him deeper than e’er plummet sounded,

And with him there lie mudded.

(Act 3, Scene 3, lines 95—102)

Shakespeare breaks the iambic **pentameter** with anapaestic substitution in the opening line of Alonso’s declaration to stress the father’s deep and abiding understanding of his own crime, laying emphasis on the word ‘monstrous’. The **repetition** of ‘monstrous’ reinforces the sense of Alonso’s self-discovery that his ‘mudded’ son lies in a sea-grave owing to his own ‘trespass’, the **imagery** **punning** on the idea that while his son is buried in mud, Alonso has muddied his own soul by abandoning Prospero to the same elements twelve years earlier.

Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban all experience unsettling physical discoveries in their battles against Ariel, who torments them with apparitions of viands, glistening apparel, stinking pools and vicious dogs (act 4, Scene 1).

In the case of Gonzalo, the Neapolitan lord undergoes discoveries in equal measure intellectual and emotional, causing him to speculate upon the ideal social, political, agricultural and spiritual possibilities of the isle (Act 2, Scene 1).

**Contrastingly**, Sebastian and Antonio appear wholly unmoved by their discoveries on the isle. Prospero plans that the experience of shipwreck, familial grief and a deep sense of personal loss will lead to empathy, understanding and penitence in the heart of brother Antonio and King Alonso, an appropriate state of mind to justify his eventual forgiveness. Antonio ultimately does not repent. However, such is the design of Prospero’s plan that his brother’s lack of remorse does not unhinge the execution of his grand project at play’s end:

For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother

Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive

Thy rankest fault—all of them—and require

My dukedom of thee, which perforce I know

Thou must restore.

(Act 5, Scene 1, lines 130—134)

A cynic might argue that Prospero’s intention is simply to safeguard himself from future insurrections upon return to Milan without his shield of ‘rough magic’. The Epilogue (Act 5, Scene 1) provides a curious hint at this possibility, which is discussed in the section on Language and the sense of discovery.

Moreover, the greater part of Prospero’s grand design is to establish a model regency for Ferdinand and Miranda. This is largely achieved by placing the young Neapolitan prince on journeys of emotional discovery about his ‘dead’ father and a visceral discovery of physical work via carrying logs as the ‘prisoner’ of Prospero.

The design of Prospero’s plan for Ferdinand is that he will prove a model suitor for Miranda and return to Naples from his journey of self-discovery with a newfound empathy for the working men of his kingdom, the falsely accused and imprisoned, and the ordinary subject at large. This, in turn, will create a model kingship for the people of Naples and a suitably loving husband for his daughter and Neapolitan queen, Miranda: ‘If I have too austerely punished you/Your compensation makes amends’ (Act 4, Scene 1, lines 1—2).

**Key Ideas About The Tempest And Discovery**

In researching The Tempest responders will learn that there are a range of well-known, pre-existing ideas about the play written by Shakespearean academics, scholars and critics who had no idea that the Board of Studies would eventually create an Area of Study based upon ‘discovery’. Higher-level students will naturally gravitate towards these conceptual and academic ideas rather than simply train their focus on simplistic and literal references to the various physical and emotional discoveries in the play.

The following section attempts to show responders how they might absorb these traditional academic ideas about the play and successfully filter them through the concept of discovery.

**Idea 1**: The play is about Prospero’s journey from revenge to forgiveness—this well-known theory maintains that the play is about a lonely and vengeful political exile who opportunistically ensnares his enemies with magic, coercing Ariel to flame ‘amazement’ around their ship’s mast, and thereby captures Alonso and Antonio returning to Naples from Algiers (Act 1, Scene 2, line 198). This idea holds that Prospero is principally driven by the desire for revenge and that he is ultimately convinced to forego his revenge in Act 5 only after Ariel shames him. This theory holds that Prospero’s character arc is evidenced by his willingness to renounce vengeance and forgive his enemies:

ARIEL: Your charm so strongly works ‘em

That if you now beheld them, your affections

Would become tender.

PROSPERO: Dost thou think so, spirit?

ARIEL: Mine would, sir, were I human.

PROSPERO: And mine shall.

(Act 5, Scene 1, lines 17—20)

The link to the concept of discovery with this particular theory is in the idea that Prospero’s desire for revenge wilts in the sudden and unexpected discovery that his enemies suffer by his actions and the idea that discoveries may stimulate new ideas and offer renewed perceptions of others. That is, Prospero’s desire to revenge his exile from Milan is tempered by the pain and grief he creates within his enemies, a revenge during which Prospero is ironically transformed by the very empathy he is attempting to create within those who have wronged him. Alonso and Gonzalo’s discoveries are individually far-reaching and transformative but will also deeply affect the political and cultural organisation of their broader society upon their return to Naples.

**Idea 2**: The play is a work of ‘post-colonial’ drama—this well-known, oft-quoted and over-cited idea holds that the play is centred on the relationship between Caliban and Prospero as a means to **symbolise** the emerging victimhood of colonial slaves in European empires. It centres on Prospero’s maltreatment of Caliban and, in particular, his seizing of the isle from its rightful owner and his teaching of language to Caliban:

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 363—364)

This theory maintains that Prospero **symbolises** a wealthy and manipulative European colonial who desires to enslave the natives of African and Caribbean rations and thereafter relegates the displaced natives as an untouchable ‘other’ on the island, thought capable all types of rape, theft and murder, and effectively 1rojecting his own crimes upon their innocent heads.

The theory centres on Prospero’s ‘theft’ of the island, as related by Caliban:

This island’s mine by Sycorax my mother,

Which thou tak’st from me. When thou cam’st first

Thou strok’st me and made much of me; wouldst give me

Water with berries in’t, and teach me how To name the bigger light, and how the less, That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee

And showed thee all the qualities o ‘th’ isle.

(Act 1, Scene 2, lines 332—338)

The intellectual framework of this idea is popularly known as ‘post-colonial theory’, a misnomer of a term for The Tempest in that while Prospero is on the island for every line of the play, it is very much in the role of a colonial as opposed to ‘post-colonial’ ruler. This theory also conveniently ignores that Caliban has attempted to rape Miranda in the backstory and that Prospero’s anger centres on this particular transgression and ultimate breach of trust for the hag-born ‘freckled whelp’ he once loved as an adopted child (Act 1, Scene 2, line 283).

Notwithstanding its inherent problems it is still the case that many teachers will raise this particular academic idea with their classes. The conceptual link between this idea and the concept of discovery is that discovery can be confronting and provocative (discoveries may be questioned or challenged when viewed from different perspectives and their worth reassessed over time) and that the ramifications of particular discoveries may differ for individuals and their worlds.

That is, to filter this well-known ‘post-colonial’ theory through the Area of Study rubric would be to argue that Shakespeare’s **purpose** is to show us that the European discovery of foreign land was fraught with moral and ethical problems via the example of Prospero and Caliban. It asserts that the historical notion of European ownership of ‘discovered land’ is a concept to be challenged and not easily trusted. It also encompasses the idea that the discovery of Prospero’s language by the outcast and enslaved Caliban is a double-edged sword, at once granting the demi-devil a means of communication with his master while simultaneously condemning him to the life of an outcast who could not possibly hope to match his master’s erudition and natural authority.

**Idea 3**: The play is about Shakespeare’s role as a dramatist and farewell to the stage—this theory holds that the play is Shakespeare’s farewell to the stage and a **metaphorical** conception of the theatre as a type of private world controlled by the playwright. It equates Prospero’s isle to Shakespeare’s stage. It is principally about the idea that Shakespeare (and all playwrights by extension) are in such control of their stage that they are equivalent to a magician in their ability to inspire and control events—create intended effects within their characters— and cast a type of hypnotic spell upon their audience:

Ariel, fetch me the hat and rapier in my cell.

I will discase me, and myself present

As I was sometime Milan.

(Act 5, Scene 1, lines 83—85)

The link between the concept of discovery and this well-traversed idea is that discovery is a process of deliberate and careful planning evoked by curiosity, necessity and wonder (discovery may be emotional, creative, intellectual, physical and spiritual) and that discovery may lead to new worlds and **values**, stimulate new ideas and offer renewed understandings and perceptions of ourselves and others.

This idea furthermore encompasses the notion that Shakespeare is presenting himself to the world as a dramatist capable of creating continual revelatory discoveries within his audience and thereby synthesise or bridge their understanding of fictional characters to real people in the broader community. It is to argue that Shakespeare envisions himself as a grand magician capable of engineering the discoveries and metamorphosis of his characters on stage and, in turn, the emotional, intellectual and spiritual discoveries of his audience.

**Societies And The Concept Of Discovery**

As with any study of a Shakespearean play, an important element of its concept and drama is to be located in its social **context**. Elizabethan society was contemporarily obsessed with the discovery of foreign lands and began to socially interact with the native people of these ‘discovered’ territories.

Shakespeare wrote The Tempest in approximately 1611, at a time of English exploration and colonisation of Africa, the Caribbean and, only four years earlier, the settlement of Jamestown in modern-day Virginia, USA. It is worth remembering that Shakespeare’s play was written at a time of passing failure for the great English colonial experiment: Jamestown was briefly abandoned in 1610 by Sir Thomas Gates of the Virginia Company following the so-called ‘starving time’ of the previous two winters, when English settlers largely relied upon the North American Powhatan tribe and trade ships for their dwindling food supply. Over 400 English settlers, mostly untried farmers barricaded behind forts and living in constant fear of their own kidnap and murder, perished during the two-year famine.

That Sir Thomas Gates even reached Virginia at all was something of a miracle given that his ship Sea Venture had survived a great tempest off the coast of Bermuda in 1609 and his crew were forced to live off the freshwater springs and wild animals of the island for almost a year before embarking onto Virginia in a parallel experience of exile to Prospero and Miranda.

Shakespeare’s comedy acknowledges the attractions and risks of territorial exploration and cultural interaction as a means to stimulate cultural, historical and personal discoveries. To discover and settle land in the Americas in Shakespeare’s day was to risk one’s life living in the midst of unknown ‘native’ societies and therefore amounted to an ultimate test of a colonist’s patience, endurance and temperament.

Despite his own society’s topical interest in the perilous trips of adventurers to the Indian Ocean and Americas, Shakespeare elected to set his final play on a fictitious island in the Mediterranean Sea, an island unintentionally ‘discovered’ by its myriad of transported exiles, shipwrecks and wandering royalty.

This is an important distinction to note when conceptualising the relevance of society and discovery in the text. Prospero’s island is not claimed for empire by brave navigators in the mould of Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh proudly implanting a flag and proclaiming English sovereignty but rather, with the exception of Miranda, is an island inhabited by guilty creatures (‘men of sin’, Act 3, Scene 3, line 53) compelled to suffer the effects of their own wicked actions and thereafter experience the transformative power of discovery in their lives.

It is also worth remembering that Shakespeare wrote his play in the years immediately following Dr John Dee’s death in 1608. Dee was a controversial alchemist, magician, occultist, mathematician, astrologer and scientist employed by Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I during their respective reigns.

Dr John Dee’s cultural similarities to the fictional Prospero lie not only in his study of magic and the occult but in his keen interest for the preservation of old manuscripts and books, his concerted attempts to communicate with angels, and in his expert navigational techniques. Navigational skills were central to the new voyages of exploration and discovery upon which England began to expand its society into the ‘British Empire’, a phrase famously coined by the English magician.

**Language And The Sense Of Discovery**

**Plot And Sub Plots**

The play is **structured** around a central plot, that of Prospero’s grand design or ‘project’ to ensnare his enemies and create a royal advancement for his daughter, and two subplots. The first subplot focuses on Sebastian and Antonio’s plan to murder Alonso and Gonzalo in Act 2, Scene 1. The second subplot focuses on Stephano, 1inculo and Caliban’s plan to usurp kingship of the isle from Prospero (principally explored in Act 2, Scene 2; Act 3, Scene 2; Act 4, Scene 1).

The purpose and function of the two **subplots** is a feature of the play’s **dramatic** **irony**: the responder is at once comically aware of the inevitable failure of the plot against Prospero’s life by the butler, jester and demi-devil but also recognises by play’s end that the parallel plot of Sebastian and Antonio’s planned murder of Alonso and Gonzalo is equally comic, opportunistic and amateurish. Both **subplots** are equally doomed to fail. Moreover, the merging of the plot and subplots underscores the transformative effects of the isle and its ability to expose human nature: the aristocratic courtiers are no greater than the drunken servant, jester and monster in their base desire for power and willingness to murder to achieve their corrupt ends.

Arguably the play has yet another two subplots in the courtship of Miranda and Ferdinand and in the relationship between Prospero and Caliban.

**Blank Verse And Prose**

Shakespeare employs ‘blank verse’ (or lines of **iambic pentameter**) for each of the major characters. There is the noticeable absence of a shift between blank verse and prose in this play compared to other works by Shakespeare. Its sole exception occurs in the opening sea-storm, when Gonzalo, Boatswain, Antonio and Sebastian discourse in dramatic, vivid prose. It should also be noted that there is a lack of **soliloquys** in the play despite numerous asides from Prospero in Act 1. Caliban’s blank verse is ironically as profound, eloquent and poignant as that of any other character in the play.

**Symbolism**

’Good wombs have borne bad sons’ (Act 1, Scene 12, line 119).

The multiple images of birth, wombs and pregnancy **allude** to the idea of the rebirth of the shipwrecked men and Miranda, a grand spiritual resurrection akin to that prophesised in the Book of Revelations. The isle then is a figurative womb in which the subjects grow and thrive prior to their eventual return to Naples.

Moreover, the mariners are **metaphorically** delivered to Prospero’s isle stillborn and remain ‘asleep’ until Ariel awakes them in Act 5, Scene 1. Sebastian’s insult to Boatswain in Act 1, Scene 1 of ‘Incharitable dog’ and Antonio’s ‘hang cur’, nbo1ically suggests the idea of a litter being issued the island. The **imagery** of hanging in Gonzalo’s prose—‘Make the rope of his destiny our cable, for our own doth little advantage. If he be not born to be hanged, our case is miserable’—suggests a troubled birth via a choking umbilical cord (Act 1, Scene 1, 27—29). Even Sebastian and Antonio (who do not thrive in the figurative womb) couch their plot to kill Alonso and Gonzalo in a birth **metaphor**: ‘The setting of thine eye and cheek proclaim a matter from thee; and a birth, indeed/Which throes thee much to yield’ (Act 2, Scene 1, lines 225—227).

Pregnancy, labour and birth **imagery** is prolific in The Tempest as a means to illustrate the extended **metaphor** that the island affects a spiritual rebirth for its subjects, Miranda and Prospero included. The transitional nature of being in-utero and the womb’s ability to **paradoxically** promote growth within a water-bound carriage is an apt **metaphor** to **symbolise** the transformative qualities of discovery.

Miranda’s loss of innocence at the shipwrecking of the crew is moreover a **metaphorical** impregnation of her mind, eventually leading to her ‘brave new world’ remark upon seeing the assembled lords and crew in Act 5, the wording a **pun** on the contemporary meaning of ‘brave’ as a fruitful womb.

**Biblical Allusion**

Shakespeare refers to several **biblical allusions** in the play, including the **imagery** of an idyllic isle reminding of the Garden of Eden populated by a young male and female (in Ferdinand and Miranda) spied upon by a harsh and vengeful god; the staff of Prospero which parts the waters and creates the sea-storm, reminiscent of the staff of Moses; Prospero’s persecution of the demi-devil Caliban and the servitude of Ariel, reminiscent of Jehovah, Lucifer and the archangels; and the disbelief of the shipwrecked crew upon sighting Prospero in Act 5, Scene 1, reminiscent of the resurrection of Christ and the reaction of his disciple Thomas, who doubted his own physical discovery.

**Songs**

The role of songs in the play is important and underscores the tranquillity and beauty of the isle. Even as Ariel ensnares and traps Ferdinand in Act 1, Scene 2 he is led to the horrible realisation of his father’s ‘death’ via enchanting music and song. The purpose of the songs in the role of discovery is to soften the blow of the alarming message they carry for the grieving young prince. However, their central message (that Alonso is dead) also bear a **metaphorical** truth: Alonso is about to undergo a ‘sea-change’ into something ‘rich and strange’, remembering that his eventual repentance for crimes against Prospero will transform his character and result in a new and just kingship for Naples, a personal discovery and transformation every bit as powerful as death itself in its ability to create a new world of love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Song is also employed by Ariel as a means to taunt, frighten and warn the wandering shipwrecks. It is alternately employed in the second subplot as a means to express the drunken ecstasy of Stephano and Thnculo in their lascivious and rapacious quest to seize the isle.

**The Epilogue**

The Tempest is often interpreted as the request of Prospero to his audience to release him from their spell. While the Epilogue is validly read as Prospero’s direct address to his audience it might equally be interpreted as Prospero’s humble request to his new companions (in the absence of his drowned book) not to leave him stranded on the isle. Another possibility is that the Epilogue is a form of repentance to a higher celestial authority, Jehovah, whose vengeance, arbitrary punishments, grand schemes and supernatural powers he has mimicked for the twelve years of his exile. Alternatively, we might keep an open mind and assume that Shakespeare allows for the poetic truth of all three possibilities.

The first alternative reading of the Epilogue draws upon the intriguing stage direction [To the others] ‘Please you draw near’ (Act 5, Scene 1, line 316). Having already discharged Ariel, the assembled lords and Miranda appear to draw away even as he requests they draw near. This ambiguity opens up the possibility that Prospero is left behind on the isle and pleads once again for mercy, but this time from Caliban.

Consider that Prospero’s request ‘But release me from my bands/With the help of your good hands’ is perhaps a **pun** on both the applause of the audience and the boatswain and his ship hands, who begin the play disregarding the authority of the natural order (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 9—10).

Prospero’s final **couplet**— ‘As you from crimes would pardoned be/Let your indulgence set me free’ (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 19—20)—sounds curiously like a request to Antonio given the events of the preceding scene, in particular his taciturn pardon of an unrepentant brother for the original plot on his life. The possibilities of such an ending lie in the post-colonial interpretation of the play: Caliban now rules the isle over his one-time tormentor whose strength ‘is most faint’ without his books (Act 5, Scene 1, line 3). Miranda’s devotion to her father, Ferdinand’s heartfelt duty to his future father-in-law, Alonso’s repentance and Gonzalo’s benevolence makes such a reading unlikely but not entirely impossible if we adopt a reading which places Prospero as a type of Old Testament Jehovah **ironically** left behind in the ‘New Testament’ of love and forgiveness he has created.

The other possible reading is that the Epilogue is Prospero’s direct address to Jehovah, whose powers he has mimicked during his time on the isle. Consider that Prospero without his rough magic is now left as humble and frail as the men with whom he desires to journey back to Europe. Prospero’s address is reminiscent of the Lord’s Prayer in the supplicant’s plea for mercy predicated upon the forgiveness of other’s trespasses: ‘Let me not/Since I have my dukedom got/And pardoned the deceiver, dwell/In this bare island by your spell.’ (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 5—8).

‘Gentle breath of yours my sails/Must fill, or else my project fails’ (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 11—12) might refer both to the favourable comment of the audience and form a plea to Jehovah for the necessary winds to return to Naples now that Ariel has been released.

Moreover, the Duke’s recognition that his ‘Ending is despair/Unless I be relieved by prayer’ (Act 5, Scene 1, lines 15—16) may well signal Prospero’s humble recognition before a wrathful god that he has unduly imitated him in using supernatural powers over Caliban, Ariel and the bewitched lords. The newly dispossessed magician seeks divine forgiveness in the same manner he has granted it to his one-time enemies: freely, indulgently and without reservation.

**The Tempest And Discovery**

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| --- | --- |
| **Discovery Ideas Drawn From The Syllabus Description** | **The Tempest** |
| The experience of discovering something for the first time or rediscovering something that has been lost, forgotten or concealed | * Love * Values * Truth * Virtue * Colonisation |
| Discoveries can be sudden and unexpected, or they can emerge from a process of deliberate and careful planning evoked by curiosity, necessity or wonder | * Miranda and Ferdinand – love * Miranda and Prospero - truth * Survival of sailors * Prospero drawing his ‘enemy’ to the island |
| Discoveries may be emotional, creative, intellectual, physical and spiritual | * Miranda’s realisation of her origins * Caliban’s expressions of humanity * Prospero’s move from virtue to vengeance * Gonzalo’s realisations * Alonso’s realisation |
| Discoveries can be confronting and provocative | * Converging narratives revelation of the lack of moral truth that resulted in usurpation * Virtue rather than vengeance * Caliban confronting Prospero |
| Discoveries can lead us to engage with new worlds and values | * Prospero adapting to life on the island and appropriating social and political attitudes of is maintained * Alonso’s new realisations * Miranda’s new realisations |
| Discoveries stimulate new ideas, and enable us to speculate about future possibilities | * Possibilities for a future where Prospero regains his power in the real world but with a renewed sense of responsibility; Caliban remains on the island- colonised and rejected, metaphor of ongoing prejudice and intolerance of the ‘other’ |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Discoveries can lead to new understandings and renewed perceptions of ourselves and others | * Prospero comes to a position of empathy and regret, ‘virtue’ rather than ‘vengeance’; the metaphysical discovery is important to the notion of power and how it must be used appropriately; as an audience we make correlations with Prospero’s renewal and our own responses to others. |
| Discoveries can vary according to personal, cultural, historical and social contexts and values | * The historical premise of colonisation and dispossession, of usurpation and political repression are engaged with; Shakespeare’s revelations infer a criticism of the colonist ideals yet justify them with fears of the other. The history of the court and ongoing usurpation are reflections of 16th C society. |
| Discoveries can be far-reaching and transformative for the individual and for broader society | * Prospero is the character most transformed in this text however, other characters are transformed – Alonso, Miranda for example. The implications for society are that we can shift and change our perspective if we are reflective. The text also deals with those who do not transform revealing limitations of some individuals as representative of aspects of societies that are not able to engage with change. |
| Discoveries may be questioned or challenged when viewed from different perspectives and their worth may be reassessed over time. | * The views of Antonio and Sebastian lead the audience to engage with how discoveries may not always be welcome or learned from. The audience can also challenge Prospero’s agenda and suggest whether his new approach to the world will change himself or society for the better. |

**THEMES**

* Discovery
* Journeys
* Forgiveness and Reconciliation
* Supernatural
* Romance
* Freedom

**Discovery**

You need to consider the use of magic leading to discovery and also how the magic stops discovery. Also as you read the text think about what needs to be discovered and how some characters never discover what they need to.

**Act One Scene One**

Here the crew and travelling nobles discover the island. This is a forced and unwelcome discovery as we see the participants struggle to overcome what they see as a tempest. As an audience we witness the storm which must have been quite unsettling for an Elizabethan audience. Also it allows Shakespeare to suspend disbelief and unfold the drama without having the constraints of I us Society.

**Act One Scene Two**

Here we discover that the storm has been an illusion and that everyone on the ship is safe. Prospero has used Ariel to conjure the magic so he can plan his revenge. We learnt that Prospero woke up one day to discover that his kingdom had been taken over by his brother, Antonio, helped by the King of Naples.

‘A treacherous army levied, one midnight

Fated to th’ purpose did Antonio open

The gates of Milan, and, i’ th’ dead of darkness,

The ministers forth’ purpose hurried thence

Me, and thy crying self.’

PROSPERO IN LINES 128—32

Prospero and his daughter, Miranda, have been cast out on a leaky boat and helped only by Gonzalo who provides them food, water and books. They discover the island through Prospero’s magic.

Prospero is engaged in revenge and the storm has captured his enemies. Ariel has dispersed them over the island. To this point the main thrust of the discovery is about physical journeys and the consequences but also consider the imaginative journey described in more detail in the next section. Ariel imagines here his freedom as he has been enslaved by Sycorax the witch and now Prospero who freed him from her.

Caliban is another character who discovers freedom and loses it. He claims he is the rightful ruler of the kingdom but has been cast down by Prospero due to his attempted rape of Miranda. He enters Cursing Prospero. In the end we discover he has designs upon rule again,

‘I must obey: his art is of such power,

It would control my dam’s god, Setebos,

and make a vassal of him.’

LINES 372—4

In this scene Miranda discovers men, through seeing Ferdinand, for the first time. She seems to immediately fall in love (no magic!) and Ferdinand also returns this Love. Prospero pretends to be angry with him and Miranda says Ferdinand wilt discover he is really a kind man,

‘Be of comfort;

My father’s of a better nature, sir

Than he appears by speech. This is unwonted

Which now came from him.’

LINES 495—7

As we read The Tempest we are aware of the illusory nature of the play. Many of the discoveries are unreal yet Shakespeare manages to portray them believably in the **context**. Many critics have argued about this instant ‘love’ but I would argue that if you can believe the fake storm and the ‘monster’ Caliban the love isn’t impossible Perhaps you can read some critical analysis such as I he notes included in this guide to help YOU formulate your own Opinions.

**Act Two Scene One**

Because Gonzalo is an optimist, his utopian vision of the island is mocked but he can discover the positive features white the others still plot as if they are in civilisation. Ariel conjures sleep to manipulate the characters and keep them psychologically unsteady. Alonso the usurper thinks his son is dead and sinks into pessimism with ‘No, no, he’s gone.’

In this scene the audience discovers much about several characters duplicity but not so the other characters in the play. Ariel seems to control the plot development and revelations. As an audience we seem to discover more giving us a position of power.

**Act Two Scene Two**

‘All the infections that the sun sucks up

From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, arid make him

By inch-meal a disease! His spirits hear me,

And yet I needs must curse. But they’ll nor pinch,

Fright me with urchin-shows, pitch me i’ th’ mire,

Nor lead me like a firebrand in the dark

Out of my way, unless he bid ‘em; but

For every trifle are they set upon me,

Sometime like apes, that mow and chatter at me

And after bite me, then like hedgehogs, which

Lie tumbling in my barefoot way and mount

Their pricks at my foofall; sometime am I

All wound with adders, who with cloven tongues Do hiss me into madness.’

LINES 1—14

This lengthy quote that outlines Prospero’s cruel and magical control over him sets the tone for this scene. Here Caliban discovers two ‘Gods alcohol and hope of freedom from the torments Outlined above. Caliban has it all wrong. We know it is Trinculo the jester and the butler, Stephano. Here we also have the concluding song. Song features heavily in this play and it is worth discussing when you analyse the language features.

‘Freedom, high-day, high-day, freedom, freedom,

high-day, freedom.’

**Act Three Scene One**

Ferdinand and Miranda discover that they love each other. Secretly, Prospero is pleased despite his actions and words. Prospero talks of ‘surprise’ but in this short scene the two lovers reveal their naivety and innocence — something that Shakespeare uses to create empathy and solve the conflict later in the play. This discovery of love provides the hope.

**Act Three Scene Two**

We return to the hope filled Caliban and his new lords. He convinces them Prospero is a tyrant and they agree to kill Prospero and burn his books to take his power. They also think Miranda will be their queen but it is the alcohol that causes these illusions. Ariel hears the plan and goes to warn Prospero. Again the discoveries in this shortish scene are the revelations of plot rather than any significant personal discovery or magical change but at the end of the scene we discover that magic is in the air and Caliban has a humanity rarely seen before,

‘Be not afeared; 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,

That, if I then had waked after long sleep,

Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming,

The clouds methought would open, and show riches

Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked,

I cried to dream again.’

LINES 127—135

**Act Three Scene Three**

Antonio and Sebastian are planning to kill Alonso and Ferdinand. They are unaware their plan is discovered and soon to be foiled by Ariel. An invisible Prospero watches while Ariel conjures a banquet. The nobles are castigated by Ariel for deposing Prospero while Alonso is so wracked by guilt and the pain he feels at Ferdinand’s supposed death he goes to drown himself. The whole play is permeated with discovery of incidents and character traits that allow the development and resolution of the conflict. This is general and we need to remember that some characters such as Sebastian don’t change. At the conclusion it is the wise old head of Gonzalo who calls for restraint and thought,

‘All three of them are desperate. Their great guilt,

Like poison given to work a great time after,

Now ‘gins to bite the spirits. I do beseech you,

That are of suppler joints, follow them swiftly,

And hinder them from what this ecstasy

May now pro yoke them to.’

LINES 105—109

**Act Four Scene One**

In a strange beginning Prospero gives Miranda to Ferdinand but warns him not to take her virginity until they are married. Ariel distracts the three attempted killers with pretty clothes in a truly comic scene where despite Caliban’s protestations they can’t be moved,

‘Prithee, my king, be quiet. Seest thou here,

This is the mouth a’ th ‘cell. No noise, and enter.

Do that good mischief which may make this island

Thine own for ever, and I, thy Caliban,

For aye thy foot-licker.’

LINES 2 14—218

Prospero then sets his spirits on them. By the end of this scene he has alt his enemies under his control and at his mercy. Prospero is welt pleased for his plans have gone undiscovered and have met with success so he promises Ariel freedom,

‘At this hour

Lies at my mercy all mine enemies.

Shortly shall all my labours end, and thou

Shalt have the air at freedom. For a little

Follow, and do me service.’

LINES 256—260

**Act Five Scene One**

Ariel tells Prospero of his enemies’ pain and says he would take pity on them if human. Prospero relents having now discovered there is more to living than revenge. Again magic is used to form the charmed circle as Prospero dresses in his old clothes as the Duke of Milan. Alonso immediately gives up his claim and Prospero reveals quietly to Antonio and Sebastian that he has discovered their plot and may reveal it.

He reunites Alonso with his son and everyone is happy. Miranda utters her, and one of Shakespeare’s most famous quotes,

‘O wonder!

How many goodly creatures are there here!

How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world

That has such people in ‘t!’

LINES 183—4

Here we also discover that the ship and its crew are well and the plot lines are resolved. Prospero invites alt to hear his story and discover how they are to get home. Once more Prospero promises Ariel freedom after the spirit provides winds to keep the men safe on the sea.

‘My Ariel, chick,

That is thy charge. Then to the elements

Be free, and fare thou well.

LINES 314—315

**Epilogue**

Prospero says direct[y to the audience breaking down any barriers,

‘Now my charms are all o ‘erthrown,

And what strength Ihave’s mine own-

Which is most faint. Now, ‘tis true

I must be here confined by you,

Or sent to Naples, let me not,

Since I have my dukedom got

And pardoned the deceiver, dwell

In this bare island, by your spell;

But release me from my bands

With the help of your good hands.

Gentle breath of yours my sails

Must fill, or else my project fails,

Which was to please. Now l want

Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,

And my ending is despair,

Unless I be relieved by prayer

Which pierces so, that it assaults

Mercy itself and frees all faults.

As you from crimes would pardoned be,

Let your indulgence set me free.’

LINES 1—20

Now The Tempest ends and Prospero has discovered his humanity, Miranda and Ferdinand love and Ariel freedom.

Prospero has lost his magic and he asks the audience directly to send him home.

**Journeys as Discovery**

The Tempest is an imaginative journey of discovery that takes the audience to a world of magic and superstition. Not only is the audience transported in a theatrical sense but the characters also allow our imagination to be freed. Shakespeare has written a play that allows the suspension of disbelief and the content to energise the imagination.

The text begins with the illusion of a storm or tempest where the characters are shipwrecked on an island. To allow imagination to take hold Shakespeare gives the audience the illusion of the storm and a magical island, far removed from the reality of the courtly world.

The storm has been created magically by Prospero and Ariel It creates a feeling of unease which is not dissipated until the end of the text when the characters are in apparent harmony. Conflict over the usurpation of Prospero is the reality that binds the imaginary vision of the play. It is the uncovering of this magic and the discovery of truths that engages the characters and the audience in the performance of the play.

Shakespeare uses imagination in a number of ways to achieve his purpose. The use of illusion or magic helps to achieve this and a good example is the storm that shipwrecks the sailors and members of the court. This idea is developed more in the themes section under the supernatural.

It is also important to recognise the masque as part of the imaginative journey that both the audience and characters undertake. We see some of the goddesses of mythology, Iris, Ceres and Juno entertain and instruct in a play that blesses the union of Ferdinand and Miranda.

With this illusion arranged by Ariel the characters are acting out the fantasies of Prospero — they are part of his imaginative journey. He says they are ‘called to enact, My present fantasies.’ Prospero, on his island, is in control. It is his imagination that has conjured up his scheme for revenge and the journey is his to control.

As part of this imaginative world we also have the physical presence of characters such as Ariel and Caliban to help us on our journey. Ariel, an airy spirit, can do just about anything and does so for Prospero. From playing music, singing, creating storms, being invisible, mimicry to playing a role such as the harpy he creates a feeling of possibility from normally impossible situations on the island.

Calibari is a more physical presence. Described as a savage and deformed slave he is the visual cue to realise that this is an imaginative world. Although physically deformed he has human qualities albeit in a primitive way. He too dreams and imagines a world that is better for him and this dreaming is part of his discovery. His imaginative journey is thwarted by his inability to act upon his imagined goals. He does have his own dreams and states that he wants to sleep so that he can dream again.

Both sleep and dreams occur throughout the play and are part of the imaginary journey for both the audience and characters. The sailors in the opening scene are put to sleep for the whole play, Miranda is put to sleep by a spell from Prospero and Ariel gets the courtiers to sleep except for Antonio and Sebastian. This leads them to imagine their plot against Alonso and its benefits.

Another example of a small imaginative journey within the play is the banquet scene where Ariel is the harpy who appears to accuse Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian of usurping Prospero in Milan. The thunder, lightning and strange shapes that bring the banquet all add to the imaginative impact of the scene and form part of the total journey of the play. Here we are taken back to when the events occurred and it raises issues that are dealt with later.

Another use of the imaginative journey is in the scene where Gonzalo is attempting to cheer Alonso after the shipwreck. He speaks of a new world where all people are equal and it is a ‘Golden Age’. This imaginative world created in his mind shows us the power of the imagination and how it can influence. While the cynics Antonio and Sebastian mock Gonzalo, it does show a place of harmony which is where The Tempest is headed.

It is important to note that while The Tempest is an imaginative journey in its own right there are other journeys within its scope. Examine both the journeys of the audience and individual characters in the previous section to explain the theme of imaginative journeys of discovery fully.

**Forgiveness and Reconciliation — The Rediscovery of Order**

At the beginning of The Tempest Prospero appears to be planning his revenge and we expect the main characters in the court to suffer. They do suffer to some extent yet by the end of the play we have reconciliation and Prospero has forgiven his enemies. In other words he has discovered forgiveness.

The outcome is strongly moral. It seems to be in contrast to the truly imaginative and magic world that we are in. The usurpers are punished but forgiven and Prospero has not yielded to revenge, which in itself is wrong.

Prospero limits the suffering of the courtiers and even reassures Miranda that no harm has come to them in the shipwreck. Ariel too makes a plea on their behalf and Prospero tells him that there will be no tragic ending.

By the end of the text we are far from tragedy. The natural order has been restored and Miranda and Ferdinand have been pledged to wed. This will bring a new era of harmony and peace. The spectre of brutal revenge has been turned into a morally correct solution.

Some critics have stated that Iris, the rainbow goddess’ appearance in the masque is a symbol that Prospero intends to forgive. This is based on the rainbows symbolic meaning that the storm is over and hope has returned.

In any sense The Tempest ends in a sense of forgiveness and reconciliation.

**Supernatural**

In The Tempest Shakespeare sends people into the world of the supernatural. In Prospero’s case he conquers the supernatural to an extent. This is not the norm for Shakespearean drama. Usually in his work the supernatural interferes in the human world to change events and influence people.

The island itself seems to be magical and it allows the supernatural to happen in the play without any inhibition. We are away from the civilised world and from the storm to the final scene where Prospero renounces his powers the supernatural is a force in the play.

We know that it has been the home of a witch and still has lots of spirits including Ariel and it also has Caliban. It is Prospero, the human intruder, who has to ‘tame’ them and take charge. Without the help of Ariel his power is limited and the success of his plan revolves around the abilities of the spirit world.

Prospero can make spells that impact on the people around him. He can torment Caliban, make Miranda sleep, stop Ferdinand attacking him and draw a magic circle for the courtiers to enter. He cannot, however, make the large spells to make the other events happen.

The supernatural theme of the play adds to its imaginative appeal. The magical transformations are theatrical and all the supernatural elements combine to take us on a truly imaginative journey of discovery.

**Romance — The Discovery Of Love**

The Tempest is considered one of Shakespeare’s Romantic plays and one of the main plot threads in the tale is the romance between the two young people Miranda and Ferdinand. It is a nice contrast to the more brutal attempted rape of Miranda by Caliban, the uncivilised savage.

Miranda and Ferdinand meet early in the play and with the aid of some magic they become deeply attached and infatuated with each other. They make strong protestations of love and Miranda even supports Ferdinand against her father’s accusations of usurpation against him. They become completely engrossed with each other.

Their relationship is so complete that the two fathers, Prospero and Alonso, have no hesitation in approving of the union. These two young lovers are representative of the good that will come from such a union; it restores an order in the world.

**Discovery Of Freedom**

The concept of freedom is a theme that Shakespeare uses in The Tempest to show that it is important to individuals but that it also means different things to those individuals. Every individual loses their freedom in some way in the text and some regain it.

Prospero and Miranda are ‘imprisoned’ on the island after having been cast out of their native land. Ariel is imprisoned by Sycorax and then has to serve Prospero for his freedom. Ferdinand is made prisoner by Prospero and made to do hard labour. The sailors are confined asleep in the hold of their ship until the play is nearly over. Other courtiers are tormented by spirits and held in Prospero’s circle and Caliban is enslaved by Prospero then enslaves himself to Stephano.

Each individual wants freedom but in a different sense. Prospero and Miranda leave the island, Alonso is freed from guilt, and Ariel is freed by Prospero to live free and so on. Freedom is an important theme in the play and each character can be examined in its light.

**Language**

The technicalities of Shakespearean language have been discussed at length by critics and his plays have particular traits such as much of the **dialogue** is written in **iambic pentameter**. The Tempest is no different but it does have some peculiarities of form because of its content.

In many ways The Tempest takes its **imagery** from its island setting and the nature of the island is frequently mentioned. The island forms the **dramatic backdrop** and white it is an imaginative world Shakespeare uses things we know in nature to make it believable.

Along with nature on the island Shakespeare uses the words of the sea to develop the imagery. The word ‘sea’ is used many times in the text and much of this is tied in with the concept of the tempest from which the play gets its title. Even on land the **images** of the sea are used and Ferdinand says near the end of the play, ‘Though the seas threaten, they are merciful; I’ve cursed them without cause.’ Act 5 Scene 1 lines 178-9.

It is the island surrounded by the sea that the **language** frames but the language of the characters also reveals much about them. For example look at the language of Prospero when he speaks to Caliban. It is full of insults and threats and is very different from the language he uses to Miranda or the members of the court. This reflects the master/stave relationship that they have.

It is also useful to examine when Shakespeare uses prose and its purpose. He usually uses **prose** with characters from the lower classes and comic characters, but occasionally characters use both. In The Tempest for example the main characters Prospero, Miranda, Ariel and Ferdinand do not use prose at all. Some characters such as Antonio, Gonzalo and Sebastian use both depending on the circumstances while others such as Trinculo and Stephano speak no verse.

In this sense Caliban is an unusual character in that he uses both poetry and **prose** to speak. One would assume that a brutish and savage’ creature would only speak in prose but he slips into poetry, especially when he is being more emotive. Caliban is certainty a unique character and he often talks lovingly of his island. Contrast this to the curses and insults he trades with Prospero.

The use of **music** and song in The Tempest is also a major factor. Being a Romantic play we would expect some music and song but it has more than any other Shakespearean play. They are integral to the plot and are used to calm, misdirect and put people to sleep. Perhaps it is the freedom of the magic and supernatural on the island that gives Shakespeare the licence to take us on this journey, of discovery.

Because we are on this journey the songs and **music** help give the play a more magical feeling. Shakespeare uses many **hyphenated words** to create **images** that reinforce the idea of the unusual. Words such as wide- chopped, over-topping, hag-born, ever-angry and brine-pits add to the feeling of being taken on an imaginative journey through a world where the impossible is possible.

With the length of the play being short by Shakespearean standards much of the play is taken up with exposition. Long speeches are given to telling the story both past and present. This allows the audience to understand motivations and actions but doesn’t allow us to get into the minds of the characters as much

**The Tempest**

**Historical And Literary Context**

The term ‘Renaissance’ comes from a French word for ‘rebirth’ and refers to a revival of Classical Green and Roman **values** and appreciation for the arts. It began in Italy and spread across Europe from the end of the so-called ‘Dark Ages up until the sixteenth century. Humanism was an associated movement that promoted the ideals of self-determination, personal expression and human individuality. It was a period of conflicting pressures and allegiances as the expansion of trade, growth and prosperity fuelled the rise of secularism which challenged religious authority. Travel and greater wealth weakened the reliance on faith, dogma and God but during the Elizabethan period, there remained a strong belief that any violation of an orderly universe of ‘Chain of Being’ would bring social instability. The foiled Gunpowder Plot of 1605 reaffirmed concerns about the dangers of civil unrest. Literacy and education were fostered in England at this time and language, moral philosophy and rhetoric were highly valued. A Renaissance man bridged the two worlds of faith and reason.

**Era Of Exploration And Colonisation**

During the Elizabethan era, England became a naval power, in part, due to the economic benefits of exploring and exploiting the colonisation of the New World. Huge profits had been made by risky ventures into the unknown territory or ‘terra incognita’ marked on uncharted seas. Discoveries of treasures and new lands generated trade opportunities and fuelled public interest and excitement about what might still be found on the margins of the known world. French, Spanish and Elizabethan adventurers were courageously testing uncharted waters for personal acclaim as well as riches and many facets of the imperialism of this era are echoed in Shakespeare’s pastoral romance, ‘The Tempest’. Scholars cite links in the play with details mentioned in a lengthy testimonial account of William Strachey. This related to a 1609 shipwreck of the ‘Sea Venture’ on an island in the Bermudas as it was heading to the new Jamestown settlement in Virginia.

Strachey’s letter vividly describes how for three days and four nights, everyone on board, including crew, passengers, noblemen and commoners alike, needed to work together in a desperate effort to keep the ship afloat. Landfall was sighted and the captain managed to get the ship close enough to get everyone safely onshore. Strachey writes of the ‘greater violence’ of the storm, ‘we could not apprehend in our imaginations’. He recounts their fears the place would be inhabited by ‘devils and wicked spirits’; relieved to find the island was actually ‘habitable’. Collaboration had saved their lives, the next year spent in repairs until they successfully completed their voyage to Jamestown. Utopian speculation about ‘new’ lands being governed in more enlightened ways is sharp contrast to the plunder that typically accompanied exploratory missions. Indigenous culture and populations were often decimated by disease, missionary zeal and enslavement.

Renaissance fascination with the social possibilities posed by the discovery of ‘new’ lands are reflected in some of the speculative ideas put forward early in the play by Gonzalo’s monologue, (lines 158-164). He fancifully envisages an idealic civilisation that has similarities to that outlined in an sixteenth century essay called ‘Of the Cannibals’. This was written by French philosopher Michel de Montaigne who described the primitive people of his imaginary nation, as being so inherently good that there would be no need for the norms of civilisation such as business, written language, mathematics, political systems, justice, money or jobs. For them, the very words for ‘lying, falsehood, treason, dissimulation, covetousness, envy, detraction, and pardon’ did not even exist, suggesting that people are in fact tainted by the very evils of society. Gonzalo imagines that in his alternative world, there would be ‘no occupation, all men idle, all women too, but innocent and pure’. By contrast, Stephano imagines himself as a tyrant king of the island and along with Trinculo considers the profits that could be made by capturing Caliban and making him a curiosity for public display back home. Such things were done with Native Americans, either as individuals or whole family groups, enslaved and exhibited in England. Prospero’s enslavement of Caliban has also been interpreted as an allegorical depiction of the callous and greed driven subjugation of the peoples in the Americas during the ‘Age of Exploration’.

**Elizabethan ‘Pastoral Romance’**

**Typical Genre Conventions**

‘Romance’ was not a generic classification for Elizabethan drama, yet the term is often used to describe ‘The Tempest’. It is better described as ‘Pastoral Romance’ and includes many of the genre’s conventions and **motifs**. These include the use of stereotypical characters, plots, setting and themes but what helped make ‘Pastoral Romance’ popular was the inclusion of songs, dance and music as well as slapstick and crude humour. Shakespeare added psychological depth to his major characters and **metaphorical** issues are examined. Shakespeare draws on **contextual** events in ways that prompt the audience to reconsider ideas about governance, imperialism and colonialist exploitation. Caliban for example, is represented as far more than a one dimensional ‘monster’ figure, for the dramatist gives this debased, embittered and lowly brute some of the most lyrical language in the play; his language conveying the reality of the dispossession and enslavement he has suffered under Prospero’s oppression. While his attempted rape of Miranda and murderous plotting is not condoned, some empathy for his plight is triggered by audience recognition of what he has lost with Prospero’s arrival and magical power.

**Setting**

Action in a Pastoral Romance is set in remote and isolated places that serve as locations of refuge or escape. Inexplicable events tend to happen which add a strange, enchanted aura to the location which impacts on characters in different ways. For some it prompts reflection, self-awareness or growth while others remain immune to its transformative power. Shakespeare chooses an unnamed island, described by Caliban as being ‘ten leagues beyond man’s life’ as well as ‘Uninhabitable, and almost inaccessible’. Gonzalo refers to the discomforting unfamiliarly of ‘contraries’ of this barren place which also has an ‘eerie’ haunting sort of music. As aptly observed by Prospero, this confined, microcosmic setting of sprites and spirits, ‘Tis new to thee’. Physical dislocation and emotional disorientation help provide the transformative catalyst for reassessment and self-exploration for some of those who find themselves metaphorically cast adrift’.

Fragmentary comments build a composite picture in the audience’s mind of a ‘bare island with a rugged coastline, indented with caves, rocky cliffs and outcrops. Pockets of heavily wooded forest are found, such as the ‘linden-grove’ that protects Prospero’s cave from the worst weather and which provide the logs that Caliban and Ferdinand must carry. What enables Prospero and Miranda to survive such an inhospitable environment is the fact that Caliban had revealed sources of fresh water and ‘every fertile inch’ of land. His welcoming generosity had however, been exploited and left enslaved and tormented by magic. He has been stripped of home and autonomy, ‘In dreaming/the clouds me thought would open, and show riches/ready to drop upon me, so when I waked/I cried to dream again.’

The audience is taken to a magical world, described by Ariel in Act III as a ‘desolate isle’. It has antithetical qualities; physically bleak and yet capable of ‘giving delight, hurting not’. The motely group that find themselves thrust together on this foreign shore, similarly exhibit differing behaviour and outlook. This differentiates the virtuous who show repentance for their wrongdoing from the villainous like Antonio who remain unmoved and beyond redemption. Their differing reactions to the spectacles and illusory experiences conjured by Prospero’s magic indicate their character and moral worth. Physical dislocation is commonly used in Pastor Romance to disorient characters so that they are prompted to reassessment of their actions and their relationships.

**Characters**

Rulers are normally accompanied into exile or isolation by loyal companions but Prospero only has his infant daughter as a human companion until he orchestrates his enemies being caste ashore. Shakespeare replaces stock Pastoral character with more complex personalities like Ariel and Caliban. Parental, sibling, master and servant, ruler and courtiers are reflective of the social and historical **context** of the play. The antithetical villainous or virtuous characters are drawn from mixed social backgrounds but Shakespeare retains the typical pastoral hero and heroine as representative figures but without developing them to any great depth. The ‘admirable Miranda’ **personifies** goodness, and unsullied by the evils of civilisation, an equally virtuous suitor, finds her ‘So perfect and so peerless’. While the pastoral resolution phase typically sees wrongs forgiven and estranged kinsmen reconciled, the positive natures of some on Prospero’s island are offset by the duplicitous Sebastian and Trinculo and the unrepentant Antonio.

**Plotlines And Themes**

The typical five Act Elizabethan structure is used but it opens in the midst of crisis or dissension before a series of complications and reversals finally achieve resolution and restored stability. Reconciliation, repentance and forgiveness are recurring themes and these are reinforced by variations of the binary oppositions of innocence or goodness versus evil or wickedness, youth versus age, and superstition versus reality. Two parallel plots are often found that involve relationships between parents and their children or relatives and can involve the forces of fate, fortune and providence. The evils committed by the parents or elders of one generation being ameliorated or overcome by the promise of marriage and future offspring in the next. The love plot between the hero and heroine is usually beset by problems that threaten to keep them apart for a time before they can wed. Shakespeare uses genre device in developing the instant affection between Ferdinand and Miranda.

Disorientation serves as the greatest trigger for character change in Pastoral Romance for changed **context** prompts personal reflection and altered outlook as happens with Prospero and most of his captives. Shakespeare interweaves such typical conventions into his nine scenes but adds greater character and conceptual depth. The forces of fate, fortune and providence more often found in tragedy, blend with Prospero’s quest to confine and control his enemies and orchestrate conditions that encourage insight and repentance. The triumph of virtue over villainy in varied inter-relationships, affirms the benefits of social harmony and stability. Forgiveness of even the worst acts of callous greed and malice encourages positive transformation in some but not all, showing the benefits of social harmony and moral behaviour.

**Characterisation**

**Prospero**

The protagonist’s comments, actions and magical power, help develop awareness of broader issues at play than those commonly dealt with in Pastoral Romance. Parallel experience is typically used in the sub-genre to differentiate virtuous and villainous characters but the play’s strong political subtext affirms the extent to which filial betrayal and political overthrow, has disrupted the ‘natural order’. The microcosmic island scenario echoes a much larger macrocosmic **representation** of how ambition, greed and a colonialistic quest for power can instigate not only the discovery of other worlds and cultures but also their overthrow and exploitation. Shakespeare’s **representation** of his flawed master illusionist begins with the play’s opening tempest which terrifies crew and passengers. His ‘enemies’ are brought under his power and cast ashore on this strange and ‘barren’ isle where he has been forced to live for the past twelve years. Their feelings of displacement and vulnerability, echo what he had experienced years before, and similarly encourage in many but not all, moral reassessment of human relationships, on political, societal and personal levels.

Antonio’s guilt is **foregrounded** in the **contextual** details of what is revealed to Miranda, simultaneously informing daughter and audience alike, of who they really are and how they came to be cut off from human contact. Exile has prompted introspection and recognition of personal flaws and failings; Prospero admitting his selfishly indulgent quest for knowledge, ‘my library/Was dukedom large enough’. Personal obsession had undermined his role as leader which enabled Antonio to seize control but what really condemns him is the callous heartlessness of abandoning his brother and niece to the waves. His lack of humanity is countered by the compassionate actions of Gonzales who not only provides provisions but also some of his master’s precious books. It is fitting that an embittered deposed Duke, has effectively reversed the roles of powerful and powerless as the castaways struggle ashore, initially unaware of who has survived and who has perished.

Comments and actions demonstrate that Prospero can be quick tempered and petulant and at times, even ungrateful to Ariel. Such faults humanise the protagonist and quickly show that tragedy can ironically spark positive self-assessment and altered outlook. Haughty arrogance is shown towards Caliban however, despite the life-saving help he gave when father and daughter first arrived. Once Prospero’s authority was challenged, Caliban was deposed from power, enslaved and kept submissive by magical spells and demeaning treatment. These differing depictions of dispossession and exploitation have echoes of the colonialist voyages of discovery happening at the time the play was written, showing the benefits of those in authority and the suffering of the oppressed. Prospero’s folly has been offset by new-gained insight and heightened understanding in the same way that tempest will serve as a redemptive catalyst for many of the castaways. This is part of his strictly mapped out plan to punish his foes in ways that will make them question their wrongdoing.

Shakespeare uses three key illusions as prompts for penitent reflection; the Harpy’s banquet, the betrothal masque and revelation of Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess. He assesses their worth at the beginning of the final act, ‘Now does my project gather to a head’. His hold over his foes is also visually reinforced by the spellbound magic circle but as his redemptive plan has largely served its purpose, Ariel is instructed to ‘break their charms, restore their senses and they shall be themselves’. Displacement coupled with suffering, is used as a catalyst for self-discovery and a reason for altering outlook and **values**. Prospero realises that reconciliation would be difficult for his ‘unnatural’ brother, but despite his good cause for severe retribution, he favours mercy. Convinced that his son is dead, Alonso’s grief elicits contemplation of personal flaws including his involvement in political intrigue. Penitance prompts moral re-evaluation which is rewarded when he finds his son not only alive but happily in love. Both fathers bless their betrothal and the dynastic peace that it offers. Antonio’s incalcitrant and unrepentant stance affirms that not all are capable of salvation while simultaneously affirming Prospero’s moral superiority in ensuring that ‘nobler reason’ triumph over ‘fury’. The sheer willpower needed when he says, ‘For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother/Wo.dd even infect my mouth, I do forgive/Thy rankest fault’. ...l forgive thy rankest fault’ is evident in his terse and emotionally loaded **diction**. Antonio is unresponsive and without any sign of remorse, ‘I feel not/in the deity of my bosom.’ He is forced to accede however to Prospero’s legitimacy as the ruler of Milan when they leave the island and return home.

Honest appraisal of personal flaws is a pivotal part of the redemptive process, for Prospero has come to recognise that ‘virtue’ and reconciliation must take the place of ‘vengeance’ and enmity. Caliban had been considered a ‘thing of darkness’, but Prospero must now acknowledge him ‘mine’ with the realisation, ‘the creatures of this island...they are of monstrous shape yet more kind, gentle than our human generation.’ Self-discovery also stresses that leadership should exhibit kingly ideals of legitimacy, personal worth and merciful justice. The solemnised union between Miranda and Ferdinand validates their innate nobility but requires personal sacrifices if Prospero is to be worthy to rule, ‘I’ll drown my book...I’ll break my staff’. The restoration of justice also requires the liberation of Caliban and Ariel, ‘thou shalt ere long be free’ once the mariners have been fetched. Magnanimity has been demonstrated in tangible form and he can ‘thence retire me to my Milan’ and resume his political responsibilities. Dressed in his Ducal robes, he announces, ‘Our revels now are ended’ marking the end of the staged masques rather than any specific farewell to the stage but it has often been read this way because he likens himself to a playwright by asking the audience for their applause.

**Ariel**

Ariel’s first appearance shows a desire for ‘liberty’, which is ascribed with the words ‘Be free’ that begin the last line of the drama. This desire for freedom is also shown when Prospero is reminded in Act I, ‘I have done thee worthy service,! Told thee no lies, made no mistakings, serv’d/Without or grudge or grumblings.’ At times, Prospero can address Ariel in threatening tones as being ‘moody’ lying as a ‘malignant thing’ but typically, more affectionate terms are used, including ‘my bird’, ‘my industrious servant’, ‘my chick’ or ‘my diligence’. Virtuous and willing to please, this ‘airy spirit’ is described by Prospero as having been ‘too delicate’ to have followed the ‘abhorred commands’ of Sycorax and was therefore imprisoned in a tree ‘by help of her more potent ministers’. Ariel adopts female forms including the Harpy, Ceres or Juno as well as water-nymph and ‘marsh-light’. This ‘tricksy spirit’ is often depicted on stage as male but no specific gender is mentioned in the text.

Ariel’s wondrous talents enable Prospero’s tasks to be achieved in seconds or done ‘with a thought’ as mentioned in Act IV. The tempestuous storm is conjured in such a way that Neptune himself; ‘Seem to besiege and make his bold waves tremble’. Prospero praises the ‘brave spirit...so firm, so constant’ who delights in the magical sounds, singing and strange music that frightens Trinculo and Stephano whereas Caliban is calmed by its beauty. Four of the play’s songs are sung by Ariel, who also plays his pipe but an admonishing role is also played when he rebukes the ‘men of sin’ for supplanting Prospero and mocks the useless threat they pose when they draw their swords. Although non-human, Ariel shows empathetic compassion for the suffering experienced by Prospero’s castaways, suggesting to his master, ‘If you now beheld them, your affections would become tender-mine would, were I human.’ Ariel joyously responds to Prospero’s granting of liberty.

**Caliban**

Shakespeare’s **representation** of Caliban, reflects many Elizabethan perceptions and assumptions about the ‘savage’ natives discovered in the New World. Colonial expansion prompted philosophical debate about notions of nature or nurture, and considerations of whether ‘natural man’ as many critics see Caliban is bestial or unspoiled by the taint of civilisation. Caliban is an anagram for a 17th century spelling of ‘cannibal’ suggesting a rejection rather than an embracing of Prospero’s form of education. In punishment, this ‘frekled whelp hag-born’ son of Sycorax, has been usurped and reduced to brutish enslavement. His pregnant mother had been abandoned on the island by sailors and his swarthy appearance is described as ‘misshapen’ and ‘disproportion’d’. Alonso thinks he is ‘a strange thing as e’er I looked on’ but more derogatory terms including ‘demi-devil’, ‘born devil’ or monster allude to his having been sired by an incubus. Prospero prefers to use slave references rather than his name, **juxtaposing** ‘this most lying slave’ and the deposed Duke in a master-servant relationship often used in Pastoral Romance.

Initially, he had been treated more amicably, ‘Thou strokedst me and madst much of me’ as well as educating and teaching him to speak but he later feels aggrieved by what he sees as ingratitude for the help he gave them when they first arrived, saying they only taught him ‘how to curse’. Their relationship is shattered by his attempted rape of Miranda who now despises him and calls him ‘villain while her father condemnation is more abusive, calling him a ‘poisonous slave’, ‘filth’ and ‘thing of darkness’. Character contrasts with Ferdinand highlight that Caliban resents having to carry logs whereas the young lover is quite happy to do so in the belief expressed in the middle act that ‘some kinds of baseness/Are nobly undergone; and most poor matters / Point to rich ends’. Whereas Miranda views Caliban as being ‘a thing most brutish’, she feels Ferdinand is ‘a thing divine’. Her criticism seems warranted when Caliban enjoys watching Trinculo get beaten and even wants to join in,

‘Beat him enough; after a little time I’ll beat him too’.

The greatest challenge to stereotypical perspectives however is Caliban’s use of **verse** and eloquent **language**, especially when he is referring to the ‘sweet airs’ and ‘sounds’ of his island home. He offers reassurance, ‘Be not afeared, the isle is full of noises’ which help soothe him to sleep, offering refuge from his enslavement, ‘When I waked/I cried to dream again’. His intellectual superiority to his fellow plotters is most apparent in his use of verse whereas Stephano and Trinculo use prose. Whereas the nobles denigrate Caliban’s appearance and behaviour he can be equally eloquent as shown by his use of religious **metaphor** in hoping to ‘be wiser hereafter/And seek for grace’. Some critics cast Prospero as the usurper, arguing that Caliban’s situation echoes how the Duke was overthrown.

**Miranda And Ferdinand**

Prospero, the ‘prince of power’ has brought up a daughter, ‘perfect and so peerless’ who is still only fourteen years old and that coupled with her secluded upbringing far from civilisation makes her naivety credible. Other than Caliban, her father has been her only company and benchmark for attitudes and **values** and yet, as becomes apparent in the opening scenes, she has not been told anything about how and why they came to live on this island. Her comments suggest that she has been curious but that her father has withheld information until now. Her interjections and exclamations and expression show sensitivity, a lively interest in their past and innate intelligence. Her compassion is clear when she fears for those who seem in real danger during the storm. She also shows a compassionate nature when fearing for those on the ‘brave vessel’ who seem in genuine danger during the ferocious storm that makes it likely they will be ‘Dash’d all to pieces!’

She pities the ‘poor souls she thinks have perished before Prospero dispels her fears saying, ‘There’s no harm. done’ because the ‘direful spectacle of the wreck, which touch’d/The very virtue of compassion in thee’ has been illusory. Her questions trigger Prospero’s revelation of past events, but her main dramatic function is her romantic relationship with the young prince who had battled the ‘surge most swoln’ onto the shore. He is spellbound by his first sight of her, thinking she is ‘most sure the goddess of this island’. Mutual attraction is a sub-genre convention and clearly besotted, he sees Miranda as ‘admirable’ which is necessary if they are to fall in love and be betrothed in the space of three hours. They are well-matched, shown by his response to the ‘wonder’ of the island and willing submission to Prospero’s servitude in order to win her affection and her father’s approval. He is even prepared to renounce his kingdom and remain on the island so that he can be with her.

Their unrealistic whirlwind romance is typical of Pastoral Romance. His courteous restraint contrasts markedly with Caliban’s lust and attempted rape. The strength of her affection even prompts her to challenge her father’s authority by trying to limit the tasks Ferdinand must do. Although she feels guilty, she even disobeys her father’s explicit instruction not to tell the Prince her name or that she loves him. In a largely functional dramatic role as a benchmark of feminine virtue and worth, Miranda has few significant lines and no soliloquies although several characters discuss her. Caliban tells Stephano that Prospero ‘Calls her a nonpareil’, reinforced again at the beginning of Act IV, when her father says, ‘thou shalt find she will outstrip all praise’. Her isolated upbringing is reinforced when she stares in wonder at the ‘goodly creatures’ here assembled. Nobility was an important consideration of Renaissance dynastic marriage arrangements as affirmed by the loveless marriage organised by Alonso for his daughter.

Miranda’s virginity is equally paramount, and bluntly discussed at the beginning of Act IV. An unsullied betrothal is necessary if she is to be deemed fit to be the Prince’s wife. Marriage was a political tool, organised for financial, reproductive and security purposes without any consideration to emotional attachments. Sexual restraint is vital if Ferdinand and Miranda are to marry and thereby help heal old enmities and foster future peace via political reconciliation with Alonso. When viewing Caliban’s attempted rape in this light, it is more understandable that it was abhorred for it would have devalued Miranda as a potential royal spouse and thereby ruins Prospero’s plans. When he reveals them playing chess, the game takes on metaphorical weight as both a game of strategy but also of politics and power. Ferdinand is a future ruler and their dynastic union and the issue that will flow from it, will achieve a more secure future for all.

**Alonso And Gonzalo**

Prospero tells his daughter in the opening Act that Alonso, the King of Naples had been his ‘enemy’ and did ‘extirpate me and mine/Out of the dukedom’ by conspiring with Antonio to levy a treacherous army and drive them from the city. Personal animosity had combined with political ambition to couple the duchy of Milan to the crown of Naples. His complicity in putting the deposed Duke and young daughter adrift in a rotten boat is undeniably venal, showing a capacity and willingness to betray honour and moral scruples for corrupt, personal profit. When we learn that overthrow is followed by casting them off in a boat so rotten that ‘the very rats I instinctively have quit’ and without tackle, sail or mast but only a ‘rotten carcass of a butt’ they would surely die, makes Alonso’s criminal involvement reprehensible. All but killing them in cold blood, the actions of Antonio and Alonso meant to kill the exiled Duke and his offspring, countered by Gonzalo’s life-saving provision of food, water and books.

Alonso was motivated by personal animosity towards Prospero as well as political greed and ambition in wanting to add the duchy of Milan to the crown of Naples. The reconciliation orchestrated by the master illusionist shows he has become a political strategist showing great restraint given how his foes had conspired to set them adrift in a boat so rotten that even, ‘the very rats/instinctively have quit’ and without tackle, sail or mast and only a ‘rotten carcass of a butt’ virtually unseaworthy. Personal suffering makes Alonso recognise personal guilt; blaming himself for marrying off his daughter to the Prince of Tunis and so causing the death of his son. At the magical banquet, Ariel stresses the need for punishment for their ‘foul deed’ in supplanting ‘good Prospero’. Disguised as a threatening harpy, Ariel tells them are foolish to think they could harm the ‘ministers of Fate-the elements’. It is suggested that Ferdinand is dead and Alonso is told he will suffer, ‘Ling’ring perdition, worse than any death.’ Inconsolable, the grieving father reflects on personal guilt and regrets his involvement in overthrowing Prospero, making him less villainous than Antonio.

Old Gonzalo is depicted as an ‘honourable man’, similar in inherent goodness and compassion to young Miranda. He is unstintingly loyal to his grief stricken king and makes futile attempts to console him. His trust in Providence was evident in the opening tempest and despite the constant mockery from Sebastian, remains doggedly optimistic, even talking about his visionary ideas for a Utopian society that would not need for governance by magistrates, wealth or powerful leaders. Prospero fondly acknowledges Gonzalo’s ‘charity’ in providing them with the essentials that kept them alive as well as some treasured books that helped him refine his Art. In the final Act, the trustworthy courtier talks about the impact of divine providence, exaggerating that everybody has attained self-knowledge.

**Antonio And Sebastian**

Prospero tells Miranda about her ‘false uncle’ and is clearly still bitter about the way he had neglected ‘worldly ends’ and foolishly cast government ‘upon my brother’. He is still amazed ‘that a brother should/Be so perfidous’ and with unexpected insight for a girl so young and inexperienced, Miranda says, ‘Good wombs have borne bad sons’. Antonio is clearly not only ‘bad’ but still treacherous shown by his implacable villainy. Rather than any hint of shame, guilt or remorse, he remains egotistically arrogant, prompting the plot to murder Alonso and Gonzalo, so that Sebastian will be King instead of his brother. The language used by Antonio and Sebastian is largely sarcastic and mocking and Prospero’s brother voices no signs of moral conscience; ‘Twenty consciences that stand ‘twixt me and Milan, candied be they and melt, ere they molest!’ Sebastian and Antonio are largely undifferentiated fellow conspirators, except for Sebastian’s ‘hereditary sloth’. The unwarranted nature of their acts of betrayal, make their behaviour even more condemnatory.

**Stephano And Trinculo**

These are typical of the fools found in Pastoral Romance and are used as character foils and comic relief. Stephano calls Caliban a ‘brave monster’, who when drunk with ‘celestial liquor’, thinks Stephano is a ‘brave god’ and is ready to ‘kneel to him. The butler’s **coarse language** and drunken behaviour shows his lack of any positive qualities. Trinculo is a trembling coward who fears the weather, the island’s music and ‘devils’ but he also earns no sympathy from the audience due to his mocking treatment of Caliban. Recognition of Trinculo’s inferiority shows Caliban’s superior intelligence, ‘What a pied ninny’s this!’ Stephano and Trinculo serve as grotesque, parodic versions of Prospero who twelve years earlier, had abused Caliban’s generosity in showing him how to survive on the island. In Act Ill, ii, these drunken and petty thieves also parody the duplicitous Antonio and Sebastian. Caliban’s short speech about the island’s ‘Sounds and sweet airs’ gives him a voice that adds complexity to his character and some empathy from the audience, unlike his utterly villainous fellow conspirators.

**Conceptual Focus**

**Magic And Verisimilitude**

Illusion prompts discovery and transformation by distorting and challenging reality. New experiences test the castaways’ senses, while strange spectacles leave them awestruck and full of wonder. What they see, hear and feel causes them to speculate about different types of places and relationships as well as reconsider what should be valued in life. Strange creatures like Caliban and the figures in the masques are discovered as is a newfound appreciation about what has been lost. Pastoral Romance distorts reality in order to reaffirm moral truths and timeless **values** about the importance of social harmony. By being literally forced to look with new eyes, cathartic understanding becomes possible. Prospero’s ‘potent art...rough magic’ magic is used to bemuse the senses; and Caliban warns of the threat posed by Miranda’s father because ‘His art is of such power’.

Prospero’s magic, unlike Ariel’s supernatural powers, has been learned from his books as Caliban mentions in his advice to Stefano and Trinculo, ‘Remember First to possess his books,’ Caliban says to Stefano and Trinculo, ‘for without them He’s but a sot’. His books have empowered the exiled Duke on Caliban’s isle. **Ironically**, however, they were also the cause of his downfall by drawing him away from carrying out his proper duties as ruler. Ariel’s skills and Prospero’s learned magic help create the impression of a surreal world; enhancing feelings of disorientation and vulnerability that the castaways feel. The island’s ‘marvellous sweet music’ is often mentioned, capable of mesmerising or frightening the senses, used by Ariel to charm the mariners to sleep or to awaken them when necessary such as his singing preventing a murderous act. Prospero even charms his daughter into sleep, making her drowsy, ‘Thou art inclined to sleep; ‘tis a good dullness, and give it way’.

The most spectacular example of Prospero’s power are the play’s masque scenes, the betrothal masque described by Ferdinand as ‘a most majestic vision’. Shakespeare incorporates them as examples of an increasingly popular dramatic device at the time of composition. They were incredibly expensive to stage because they featured elaborate sets, costumes, masks and stage effects. They were also often accompanied by dancers and musicians who all served to heighten the perception of verisimilitude or false reality. The visual spectacle was combined however with simple plots that were typically based on themes, characters and Gods and Goddesses from Greek and Roman mythology. Virtues and vices were symbolically represented as Shakespeare does in ‘The Tempest’ to alter personal perspective and promote reflective soul-searching and the need to ‘rectify our knowledge’. The combined impact of supernatural occurrences, strange illusions and imaginative masques become part of the chastening and transformative process.

Prospero has planned.

References to fate, fortune and providence have also been partly responsible for bringing former foes to this island and therefore under his control. The role played by such forces is **metaphorically** interwoven in the play with the motifs of sleep and dreaming. In Act I, Ferdinand describes how, ‘My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up’ while Sebastian in Act II refers to the, ‘sleepy language, and thou speak’st/Out of thy sleep.’ What experience and personal suffering teaches is also embedded in dream imagery, ‘And rather like a dream than an assurance’ but Prospero stresses it best in Act IV, ‘We are such stuff/As dreams are made on, and our little life/Is rounded with a sleep.’ The creation of an imaginary world prompts many discoveries by stressing the discrepancy between what is real and what is illusionary as well as what is morally valued or rejected as false and venal.

**Discovery And Emancipation**

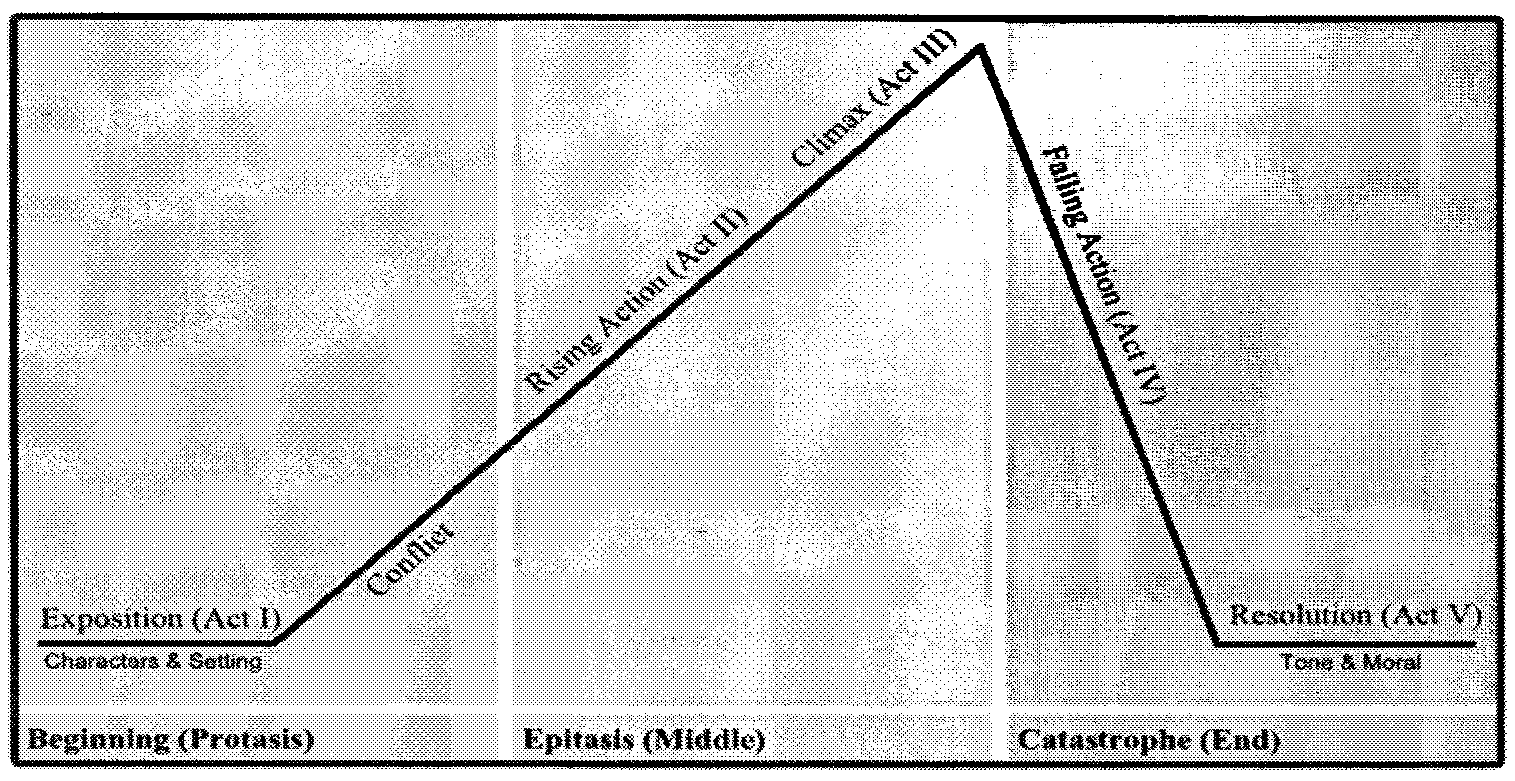
Delusions, illusions and dreams force characters to ponder what they have seen. Self-discovery has the power to challenge false or flawed assumptions and alter perspective in positive ways. Transformation depends on ind1via and their inter-relationships but insight usually results from facing adversity. This highlights that adversity can often be the catalyst for transformative understanding and self-awareness. Shakespeare makes this evident in the way disaster can **ironically** become the impetus for personal and moral growth as well as affirming the social importance of compassion, justice and redemption. The fusing of past, present and future stresses the benefits of self-awareness in political characters like Prospero and Alonso. Prospero’s twelve years of lonely exile have forced the introspection required for the realisation of personal complicity in his overthrow.

His negation of duty had, ‘in my false brother/Awak’d an evil nature’. His selfish misuse of knowledge had created the situation where ‘foul deeds’ were committed against him. Painful self—knowledge however, becomes the vehicle for his emancipation, seeing a better alternative future than one embittered by feelings of vengeance. He finds the strength to forgive even his ‘unnatural’ and ‘perfidious’ brother but in Act V, he makes it clear that penitence is required for his other foe, ‘Most cruelly! Didst thou, Alonso, use me and my daughter’, he and others described, as being ‘worse than devils’ and ‘rabble’ and valet’s. Whereas Antonio is beyond salvation, Alonso accepts the rebuke and resigns, entreating pardon for his wrongdoing.

By ‘being penitent’ for his personal shortcomings, Prospero is more willing to acknowledge the contrition and atonement of others. This confirms his moral worth and strength of character, which entitles him to the return of his lost dukedom. His superior worth is stressed by his having ‘pardoned the deceiver’ and proffered reconciliation rather than punishment. Similarly, Alonso had realised how his part in the conspiratorial overthrow of Prospero had disrupted rightful rule as well as showing a callous disregard for life. His blessing for the marriage of Ferdinand to the woman, who in infancy had nearly died because of his actions, marks him as being worthy to return to civilisation as an enlightened leader. Miranda’s innate personality and education, combined with positive nurturing has made her an admirable and intelligent woman. The marriage between the young lovers that Prospero’s arts have encouraged will hopefully redress the wrongs of their respective fathers and promote social harmony and peace.

The enclosed and enchanted setting has allowed Shakespeare to **contrast** nature and society in ways that **metaphorically** stress notions of personal discovery and spiritual rebirth. The play challenges the assumption that civilised society is superior to primitive cultures by showing that the heartlessness of Antonio and Sebastian is more fundamentally monstrous than Caliban’s desire for autonomy and freedom. Discovery and emancipation are fused after Ariel is told to ‘break their charms, restore their senses and they shall be themselves’. The magician’s decision that the castaways ‘Shalt have freedom’ including Caliban who can then acknowledge, ‘How fine my master is’ testifies to how outlook has been changed for several characters. Sea imagery in Act V stresses the purgative cleansing of the ‘shore of their minds’ by the traumatic ‘sea-change’ they have experienced. His future will be marked by awareness that ‘every third thought will be of my grave’ but he asks Ariel in a last service before he is set free, to provide ‘calm seas, auspicious gales’ and the audience’s applause to fill their vessel’s sails for their return voyage home.

**Dramatic Structure**



**Exposition**

(Act I, Scene I and ii) Storm crisis is realistically conveyed in dialogue and sound imagery.

Some ideas about characters are revealed via comments made by Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian, and Gonzalo.

Focus shifts from the storm and shipwreck to those on shore. Miranda is told, a prologue summary by her father about how he was overthrown and exiled. Exposition finishes once Ariel and Caliban are introduced and Ferdinand arrives.

**Complication And Rising Action**

(Act I, Scene ii) Ferdinand and Miranda fall instantly in love but a complication arises from Prospero inference that he is against the match.

(Act II, Scene I and ii) Gonzalo voices utopian ideals while Alonso and the others are put into a magical sleep. Antonio and Sebastian plot to kill the king is foiled by Ariel. Prospero’s serious machinations against his enemies is offset by the comic subplot plot by Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano

(Act III, Scene I and ii) Ferdinand and Miranda plight their troth while Caliban and others plot to kill Prospero.

**Climax, Crisis Or Turning Point**

(Act III, Scene iii)Antonio, Sebastian and Alonso are brought to a magical banquet prepared by Prospero. The banquet vanishes amidst thunder and lighting and Ariel’s Harpie warning to the ‘three men of sin’ of their punishment.

**Resolution Or Falling Action**

(Act IV, Scene i) The romance between Miranda and Ferdinand is recognised by Prospero; their marriage contract marked by the betrothal Masque. After Prospero utters the farewell to his actors, Ariel enters with news of the collapse of the Caliban plot.

(Act V, Scene i, 1-171)Prospero now has all his enemies in his power, and he reveals his identity when Ariel gives him his hat and rapier that he wore when he had been the Duke of Milan.

**Catastrophe Or Denouement**

(Act V, Scene i, Epilogue) Ferdinand and Miranda are ‘discovered’ playing chess, and Alonso realizes that his son is alive and betrothed to Prospero’s daughter. The drama closes with universal forgiveness and the ‘restitution of all things.’

**Dramatic Style And Language Use**

Shakespeare atypically observes Aristotle’s ‘three unities of time, place, and action’ in this play to clarify the plot and create a sense of urgency. The impression is given that events are following a tightly organised schedule and plan. Events are conveyed on this non-realistic, microcosmic isolated setting in a ‘**tragi-comedy**’ style, which combines the dramatic forms of comedy, tragedy, and pastoral romance. This gives greater dramatic scope, allowing the playwright to manipulate serious themes, mixed conventions, and character types with mixed emotional overtones. **Metaphorical** **analogies** made between nature’s seasonal **rhythms** and human existence are offset by different types of **humour** ranging from the sexual banter and crudity of Trinculo and Stephano, to the **mocking sarcasm** of Antonio and Sebastian and Ariel’s mischievous trickery.

The play is mostly written in **blank verse**, **iambic pentameter** but the **verse**-form often mimics the **pace**, **tone** and nuance of everyday speech to the extent that at times, it is almost indistinguishable. This is evident in Prospero’s speech to his daughter in the opening act when he talks about ‘My brother and thy uncle’. This adds realism and breaks up the rhythm. At other times, individual lines preserve the lyrical smoothness and harmony typical of Shakespeare’s **blank verse** set against lines that lack **rhythm**. **Soliloquy** and **dramatic monologues** lack the intensity of those found in tragedy but they are still conceptually significant as seen when Prospero talks in Act V of what has been achieved through his use of magic.

The nobles typically speak in **verse** but characters of lower social rank such as Stefano and Trinculo use **prose**, their low-comedy scenes lowering the **tone** whereas **blank verse** has greater dignity which heightens the **atmosphere**. The boatswain’s use of **prose** in the opening scene conveys the excitement of the storm and the insolence that comes with the urgency of what needs to be done if they are to survive the tempest. In the final scene however, the boatswain uses **blank verse** and his language is more calm and respectful, telling the king that the ship is safe and sound. Caliban uses both language forms, revealing his complexity of character. Prospero’s language contains **imperatives** that help assert his power but it also has some of the play’s richest **imagery** that includes references to sea, storm, sleep and dreaming. **Sound imagery** is used to suggest the clamorous noises of the terrible storm that opens the play and many of the play’s compound words also relate to and reinforce the power of the sea: ‘our sea-sorrow’, ‘a sea-change ‘sea-swallowed’, ‘still- closing waters’ and ‘never-surfeited sea’. The play also has seven songs, four of which are sung by Ariel who also creates the ‘heavenly music’ mentioned in the final act.

Theatrical spectacle such as the masque scene and supernatural occurrences serve as ‘some oracle to rectify our knowledge’. Most of the masque sections are expressed in **iambic pentameters**, using typical **Jacobean rhymed couplets**. The smoother harmony and use of more end-stopped lines creates a more artificial regularity which suits the sort of play within a play feature of the masque. This is evident in the inflated rhetoric and lengthy exchange between Iris, Ceres and Juno in the Act IV betrothal masque. Shakespeare also manipulates sentence length to control action and pace. Lengthier narrative sections of dialogue, such as Prospero’s description of his brother’s treachery, making greater use of longer, more detailed sentences while a shorter, terser structure is used in scenes where there is greater action or emotion. Questions and **exclamations** can add force and focus and **repetition** of words and phrases can also add emphasis to what is being said. **Alliteration** is frequently used to either strengthen the **rhythm** or heighten **melody**, ‘Let me remember thee what thou has promised’.

**Key Scene Analysis**

**Opening Tempest Scene**

This short but **dramatic** storm scene begins amidst the sound of ‘a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning’ when the ship is about to run ‘aground’ on the rocks. The Master urges his mariners to ‘bestir, bestir’ before the Boatswain takes over and rouses his men to action. The passengers have obviously ignored his request to ‘keep below’ in their cabins and now ‘mar’ the mariner’s efforts by being on deck. Gonzalo’s foolishly requests patience but the Boatswain exclaims ‘the roarers’ care not ‘for the name of king’ and for them to go ‘Hence!’ In the midst of crisis, social status holds no sway, regardless of ‘whom thou hast aboard’. The need to avoid disaster by immediate action legitimises his calls for the courtiers to ‘trouble us not’ and to just get ‘Out of our way’. Gonzalo’s use of gallows humour ‘make the rope of his destiny our cable’ shows he recognises the danger. The nobles are named but the mariners are identified by their special nautical role. Urgency is embedded in the Boatswain’s nautical language, ‘Down with the topmast! yare! lower, lower!’ He is stunned when the passengers return, ‘Have you a mind to sink?’ Antonio and Sebastian respond to such criticism with a torrent of abuse, outraged by his at his lack of deference to their status, and calling him an ‘uncharitable dog’, ‘cur’ and ‘whoreson’.

With waves pushing the ship ever closer to the rocky shore, the nobles must learn that social protocols have no value here. Gonzalo’s aside suggests offense at Antonio’s abusive threats to the Boatswain, King and Prince already below deck at their prayers. When the wet mariners return and declare ‘All lost’, disaster is confirmed and prayers seem the only salvation left. Antonio’s continued vitriolic attack sets him apart the others, despite the crisis that threatens everyone’s life. Stage directions indicate terrified cries for ‘Mercy’ or ‘Farewell’, and five **repetitions** of the phrase ‘We split’, the hopelessness of their situation prompting audience empathy for the victims. Gonzalo uses prose to voice his terror, ‘Now I would give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground’ which shows that adversity can utterly alter outlook and evaluation of what is important. His wish for a small parcel of dry land also foreshadows where everyone on board will ironically end up, as providence and Prospero’s arts have planned.

**Act Three — Scene 3— Banquet**

The banquet masque is an important turning point in the play for it triggers Alonso’s reconciliation with Prospero. It begins with ‘Thunder and lightning’ and the entry of Ariel ‘like a harpy’ who makes the illusory banquet vanish just as the ‘three men of sin’ are about to eat. They are addressed as ‘Being most unfit to live’, and mocked as fools when they draw their swords for these ‘ministers of Fate’ are ‘invulnerable’. The prime ‘business’ of this scene is that they ‘remember’ how they ‘did supplant good Prospero’, before committing the ‘foul deed’ of casting ‘Him and his innocent child’ into the sea. They are warned that the ‘powers’ have not forgotten, as shown by the punishing storm and Alonso’s loss of his son. Contrition is prompted when Ariel speaks of further suffering in the form of ‘Lingering perdition, worse than any death’. Before the Shapes enter to carry off the table, they are warned they will know nothing but ‘heart-sorrow’ before vanishing ‘in thunder’.

Past crimes will be punished, and Prospero is pleased with Ariel’s performance and that his spectacular ‘high charms’ have helped ‘knit up’ and distract his enemies. Now ‘in my power’, he leaves to visit Ferdinand and his own ‘loved darling.’ Alonso and Sebastian react differently to what they have witnessed, Alonso seeming traumatised and grief-stricken, ‘O, it is monstrous, monstrous’ in the belief that his ‘trespass’ has caused his son being bedded ‘I’ the ooze’. He heads off seeking to be ‘with him there lie mudded.’ Antonio seems unmoved however while Sebastian displays arrogant confidence that he can ‘fight’ them ‘one fiend at a time’. Chorus like, Gonzalo now comments on the behaviour of the others, describing them as ‘desperate: their great guilt,/Like poison given to work a great time after /Now ‘gins to bite the spirits’. He begs Adrian to follow them and stop them ‘from what this ecstasy/May now provoke them to: The loyal courtier has committed no crime, but he shows compassion for the guilty Although he has witnessed the banquet, he registers no fear; some critics suggesting a hr to the banquet scene in ‘Macbeth’ where only the guilty witness Banquo’s blood smeared ghost The banquet masque links crime and punishment, by prompting the guilty to contemplate the dire consequences of their actions.

**Act Four — Betrothal masque**

Before the masque begins, which takes up most of the act, Prospero gives his blessing to Ferdinand and Miranda. This is accompanied however by a stern warning to Ferdinand that he take care not to break Miranda’s ‘virgin-knot’ before the wedding has been solemnized. The masque itself affirms the harmonious social function of marriage in accordance with the natural order of life. Stock characters include reapers and nymphs, their role to celebrate fertility and seasonal change through typical Pastoral Romance motifs. Prospero is the stage manager, ‘Spirits which by mine art/I have from their confines called to enact/My present fancies’ but the masque requires Ariel’s many talents. These include the soft music used to introduce it; ‘Now come, my Ariel!’ Bring a corollary/Rather than want a spirit: appear and pertly!! No tongue! All eyes! Be silent...’ It breaks up the main action with a spectacular display of the power of magic; Prince Ferdinand describing it as ‘a most majestic vision’ and acknowledges his ‘wondered father’.

**Structurally**, the masque also marks the completion of the lover’s courtship and is clearly distinguished from the rest of the play by the use of a more formal style than the use of **unrhymed verse**. This includes **rhyming couplets** and the sort of elevated language that is used by the mythical goddesses Iris, Juno and Ceres, the goddess of harvest. This trio herald the ‘contract of true love’ which challenges the typical marital arrangements of the time between noble families which were political, dynastic contracts not requiring any emotional attachment between the couple. **Juxtaposing** artifice with and realism, the goddesses give blessings of honour, prosperity and plenty, suggesting that the wedding will be fruitful. Marriage represents social harmony and triumph over discord. At the conclusion of the masque, Prospero addresses Ferdinand and tells him that ‘We are such...’ which reminds them all, including the audience, that the masque, with all its heavenly creatures, and magical wonders, is not real.

**Epilogue**

Only when Prospero is alone on-stage, does he announce that his charms are ‘all o’erthrown’. Minus his magical power, books and staff, he asks his audience to ’let your indulgence set me free’ through their applause. Critical debate has suggested that the epilogue is the dramatist’s farewell to theatre but some scholars challenge that it is meant as personal allegory. Frank Kermode argues that ‘The Epistle — one of ten of Shakespeare’s that survive’ was ‘a conventional appeal for applause’. Similarly, Shakespearean academic David Crystal states that during Elizabethan times, the epilogue was ‘a conventional expression of humility at the end of a play, apologizing for any inadequacy in the performance and asking for applause’. While ‘The Tempest’ was Shakespeare’s final romance, he co-wrote three more plays before he died. As such, no strong evidence suggests the Epilogue needs to be viewed as theatrical farewell.

**ACT I SCENE I**

One of the most significant features of this scene is, of course, the storm. No matter how it is presented, it is still an **image** of chaos. The play begins with the world’s normal, orderly state being reversed.

The opening scene establishes that the title of the play refers to more than the ‘tempestuous storm’. The storm is also **symbolic**: it stands for social, political and personal upheaval. The boatswain’s contempt for his noble passengers, who are only getting in the way of the sailors trying to do their work, is a good example of this reversal. He has no interest in the rank of his passengers unless they can ‘command these elements to silence’ (lines 2 1-2) — command the storm to stop — and orders them out of the way.

The lack of respect would be both shocking and humorous for an Elizabethan audience. Together with the **powerful image** of the storm, it introduces the idea that upheavals, reversals and revelations are going to be central to the action of the play.

Although this scene is written in **prose**, Shakespeare has nonetheless used **dramatic techniques** and **language structures** very effectively. The **pace** of the scene builds throughout, something that the many entrances and exits helps achieve. The cries of the mariners and nobles throughout the scene also build the **tension**. Just before the end of the scene there are numerous offstage voices crying out in fear of approaching death. When Gonzalo is alone on stage at the end of the scene, especially after the confusion in the action, it is a reminder to the audience that when we are faced with our own death, we have to prepare for it in isolation.

**ACT I SCENE II**

This is a long scene — over 500 lines. The Tempest is unusual because it has fewer scene divisions than most other plays. This is why the scene has been divided into sections. This is typically the way a production company would work: actors would not attend all main rehearsals, but would instead attend when they were in the particular ‘sections’ to be rehearsed.

**Section 1 (lines 1-186)**

**Structurally**, it is significant that we have seen the storm before we discover that it is a product of Prospero’s art. We have suspended disbelief, accepting that the storm on stage is a real event within the **context** of the play. This has provided a **dramatic opening** scene, but it also provides us with a lasting impression of Prospero’s powers. We, like the sailors, have accepted the storm’s ‘reality.’

**Section 2 (lines 187-306)**

Again, this section is expository, but it has the advantage that it explores the relationship between master and magical servant dramatically. The argument that they have about Ariel‘s freedom is a dramatic technique that allows Ariel’s story to be presented in a more engaging way. Audiences during Shakespeare’s time would have been used to the idea that the relationship between magician and spiritual servant was difficult. Spirits were traditionally reluctant to serve, masters found it difficult to successfully command. Because Prospero is able to convince Ariel to perform his will, it again proves to us how powerful he is.

Ariel’s powers are essential to the plot. He is able to travel anywhere on the island instantaneously and can appear in many forms. He can control all the elements — earth, wind, fire and water — and can become invisible at will. He manages the other spirits in the play who are mentioned in the text and the directions, but who never speaks any dialogue.

The relationship between Prospero and Ariel has been imagined in a great number of ways. The decision to have a female actor play Ariel can further complicate the relationship — many productions choose to do this. Their relationship can be portrayed as almost sexual, close and loving or difficult and spiteful. However it is interpreted, the tension in the relationship is evident in the script.

**Section 3 (lines 307-end)**

This scene sets up much of the dramatic tension that will drive the action for the rest of the play. Prospero’s plans for his enemies, Ariel’s desire for freedom, Caliban’s hatred and Ferdinand and Miranda’s love are all established. These strands of the plot will be played out in the scenes that follow.

The use of **music** in the scene is an important technique. Prospero’s power to command the storm, tame the spirits and immobilise Ferdinand have established the power of magic in the play. The songs establish that magic is also a beautiful thing. The first song is about the calming of the storm; the second seeks to comfort Ferdinand for the loss of his father.

**Dramatically**, the songs **contrast** strongly with the frenzy of the storm. On the Shakespearean stage, the actor playing Ariel would be likely to have a very high voice and sing in a light, lyrical style.

The use of **asides** in this scene has a very particular effect. Prospero explains to us, through asides, that he is ‘uneasy’ because Ferdinand has too easily won Miranda’s love, and may not value it as a result (lines 453-4). He will, therefore, place some obstacles in the way of their relationship. The asides firstly let Prospero establish a stronger relationship with the audience; secondly, they explain what might otherwise be seen as cruel and irrational behaviour.

The play's opening immediately poses questions for the audience: who are these people (the nobles) and why have they gone to sea? Will they survive, and where might they find themselves if they do? We are surprised by the suggestion that the storm is not natural, and wonder what kind of person can raise a tempest. Prospero explains to Miranda who they are, and why they are on the island; who are the people who have abandoned the ship, and what are his plans for them. Having met Miranda and Prospero, we are also introduced to Caliban and Ariel, and later Ferdinand. We also have an indication that the business Prospero and Ariel are to accomplish is to be achieved in a brief space of time.

This scene contains long passages of **narration** by Prospero, which risk boring the audience. The benefit for the playwright is that he does not have to present directly (as in other late comedies, such as The Winter's Tale or Cymbeline) the principal characters' earlier experiences, but has more time to depict the resolution of their problems. The potential problem is also minimized in these ways:

* the play's explosive opening scene will enlist our attention more effectively than mere conversation;
* Prospero is aware that he may lose Miranda's attention, so he several times reminds her to or rebukes her for inattention;
* the story he tells is intrinsically interesting as it explains what we saw in the last scene;
* as he concludes his speech, Prospero sends Miranda to sleep and summons up his familiar spirit, Ariel.

We meet Ariel, Caliban and Ferdinand. As Ariel is an ‘airy spirit’ and Caliban a ‘salvage and deformed slave’, their actions and gestures must suggest this to the audience. The **pacing** and **structure** of the scene are evident as it concludes with the arrival of Ferdinand, led to Prospero's cell by Ariel and his music. There is no doubt that this **music** will be played here, and frequently throughout the play to accompany the action. Prospero's power is shown in his summoning Ariel and his control of Miranda's sleeping: he may well use his staff for the exercise of this power - the staff and the book, from which he has earned his Art, are important properties throughout the play.

The scene contains a joke about language (repeated later by Trinculo) as Ferdinand is amazed that the goddess-like creature he has met in this remote place speaks his tongue: ‘My language! Heavens!’. Generally, we note how the informal (prose) of the first scene is replaced by a dignified and measured **blank verse**. Even Caliban (he has been taught by Prospero) habitually uses **verse**, though he attempts to render his speech ugly by repeated (powerless) cursing.

The versatility of this basic verse form appears in Ariel's account (195-214) of how he ‘performed’ the tempest - the **description** embodies the frenetic action it depicts. Ariel can alter his voice or mimic others. Although he speaks directly (**blank verse**) to Prospero, to whom he also appears, he has different appearances or becomes invisible, and has different voices for others. He is able to lead or manipulate people by means of his songs, two of which are heard in this scene: these should be performed as beautiful lyrical airs - here Ferdinand remarks on the music's power: ‘Allaying both (the waters') fury and my passion/With its sweet air’.

One key **symbol** running through the play is to be noted in the **dialogue** here and subsequently - the sea. Note how the word is used in compounds (‘sea-sorrow’, ‘sea-storm’, ‘sea-change’) as well as on its own. The references at first seem merely literal and commonplace but Shakespeare builds up gradually an idea of the elements generally, or nature, but especially the sea, as embodying the principles of justice, retribution and forgiveness which lie at the heart of the play: this becomes explicit in Ariel's ‘three men of sin’ speech in III, iii, and in the play's last act.

**ACT II SCENE I**

Gonzalo’s attitude to the death of Ferdinand seems strange. The king believes his son has died but by the end of the scene he seems to have rediscovered some hope that Ferdinand lives.

The vision of a perfect society outlined by Gonzalo is a key **image** in the play. In this scene, we see his vision of a perfect society **contrasted** with the scheming, amoral political world typified by Antonio.

One way that the **contrast** in the attitudes of Gonzalo and Antonio is revealed is through the use of the story of the ‘Widow Dido’. The original story is from Roman mythology. Dido, the Queen of Carthage, fell in love with Aeneas, who had been shipwrecked there. The god Mercury compels Aeneas to leave Carthage and Dido, in grief, burns herself to death on a funeral pyre. There are several obvious links between Dido’s story and the story of The Tempest. As well as the shipwreck, there is the love of Ferdinand and Miranda and the role of gods and spirits. Tunis is very near to the ancient ruins of Carthage.

Gonzalo praises Dido. He says that the king’s daughter will be the fairest queen since Dido’s time. He sees her as a model of virtue and self-sacrifice. Sebastian and Antonio see Dido as an adulteress — Aeneas was her lover, not her husband — and mock Gonzalo‘s lack of understanding.

This is one of the many times in the scene that the characters disagree with each other over the nature of things. Like the argument about whether the island is fertile or barren, we now have an argument about human nature. From the same story, different characters get different interpretations. Whether they see Dido as virtuous or promiscuous depends upon their own view of the world.

The Tempest sets up many of these **contrasts** and parallels in its **structure**. The plot to murder Alonso in this scene links with Caliban’s plot to kill Prospero. The final effect is to make the island a microcosm, a place that represents the structures and relationships in society. The island, an imaginary place, becomes a vehicle for exploring the nature of our society and helping us to understand the world and our place in it.

This scene introduces us properly to the people we have first seen in I, i, where their status is clear but not their identities. Prospero's story of his past in I, ii enables us to identify the various characters. Much the most important is Alonso, whose distress at the loss of his beloved Ferdinand, and whose getting of wisdom with age, enable him (later) to repent of his part in Prospero's overthrow. Gonzalo, of whom Prospero has spoken so well, appears superficially to be foolish - his speech is meant to divert Alonso (whose jester, Trinculo, is elsewhere) but appears inappropriate in the circumstances. His manner may be tedious, but his ideas deserve better than the scorn of Antonio and Sebastian.

These seem to be soul-mates in their **sarcasm** towards Gonzalo and Adrian. Later, as these two conspire against Alonso and Gonzalo, it seems otherwise: Antonio's **cynical wit** conceals a sharp and scheming mind, while Sebastian is a weaker character, whom he is able easily to corrupt.

The plot on the lives of the king and his friend show us that Antonio has not changed, that he does not yet see any kind of warning in what has befallen him, and that he seeks to extend his power even when there seems little chance ever to exercise it. The seriously evil scheming of these two can be compared to the very silly plotting of Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo, and to Ferdinand's and Miranda's wholly good plotting (to get round Prospero's seeming disapproval): Prospero is, of course, aware of all of these schemes, to which his responses are well-judged. It is worth noting that Ariel has ensured that the nobles' garments are unharmed by the salt water: this is a clue that the shipwreck is not all it seems, but Antonio and Sebastian are unimpressed, nor do they see the sleepiness of the others as anything but an opportunity for wickedness.

This scene readily divides into two parts - in the first, the stage is crowded with characters, and the exchanges are very open and public. When sleep falls on all but the plotters, the **dialogue** becomes intimate, the action confined to a small part of the stage. After Gonzalo's attempt to comfort Alonso, the **dialogue** is characterized by the kind of **verbal fencing** known as **stichomythia**: this is usually set out as single **pentameter** lines (statement and repartee) but here the speaking is informal, in **prose** (which is not an indication simply of social class but of lack of formality).

In the second part of the scene, you should note how Antonio manipulates Sebastian: he is fairly sure of his man, but cannot reveal too much of his own mind until he is sure he is no danger of betrayal: hence, much is hinted, rather than stated at first. The supernatural elements in the scene are (relatively) few, but notable: apart from Ariel's restoration of the nobles' clothes, there is the strange sleep (which we have already seen befall Miranda in the previous scene). Unlike the plotters, the audience is aware of Ariel's vigilance, and we are not surprised by his rescuing the intended victims, to the embarrassment of the plotters who try unconvincingly to explain the drawn weapons in their hands.

The **dialogue** varies enormously in this scene. The **conventional rhetoric** of Gonzalo's (verse) attempt to comfort Alonso gives way to **prose dialogue**, and a series of **feeble puns** and obscure references to the classical world (often cut in modern production). Alonso's speech (‘You cram these words into mine ears...’) introduces a more serious **tone**, maintained by Sebastian, Gonzalo and Francisco, but the **informal prose** returns before the nobles sleep: thus, when Antonio begins his temptation, he changes his manner of speech, adopting a precise and delicate poetic turn. This is the Antonio whom Prospero has described as able to ‘set all hearts...to what tune pleas'd his ear’. There are some notable **images**, but what is most striking is the organization of Antonio's argument, and his use of hint and unspoken suggestion: ‘What might/Worthy Sebastian? O, what might? - No more:-/And yet methinks I see it in thy face,/What thou shouldst be.’

**ACT II SCENE II**

It was indeed common practice in England during Shakespeare’s time to exhibit natives, particularly those from the Americas, for profit. This scene **satirises** this practice. Trinculo and Stephano come to represent the drunken and ignorant adventurers who see indigenous people only as a source of profit, either as slaves or as exhibits in a freak show. Supposedly civilised society is revealed to be petty, self-serving and corrupting. Particularly for productions that wish to explore the problems of colonialism, this is a key scene.

Shakespeare’s **humour** is more effective in this play than in many of his others. Tastes in comedy, and the **context** of comedy, have changed significantly since Shakespeare’s time and making what were once very funny scenes work for modern audiences can be a real challenge to a production company.

Stephano is the dominant partner, more in control of the situation and more interested in what he can gain personally. For example, his interest in murdering Prospero increases when he realises it would mean that he would then have Miranda as his queen.

Trinculo is the unfunny jester. He is more likely to moan about his situation than take charge. He envies Stephano’s acquisition of a servant, and whines about Caliban’s lack of wit. He is more superstitious than Stephano, afraid of the thunder and the spirits on the island.

The language of Shakespeare’s **humour** is often revealing. For example, Trinculo’s desire to exhibit Caliban for profit is disguised from the modern audience by a range of **puns** and **absurdities**. He says, for example, that were he ‘in England’, ‘there would this monster make a man’. There are two meanings here. Firstly, there is the financial meaning: with the right kind of advertising sign, ‘holiday fools’ (ignorant men) would part with their ‘silver’ and this would be the making of him. Secondly there is the **satirical**: in England, they are so ignorant that this beast would be mistaken for a man’.

This scene is more than a comic interlude. It is essential in exploring the play’s themes. Look at the **contrast** between Prospero and Stephano. Prospero does not treat Caliban well by today’s standards, but he is infinitely better than Stephano, whose first act is to get Caliban roaring drunk. The cloak Caliban uses to hide beneath reminds us of Prospero‘s magic garment: this link draws our attention to the differences between Caliban’s masters.

In terms of the play's whole **structure** we see how Prospero's action in raising the tempest has brought to the island various characters, whose actions he and Ariel oversee, making three strands of the drama. Ferdinand we have already met, followed by Alonso and his court; but Trinculo and Stephano are not part of Prospero's original scheme: their anarchic presence is a **comic parallel** to the more serious malice of Antonio and Sebastian; their meeting with Caliban forms a further connection.

We see two rebellions plotted, but our view of each is made clearer by the other. Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo can also be seen as ‘three men of sin’ (if Caliban be a man). Like Iago, Antonio is skilful in manipulating others, but he lacks wisdom and his political aims are short-sighted: trapped on the island with (as far as he knows) no mariners, no ship and no hope of these, he still aspires to an ascendancy which has no meaning if he cannot return to Italy. Caliban's apparently more modest aspiration is surprisingly more realistic - to serve Stephano, who (this appears in III, ii) will usurp Prospero's rule over the island. We note also Caliban's naturally servile tendency (he was like this when he met Prospero) and his mistaken belief that the island is Prospero's chosen domain: because Prospero has been exiled from Milan, his authority is exerted over this little island. But he is as ready as Caliban to let it go. Caliban's enjoyment of strong drink is a **comic analogy** to the serious topical theme of corruption and enslavement of Indians (and others) by means of liquor.

The rebellious intention of the fool, the butler and the monster is mirrored in the knockabout anarchy of their actions. The scene has many opportunities to improvise from the usual script, and this may be seen in modern productions as is Shakespeare's time. Trinculo's hiding under Caliban's gabardine (one of many episodes in which clothes figure prominently) is a **comic** version of another theme of the play - concealment leading to **discovery** and reunion.

Here Stephano thinks he has **discovered** an even stranger creature than the simple monster Trinculo has found. His and Trinculo's joy on finding each other anticipates the reunion of Ferdinand and his father in Act V. The combination of gabardine, multiple limbs and Stephano's drunkenness makes possible the audience's enjoyment of his evident incomprehension. Caliban's awe at the strangers reminds us of Miranda's reaction to Ferdinand - indeed Caliban makes the same mistake, as he supposes Trinculo to be a ‘spirit.’ After the gabardine, the most important **prop** in this scene is Stephano's bottle; for Caliban this acquires a magical authority as great almost as Prospero's staff, while Stephano blasphemously likens it to the scripture: ‘kiss the book’ (the reference is to kissing the Bible in making an oath).

The scene is notable for parallels to other parts of the play, for the variety of language forms and for **repetition** which produces running gags. Obvious references to other parts of the drama come in Caliban's calling Trinculo a ‘spirit’, in Trinculo's and Stephano's joy on being reunited, and in Trinculo's account of his swimming ashore ‘like a duck’ (in contrast to Francisco's dignified and eloquent description of Ferdinand's swimming, in II, i). Several terms are chosen for **repetition** and **comic** development - such as Trinculo's ‘duck’, leading to a joke about a goose. In Trinculo's first speech the **noun** ‘fish’ combines the ideas of Caliban's monstrous form, his lack of hygiene and the ever-present sea.

Later in the scene, Trinculo will repeat the term ‘monster’ - suggesting Caliban's strange and inhuman nature, but ringing the changes by prefacing it with different **epithets**: ‘weak/credulous/perfidious and drunken/puppy-headed/scurvy/ abominable/ridiculous/howling’ and (damning with faint praise) ‘brave’. Finally, note how varied the forms of theatrical speech are in this scene. Caliban's habitual speech (as in the opening soliloquy) taught him by Prospero, is blank verse which would be eloquent were it not so full of cursing (he has already told us in I, i, that his curses have no power).

Trinculo's **monologue** is rather like that of the Porter in Macbeth. It barely advances the plot but shares with the audience a shrewd comic meditation on the play's themes (here the nature of man and the islander; the wonder excited by such creatures in England, and its commercial possibilities). But the speech is also a loose blueprint for **banter** and exchanges with the audience, improvisation or addition of highly topical material (for obvious reasons not in the surviving text). At first Caliban joins, with Stephano and Trinculo, in **prose dialogue**: this indicates the informality of the episode (one is a fool and two are drunk) as much as the men's status. Later in the scene, he reverts to the poetic line, as he seeks to impress his new master.

Stephano's song about Kate is as different as can be from the play's characteristic **ethereal music**, provided by Ariel, the ‘airy spirit’. Learned no doubt, at sea from the sailors who would welcome the friendship of the butler (it may be a shanty, with its rollicking metre) this song, about good times ashore, is as earthy as can be. In its **euphemistic reference** to sexual pleasure it is worth **contrasting** with Ferdinand's praise of chastity in IV, i. A different kind of contrast can be found in Caliban's defiant rhyme with which the scene ends - where Ariel is delicate, lyrical, melodic, this is heavily metrical (tub-thumping), a distinction evident in popular music of our own time: Caliban could be a punk-rocker or a rapper.

**ACT III SCENE I**

Ferdinand and Miranda have fallen in love in a moment. Ten minutes into their relationship, they are engaged to be married. This is clearly unrealistic, but it does not make this a flaw in the play.

Overheard conversations are a common **dramatic motif** in Shakespeare’s plays. However, Prospero’s eavesdropping on the couple is something that can make a modern audience uncomfortable. The idea of parents listening to their daughters and their partner’s talk of love is not as acceptable today. When he shares with the audience his desire to prepare a magical surprise however, we can see he has no malicious purpose.

This short scene is the central part of that strand in the drama which follows Ferdinand and his courtship of Miranda (see I, ii; IV, i and V, i,). Here we see and hear how the lovers declare their feelings and exchange promises. The sequel to this will be a celebration in the Masque, Alonso's (and Gonzalo's) blessing in V, i, and the solemnisation of the marriage in Naples, which will at last unite the once rival states.

After the intrigue of II, i and the frenetic excesses of II, ii, this scene is an oasis (because very brief) of calm in the play. There is action, but the heart of the scene is in the **dialogue**. As the scene opens, we see Ferdinand bearing a log, one of many which he must bring in. We already know that this is Caliban's ‘mean’ task, but the 17th century audience will also know that this is menial work, unsuited to a prince (the problem lies not in physical difficulty - it is all right for a prince to fight in a battle, after all - but in its servility). Prospero has already brought up Miranda not to be vain, and she amazes Ferdinand by trying to take the log from him. He explains that his love for her has taught him to endure the humiliation: once more we see dramatized the idea of control, especially of self and strong passions. Her own remark tells us that Miranda weeps in her happiness at Ferdinand's declaration of love.

Later, he kneels as he makes his proposal of marriage, an obvious gesture of submission and fealty (frequently in Shakespeare the gesture is insincere). In this play, occasions of kneeling are many, and we have just seen Caliban prostrate himself and kiss Stephano's foot. Where the one action is grotesque, this is subtle and moving, precisely because the one who kneels is dignified and shows self-control.

Here language is throughout understated, and we might think that little is going on. In fact, Shakespeare achieves a tension between showing of powerful emotion and the self-restraint which continually checks or disciplines it. At the same time, the scene is like a liturgy, almost a ceremony of betrothal. In the absence (as far as they know) of any witnesses or celebrant, the lovers enact their own ritual and exchange promises. There is of course, both the unseen Master of Ceremonies (Prospero) on-stage, and the audience's understanding that we are the public before whom the lovers plight their troth.

The most important exchange in the scene is surely Miranda's ‘Do you love me’ and Ferdinand's very formal reply: he invokes heaven and earth as witnesses, with power of curse or blessing on his answer, in which each strong verb is stressed in the speaking: ‘Love, prize, honour’. In a scene of mostly short speeches the longer utterances of the lovers about their past (lines 37-59) are worth noting, as is Prospero's closing comment.

**ACT III SCENE II**

This scene **comically** reflects the action and issues raised in the rest of the play. Stephano is clearly unfit to rule, so his actions **satirise** those of Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian. Caliban’s plot is also a reflection of Antonio and Sebastian’s earlier one to kill Alonso.

Ariel in this scene is very much the mischievous spirit, causing trouble for the sake of his own amusement. The **music**, the raucous singing and Ariel’s trickery all provide possibilities for a very **humorous** scene. Once again, **dramatic irony** is important to the **humour** of the scene. The audience is aware of Ariel’s tricks, but the characters are not.

Some time (not much) has passed. This has enabled the plotters to move away from the place of their meeting, on the way to Prospero's cell. Caliban knows the way, but they will be re-directed by Ariel. The interruption has enabled Shakespeare to return to Ferdinand and Miranda, while he will show us Alonso and his entourage before we find out how the comic plotting of these three is to be frustrated. Caliban suggests ways of killing Prospero, noting the danger of his books. Stephano imagines his state as ruler of the isle, and the unseen Ariel shows how disunited the plotters really are by setting Stephano against Trinculo.

Caliban's response to Ariel's strange music shows a sense of beauty which surprises us, and makes him, for the first time, seem a rather pathetic figure. The conclusion of the scene anticipates that of III, iii: in both, three sinners, confused by Ariel's magic, are led away to a deserved judgement; in both cases one of the three only (Caliban and Alonso) is more receptive to the hints he is given than the other two. The scene returns us to the play's central theme of rule, and why Prospero is the lawful ruler.

The scene relies heavily on physical action, from the drinking and mock fealty at the start to the **slapstick** of Stephano's beating Trinculo for his supposed insolence. Ariel's music is important in its influence on the plotters, though the intrusion of spectacular magical effects is slight compared to the next two scenes. Caliban is required to kneel, an act of fealty as he makes his suit to Stephano, who stands, as ‘ruler’, as does his ‘viceroy’, Trinculo. Ariel's mimicry of Trinculo's voice is seen as an affront to the dignity of the ‘court’.

In variety of **verse** and **prose** forms, this scene repeats in part the pattern of II, ii. Here Caliban reiterates the key word ‘book’ as he stresses the danger of Prospero's magic. In the central part of the scene we have a **parody** of a court, as Caliban renews his ‘suit’ to the gracious ruler Stephano. The request is made, the suit is granted, and Caliban's advice sought on how his design is to be ‘compassed’. Caliban also provides us with an honest tribute to Miranda's beauty and a self-deceiving (but false) suggestion that the spirits which serve Prospero do so out of fear, because they hate him.

The speech beginning ‘Be not afear'd’ is among the most celebrated in all of Shakespeare's works. The speech moves us because we see how confused Caliban is: he resents his servitude of the tyrant, and provokes physical punishment by his defiance, but he enjoys the beautiful melodies which ‘give delight, and hurt not’. They bring him dreams in which he glimpses things so wonderful he cries ‘to dream again’. Stephano's belief that he will have his music ‘for nothing’ (having removed its source) is an error so obvious; it shows how stupid he is. Perhaps Caliban could see the mistake, but he says nothing to this effect. II, i, II, ii, this scene and III, iii all end with an instruction to characters to ‘lead’ on or ‘follow’ - here we have both: ‘Lead, monster, we'll follow’. In fact, they will follow the ‘taborer’, Ariel (the source of the music).

**ACT III SCENE III**

Following the absurd portrait of Stephano’s rule of the island, the king and his followers enter. The **juxtaposition** of these scenes suggests that we view the courtiers as unfit to rule. Gonzalo’s opening **image**, of being in ‘a maze trod indeed/Through forth-rights and meanders’ (lines 2-3) is very apt. The maze isn’t just the physical tangle of pathways they have been through. They are also in a **symbolic** maze, attempting to discover something of their own nature. Not all the courtiers will learn from this journey, of course.

Having Antonio declare that the visions of banquets are real is a clever technique. He has been established as the most cynical and irreligious of the courtiers. Because he believes in the vision of the banquet, it greatly strengthens its believability. This moment reinforces the audience’s impression of the strength of the magic on the island.

Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian are tempted by the feast further indicating that they are shallow and materialistic. They are more interested in rank, wealth and power than in spiritual achievement.

Antonio and Sebastian are unredeemable, but Alonso is learning from his torment. In this scene, he at first refuses to eat, an indication that he is not yet as corrupted as the other two. By the end of the play, he will be redeemed.

This is the pivotal moment of the play; a lot of stage business is accomplished in a fairly brief scene, where nothing is wasted. Having searched fruitlessly for Ferdinand, Alonso accepts that his son is drowned. Prospero now reveals to Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian why they have been shipwrecked on the island, and how they are to amend their ways. The appearance of ‘strange shapes’ (spirits in the service of Prospero) amazes the nobles. Their natural suspicion of the banquet they see laid out is outweighed by their hunger, and they attempt to ‘set to.’

This is the cue for Ariel, in the guise of a Harpy, to condemn the ‘three men of sin’ and tell them how they are to atone for their crimes. While Alonso recognises his guilt, and sees that the loss of his son is a just punishment, Antonio and Sebastian remain defiant. Antonio never shows remorse, and he has already (Act II, scene i) explained that he cannot feel it, as he has no conscience; at the end of the play he must yield to Alonso's authority and Prospero's power, but he is not reconciled to his brother. Sebastian appears ready to join in the general rejoicing in Act V, and he is evidently happy to see his nephew alive – ‘A most high miracle’ - even though this means he has no hope of succeeding Alonso. The judgement in this scene follows both recent (II, i) and distant past events; its sequel is the penitence and forgiveness of Alonso in Act V.

This is among the most spectacular scenes in a play filled with spectacle. The entry of the nobles here represents the end of a journey, on foot, across the island. They barely have time to sit down before the spirits appear; though we do not know exactly what these shapes look like we can infer from Gonzalo's ‘monstrous shape’ that they are grotesque. Unlike the Masque in the following scene, the spirits here perform a dumb show of which the meaning seems very clear: ‘gesture...expressing...a kind of excellent dumb discourse.’ They produce a banquet, and gesture to the tired and hungry onlookers to eat it. All this is done to the accompaniment of ‘marvellous sweet music’ - usually in this play a signal to the audience of magical or supernatural business afoot. The ‘quaint device’ in the stage direction indicates some trickery or illusion (perhaps the opening of a trap door) for which Ariel's wings give a cover (now you see it; now you don't). Before Ariel speaks (one of few places - compare III, ii - where he is heard by anyone other than Prospero or the audience) Prospero (unseen by those on stage) appears, to oversee the passing of sentence; having heard it, he commends Ariel - we have a sense of Prospero wholly in control, and his enemies wholly in his power.

Gonzalo's words establish the sense of the distance the company has walked: ‘Here's a maze trod, indeed,/Through forth-rights and meanders!’ Note also how Alonso (anticipating Ariel) attributes intention to the ‘sea’ which ‘mocks our frustrate search on land.’ The response of the nobles to the shapes is to consider that the most exotic travellers' tales are to be believed - this passage is reminiscent of much in Othello, especially Othello's speech before the Venetian council, in which he recalls the stories with which he wooed Desdemona. Othello's ‘Anthropophagi and men whose heads/Do grow beneath their shoulders’ are surely the same as the men of whom Gonzalo speaks here, ‘Whose heads [stand] in their breasts.’

But the most interesting speech is Ariel's. We may suppose this to be Prospero's lines, which Ariel delivers. Ariel refers repeatedly to the sea and the other elements as serving Destiny, which has caused the sea to ‘belch’ up these three sinners. As the men draw their swords, Ariel contemptuously suggest that they have as much hope of wounding the wind and waters as of harming him. The ‘men of sin’ are rebuked because they ‘did supplant’ Prospero - we recall that Stephano has applied the same verb, in the previous scene, to Trinculo's teeth (he will ‘supplant’ these, he says, if Trinculo continues to abuse Caliban).

This leads to an eloquent statement of a central theme of the play, which recalls (Act I, scene ii) ‘bountiful Fortune’ and the ‘most auspicious star, whose influence’ Prospero must court. The natural world is seen as an agent of ‘powers’ which delay, but do not forget the offences of the ‘men of sin’. It is clear that Prospero himself has delayed but not forgotten, but he appears throughout the play to exercise great power because he works in sympathy with the fundamental powers of the universe. In recognizing his sin, Alonso draws his metaphor from music (one of many musical references in the play): the thunder is the ‘organ-pipe’ which ‘did bass [Alonso's] trespass’. Gonzalo expresses the idea of delayed retribution by the **image** of ‘poison given to work a great time after’ - the ‘poison’ is a **simile** for the ‘great guilt’ of the ‘three men of sin.’

**ACT IV SCENE I**

Pre-marital sex was not as acceptable in Shakespeare’s time as today, so Prospero’s warnings about it were probably seen as the actions of a reasonable father. The difficulties this presents in contemporary productions has already been discussed above. An actor presenting these lines today typically tries to suggest the flaws of Prospero: he has already manipulated the situation to bring the lovers together, and now he can’t help meddling. Ferdinand and Miranda typically smile or nod at Prospero in a way that communicates that they are indulging his parental foolishness.

This is a very self-referential play. There are numerous reminders to the audience that what they are watching is a piece of theatre. This is still a common technique today.

However, Shakespeare’s ‘stage magic’ of The Tempest is about more than spectacle. It is about transporting the audience into a world of the imagination. By making us aware that we are in this world, Shakespeare is asserting the power of the imagination. Considering the imaginary journey can help us broaden our understanding of the world and ourselves.

Prospero’s long speech in this scene is an excellent example of this. His speech argues that in the same way as these spirits before us disappear in a moment, so do our own lives and everything else in the world. He is reminding us that we need to make the best of our lives and its opportunities. During the speech he refers to the ‘actors’ and the ‘great globe itself’.

The first part of this scene is discussed at length in the [section on the Masque](http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/shakespeare/tempest.htm#masque). In theatrical terms it is a clearly organized scene. Prospero is reconciled to Ferdinand (an anticipation of the next scene) and explains his purpose, and the importance of self-control. To celebrate the lovers' betrothal he will show a ‘vanity’ of his ‘art’. His recollection of the plot on his life betrays Prospero into showing his own ‘passion’ but he reassures Ferdinand that the masque has really ended, and though he is indeed ‘vexed’ he will ‘still (his) beating mind’ presently. Once the lovers retire to his cell (as he recommends and as we find them to have done in the next scene) he and Ariel can rout the plotters.

Click [here for comments on the Masque](http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/shakespeare/tempest.htm#masque). The opening of the scene has the formal character of III, i. After the Masque, the lovers will be able to remain still while Prospero delivers his famous speech. In the second half of the scene we see Prospero and Ariel make preparations before the would-be rebels try vainly to sneak up on their prey, who is in any case more than ready. As their ambition is to rule, Prospero has had Ariel display some flashy but worthless garments outside his cell (either on a clothes line or a lime - there is textual support for both readings, and both can work in performance).

In putting these on, Stephano and Trinculo suppose they are assuming the dignity of office. Caliban points out that they are mistaken even about the wardrobe (‘It is but trash’). The plotters are chased by spirits in the form of dogs. In the modern theatre this usually done by sound effects, but Shakespeare, too, would not have brought real dogs on stage. Either, as today, the dogs would be presented in the sound of their barking and baying, or actors would appear as the spirits, in a stance or with actions suggestive of hounds. In any case, what is important is not what the audience is shown but what we know the plotters to think they have seen and heard, and this is clear in their terrified reaction.

There is enormous variety here. We begin with the stylized and (necessarily) artificial verse of the masque. Since Shakespeare wants this to be a performance for those in the play, its language must be to theirs, as **blank verse** is to everyday speech. For those who want to know how this formal style works, it is largely a matter of **rhymed couplets**; end-stopped lines; invocations of characters; an abundance of **adjectives**, of which many are **hyphenated compounds**; esoteric ‘classical’ vocabulary, non-standard word-order (moving the main **verb** to later in a sentence) and stress of terminal -ed on **verbs**.

Next comes the more usual eloquence of Prospero's long speech at line 146. This could be a description (admittedly a very beautiful one) of how theatre creates an illusion for the imaginative audience, as the spirits have just done. It has acquired greater resonance because critics have assumed that Shakespeare suggests here that, for him, the making of theatrical illusion is at an end - that it is a kind of cryptic leave-taking. This may be so, but the speech makes obvious sense in its **context**: the Masque is over and the sprits have disappeared back into their element of ‘air’. All theatrical illusions disappear when the play is over.

Ariel's account of his leading the plotters to the cell is like his account of the tempest in I, ii: **active verbs** describe what could barely be shown directly. It is interesting that Ariel compares his victims to colts and calves - where would he have seen these? This experience has united Stephano and Trinculo against Caliban. Stephano also affects the state of ruler by seeing ‘disgrace and dishonour’ in their misfortune (specifically in losing his bottle - a bathetic conclusion). There is vulgarity (‘horse-piss’) and a series of weak **puns** on the line and the jerkin. The scene ends on a note of triumph for Prospero, as he declares that now all his enemies lie at his mercy: the play's last scene will show how he exercises his power over them.

**ACT V SCENE I**

At the end of Act IV, something surprising happened: instead of severely punishing Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban, Prospero has let them off lightly! It is an action that **foreshadows** what will happen in Act V. Prospero’s mercy for all of the nobles is the dominant action of the act.

It is worth looking more closely at Prospero’s forgiveness of Antonio. It is very begrudging. Prospero says that ‘to call (him) brother! Would even infect my mouth’ (lines 130-1) and requires his dukedom from him, even as he forgives him. What this shows us is that Prospero is no saint. He still has very human imperfections — his forgetfulness in the previous scene was another example of this. His forgiveness of his brother is not absolute, but this makes him a believable character.

Revealing Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess is an interesting **symbol**. Prospero has been the magical ‘stage manager’, manipulating all the characters like they were pieces on a chessboard. The chess game **symbolically** draws our attention as it reinforces the power of the imagination and the way we can learn more about ourselves from imaginary journeys.

Miranda’s ‘brave new world’ quote is well known. It is an **ironic** moment in the play. By this time we have come to know the faults of all the characters Miranda is looking at, and believe none of them to be shining examples of humankind’s most noble achievements, But the moment does again reinforce our impression of Miranda’s innocent idealism; Prospero’s response to her — ‘Tis new to thee’ — is a gentle reminder that the world is not as it seems. Shakespeare uses his reply to point out the **irony**, but it is gentle rather than savage.

When Prospero casts aside his magic cape, breaks his staff and says he will burn his books, the legend has it that this is really Shakespeare saying he will be writing no more plays. He is a ‘magical dramatist’: throughout the play he has manipulated everything that the other characters have experienced and no one, apart from the audience and him, is fully aware of what has gone on. The Tempest makes its imaginary world believable and effective largely through application of this technique. Prospero’s final summation of his powers in this scene is a significant feature because it once again engages our imaginations, making us aware of the range of possibilities for power Prospero possesses.

This play is tightly organized, and its dénouement is implicit in the first act; we know that Prospero has a purpose for his enemies, and we see in III, iii how they are condemned for their sin and directed to live ‘a clear life ensuing’. In this scene we learn first that his enemies are wholly in his power, and awaiting justice. Though he is moved to take revenge, Prospero recognizes that the ‘rarer (nobler) action is in virtue’, and he will forgive them. He delights in the puzzlement of his captives, and gently teases Alonso about his loss, before revealing Ferdinand alive, playing chess with Miranda.

This leads to a bewildering series of reconciliations and meetings, tempered by the obduracy of Antonio. Both Ferdinand and Miranda express fundamental themes of the play: he notes how ‘the seas threaten’ yet ‘are merciful’, while she sees the nobles as representatives of a ‘brave new world’. More comic reconciliations follow: Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano are justly rebuked but mildly punished, while the Boatswain is excused for his **intemperate speech** in the tempest. It remains only for Ariel to be freed from his service of Prospero - undertaking one last charge - and for Prospero to give up his magic; a process elegantly mirrored in the play's last speech, where the actor playing this part steps out of character and invites our applause.

This is a long scene (it is the whole Act) but has a clear structure of episodes marked by significant entrances. Gradually, Prospero assembles on stage all the characters of the drama. But first, as Ariel leaves to fetch the first of these, Prospero has the stage to himself, and his **soliloquy** is a dazzling display of the powers he commands, which, embracing humility, he is now ready to renounce; here, as in the previous Act, we have a sense that Prospero has nothing more to prove, and is ready to retire from the exercise of power. Properties are most important in this scene: Prospero's magic garment (‘My art’) and his staff fully represent, to the audience, the great power he wields.

Where previously we have seen Ferdinand holding a sword and logs, now we see him and Miranda moving chess-pieces, a cue for puns about playing false, and **symbols** of the greater dynastic stakes for which they are playing. Once more we have a piece of stage-trickery (compare the two-headed monster in II, ii, the disappearing banquet in III, iii the Masque and the hunting of the conspirators in Act IV): here it is the drawing back of a curtain (or similar device) to ‘discover’ the lovers who are playing chess.

We should also notice the use of costume here: while Prospero first covers (or replaces) his customary garb with his magic robes (first stage direction) he later asks for his hat and rapier, to ‘present’ himself as he was ‘sometime Milan’; the Neapolitan nobles and Antonio may not recognize him from his appearance after twelve years, but should recognize the garments and insignia of office.

There is a rather amusing parallel to this, when Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo appear ‘in their stolen apparel’. Their theft of these garments which they believe suitably dignified for their new status as rulers of the island, has enabled Prospero to rout them, and now the clothes appear ridiculous on them. Notice also the indications (121, 213) of characters embracing or kneeling (179).

Here (as often in the last act of a play), Shakespeare dazzles us with the variety and mastery of language. Prospero is serious but in control of his feelings as he addresses Ariel. In his great **soliloquy**, he adopts a more **formal tone** as he invokes the natural powers by which he performs his magic; this section is characterized by long sentences with **complex syntax**. When he meets the Neapolitan party he adopts a conciliatory tone, and his affection is reciprocated by Gonzalo and Alonso, whose penitence is evident and sincere in all he says.

The **dialogue** here is characterized by extreme (but never excessive) sentiment: expressions of delight and amazement abound, and the frequency with which **exclamation marks** appear is notable. While these characters speak (albeit with changes of tone and feeling, as stated above) in **blank verse**, Ariel moves from this form, at the start of the scene, to delightful lyrics, as his time of release approaches. Trinculo and Stephano speak informally as ever, but the boatswain's prose invective of I, i gives way to respectful and **formal blank verse**, as he explains the miraculous delivery of the ship.

Striking and beautiful **comparisons** abound here, but a few notable **images** are these. Alonso, as in III, iii (100-102), is ready to lie ‘mudded in that oozy bed’ where Ferdinand, he thinks, lies. Prospero (79-82) depicts the return of reason to the distracted nobles as like a tide filling the shore of reason: an **image** that recurs to Alonso because of his distraught state for Prospero is the **metaphor** which describes the distraction.

Alonso's words on seeing Ferdinand and Miranda remind us of earlier encounters: first he fears he sees a vision (he has seen strange visions already), then he believes Miranda to be a goddess (as Ferdinand suspects when he meets her). Sebastian's ‘A most high miracle’ suggests he cares more for his nephew's preservation than his own hopes of kingship - and **contrasts** with his claim that ‘the devil speaks’ in Prospero at line 129. (Antonio does not speak until Caliban appears.)

Ferdinand's comment on the seas, which he has ‘cursed...without cause’ like Prospero's ‘the rarer action is/In virtue than in vengeance’ is a brief statement which perfectly articulates a central theme of the play. And Prospero's mention of his ‘fury’ recalls Ferdinand's words in I, ii, about ‘fury’ and ‘passion’.

But the most remarkable speech is arguably that of Gonzalo. Already, there have been repeated references to Naples and Milan. Gonzalo's previous discussion of Claribel and Tunis (in II, i) has led to the ridicule of Antonio and Sebastian. Now he turns the events and places into a beautiful epigrammatic and elegant statement of the way in which the evil beginning has led to a good end:

   ‘Was Milan thrust from Milan, that his issue  
   Should become Kings of Naples? O, rejoice  
   Beyond a common joy, and set it down  
   With gold on lasting pillars: in one voyage  
   Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis;  
   And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife  
   Where he himself was lost; Prospero his dukedom  
   In a poor isle; and all of us ourselves  
   When no man was his own.’

There is a strong hint of rejoicing in this beautiful speech.

**Love in The Tempest**

The play is a comedy, in that a happy ending is contrived out of misfortune which has the potential for a tragic outcome. There is some doubt in our minds how Prospero will deal with his enemies, and Shakespeare is concerned, to a point, that his actions be justified, as is the case in speeches to Miranda, to Ariel, to Ferdinand and Alonso.

The play is about Romantic love, in the conventional sense: Ferdinand woos Miranda, but this element in the play is unusual in the circumstances in which the lovers meet, in their status (as heir of Naples and heiress of Milan) and expectations, and in their initial mistakes about each other. It is also worth considering what we learn of Ferdinand's previous relationships and Miranda's unconventional upbringing.

The romance of the young lovers leads to consideration of themes of sexual love: this is found at once in Ferdinand's enquiry about Miranda's maidenhood (in I, ii) and more fully in Prospero's insistence that Ferdinand exercise self-control in his courtship, in Ferdinand's response to this injunction, and in the masque which Prospero's spirits present in IV, i.

The play is about the love of parents and children for each other: Alonso's grief at the supposed loss of his heir is an indication of his humanity, and helps bring about his reconciliation with Prospero. We can also see Ferdinand's sadness at his father's imagined loss (though this is tempered by the joy of meeting Miranda). Prospero's love for his daughter is evident, and he explains in I, i, how he has acted ‘in care of’ her, in raising the tempest.

The play is about the love of friends: Prospero shares mutual affection both with the ‘noble Neapolitan’ Gonzalo, and with the ‘tricksy spirit’ Ariel. He fails in his attempt to nurture civilising **values** in Caliban whom he at first tries to love, and he is betrayed by his brother, whose treachery is seen as unnatural, in contrast with the love of the good old counsellor which disregards political enmity. At the end of the play, Prospero befriends Alonso.

The play is about redeeming love or mercy: at one level this is what enables Prospero to forgive the ‘three men of sin’ (and more trivially to forbear to punish Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo with any real severity); at a more profound level, this is a principle at work in the imagined world of the play. While Ariel's speech to the ‘men of sin’, in III, iii, suggests that the ‘powers (of nature) delaying, not forgetting’ are now punishing the offences of the sinners, this notion of just retribution gives way in Act V to a vision of forgiveness: ‘Though the seas threaten, they are merciful.’. This love has power to transform: we are puzzled to hear, from Ariel, that Ferdinand's father ‘suffers a sea-change’ but at the end of the play, we understand that he has indeed suffered a ‘change’ and how the sea is the agent of that change.

**Nature And Art**

The Tempest shows the distinction between the natural man, Caliban, and the civilized man, Prospero. Shakespeare demonstrates, by the examples of Prospero, Ferdinand and Miranda, and by those of Sebastian, Stephano and Trinculo how social, civilized man may rise above or sink beneath the savage. Caliban is a kind of yardstick by which we can measure others. Caliban is not merely a slave in fact, but justly so. His vileness is not chosen but is his nature; Antonio, on the other hand, embraces wickedness for his own gain, although he knows the moral law.

Gonzalo, as Act V shows, has never approved of what was done to Prospero. In his speech in II, i (on the ideal commonwealth, echoing Montaigne's essay Of Cannibals) he expresses distaste for the more cynical and divisive features of government and society - exploitation of labour, expropriation of land and extremes of luxury, poverty, drunkenness, gluttony. Contrast this with the positive way in which Prospero makes the island more comfortable and delightful.

On his arrival on the island, Prospero tries to educate Caliban; he has no intention to enslave him, but sees him as his inferior in respect only of learning. But Caliban is able only to learn Prospero's language to utter powerless curses; he cannot take ‘any print of goodness’ - his attempted rape of the child Miranda is reported to the audience as unambiguous evidence of Caliban's lack of conscience or soul. Again we see his degeneracy in his knowing his curses have no power yet persisting in uttering them, and inviting ‘cramps’ as punishment. Antonio also claims to have no conscience - in some ways this is more shocking, as he has the outward beauty and eloquence of the civilized man.

As the play is a pastoral romance it is permissible for physical beauty or ugliness to represent beauty or ugliness of spirit. So Caliban is a ‘salvage and deformed slave’ while Sycorax, through her wickedness, ‘was grown into a hoop’. Conversely, Miranda and Ferdinand appear god-like each to the other. To Miranda's untutored eye all the Milanese and Neapolitan nobles appear beautiful, but then she is comparing them with Caliban. This beauty results from an essential nobility which is tainted but not effaced by behaviour such as that of Antonio.

Prospero's magic is not simply more powerful than that of Sycorax; it is stronger because of its radically different nature. Sycorax is a goetist, her magic as potent as the demon, Setebos, whom she serves. It is usually strongest when most malevolent, although her life was spared for ‘one thing she did’ for Argier. Her imprisonment of Ariel in the cloven pine is typically cruel and destructive, ‘a torment...which Sycorax could not again undo.’

Prospero repeatedly refers to his ‘Art’: his magic is creative, of enormous power, as Ariel harnesses the elements. He is a theurgist, who does locally and swiftly what the natural universe or the supernatural power in it is striving to do always. He does not act for his own advantage but in order to produce what is good. In some ways Prospero's Art is a desperate remedy to a desperate situation: it is invoked to free himself from passion, the baser promptings of unregenerate nature, to create perfect self-discipline; for others his Art is used to restore harmony to human relationships and political hierarchies. Having done so, he can abjure ‘this rough magic’, assured that it will not be needed again.

Prospero's Art controls nature; it requires of the artist virtue and temperance if his experiment is to succeed; and it thus stands for the world of the better natures and its qualities. This is the world which is closed to Caliban...; the world of mind and the possibilities of liberating the soul, not the world of sense, whether that be represented as coarsely natural or charmingly voluptuous. Art is not only a beneficent magic in contrast to an evil one; it is the ordination of civility, the control of appetite, the transformation of nature by breeding and learning; it is, even, in a sense, the means of Grace. Prospero is, therefore, the representative of Art, as Caliban is of Nature. As a mage he controls nature; as a prince he conquers the passions which had excluded him from his kingdom and overthrown law; as a scholar he repairs his loss of Eden; as a man he learns to temper his passions, an achievement essential to success in any of the other activities.

Art and Nature as contrasting principles can, then, be discerned in comparing the education of Miranda with what passes for education in Caliban; Ferdinand's chaste love and Caliban's lust; Sycorax's lesser and Prospero's greater magic; the intemperance and folly of Stephano and Trinculo against the self-control of Ferdinand and Prospero, and the latter's wisdom.

**Theatrical Qualities**

For a detailed reading of the theatrical qualities of the play, see the comments on the key scenes, under the heading Theatrical Presentation. But in answering questions about Shakespeare's stagecraft generally, you should consider the following:

* the comic interludes (mostly involving Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban;)
* Caliban, Ariel and the spirits;
* magic and music; the sea, the tempest and the island;
* Prospero's books and staff;
* the language of the play.

**The Masque in Act IV, scene i**

In looking at this part of The Tempest you should be aware of:

* this scene in terms of the structure of the whole play;
* the relation of this scene, and antimasques to the wider themes of the play;
* critical theories about masque elements in The Tempest.

Originally a masque is any form of masked dancing (as in Romeo and Juliet) or informal entertainment. It has its origins in Italy and comes to France and England in the late 16th century. These are dramatic and musical entertainments using elaborate and expensive properties or machinery. A masque might be performed once only, owing to its expense and technical difficulty.

Playwrights were naturally attracted to the form for its spectacular qualities, but often too for the special nature of its action and view of the world. The action of masques is not limited by chronological time or dramatic interchange; their metamorphoses could provide alternatives to the demands of politics or mutability (=tendency to change); their idealized or symbolic figures could move the drama, however momentarily, away from a world of action and passion and toward the realization of another sort of possibility. Thus - to limit our consideration to only the most brilliant example - Prospero's masque in The Tempest has at its centre Ceres and Juno: the goddess of agriculture directs the play back to a world of civilized nature, away from Caliban's search for pig-nuts, ‘young scammels’, dams for fish; and the resolution of both majesty and marriage points the way to a resolution of the play's political conflicts, to the proper exercise of authority and the uniting of ancient enemies in the harmony of marriage.

The agent of all this is Iris, the rainbow, pledge of God's providence after the universal flood. And the action of the masque, in what is temporally the most tightly and precisely organized of Shakespeare's plays, moves in its brief span from ‘spongy April’ through spring and the fruition of summer to the entry of 'sunburnt sicklemen, of August weary', after which (as Ceres assures Miranda and Ferdinand) there will be not winter but:

    Spring come to you, at the farthest,  
    In the very end of harvest! (IV, i, 114-5)

So the masque's world is able to banish even winter; its natural cycle contains no death. Appropriately, it is at this point that the magician interrupts this 'vanity of mine art' to recall himself and his play from the dangerous pleasures of fantasy to the realities of the world of action. 'I had forgot that foul conspiracy/Of the beast Caliban' (IV, i, 139-40): it is precisely death, in the persons of Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo that threatens at this very moment. Prospero's awareness of time - both the masque's time and the play's - constitutes both his art and his power, his vision of his world as an 'insubstantial pageant' on the one hand, and on the other, his total command of the action moment by moment. Nowhere else in the age is the immense and ambiguous vitality of the masque's world-view better exemplified than in The Tempest.

The interlude in Act IV is not strictly a masque, in that the action is presented by spirits rather than masked men and women, and the revels at the end are also conducted by the spirits, where in a conventional masque the spectators would join in at this point.

**The Structure Of The Play And Masque Elements**

Act I is largely an expository prologue, while in Act V, Prospero unmasks himself, reunites Alonso and Ferdinand, and is reconciled with his foes. But from I, ii to IV, i in a series of eight episodes, Prospero and Ariel oversee the actions of the three principal groups of characters (Alonso and his court; the comic ‘court’ of ‘King Stephano’, and Ferdinand and Miranda). In each case there is some spectacular performance from Ariel or the other spirits, culminating in an extended sequence: it begins with the disappearing banquet, followed by Ariel, in the figure of a harpy, denouncing the ‘three men of sin’ and ends with the hunting of the comic trio of would-be rebels. Between these two comes Ferdinand's reward, in the formal masque of IV, i.

Ariel's appearance as a harpy is appropriate: the harpies tormented King Phineus by disturbing his meals and stealing his food; here food is taken away, and in both cases the disturbance is seen as a judgement on sin. The harpies come from the same Greek myth as the goddesses we see later. The punishment of Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo is delayed until the end of Act V.

**The Language Of The Play**

**Forms Of Theatrical Language**

The different forms in which dialogue is presented tells us both about the speaker and the situation. Dialogue in prose is less organized than that in **verse** (blank or rhymed) which is an indication of informality or lack of education. It is not the preserve of characters of low status. In this play, the nobles who speak in the first scene cannot compose their speech into **verse** forms: this also shows the audience that their language has descended to the level of the mariners (or below it - note Sebastian's and Antonio's curses). The sailors are distinguished not by more informal speech, but their garments and their seamanship. Caliban has no social standing, but has been taught to speak by Prospero and is most comfortable in **unrhymed verse**.

For the most part the nobles speak in **verse**, also. Ariel, as a spirit, requires more variety: in giving information to his master, he will also speak in the conventional **blank verse**, as he does at length in condemning the ‘three men of sin’ in III, iii. In other situations, or when he is expressing himself more spontaneously, Ariel will employ short lyrics, which we may suppose (from other characters' responses) to be sung or chanted.

Trinculo and Stephano are in no condition to speak **verse** if they have the capacity, which is not clear - although Trinculo, as a jester, should be able to vary his manner of speech. On the other hand, the Boatswain is more versatile: like everyone else, in the extremity of the storm and caring no more than ‘these roarers for the name of King,’, his speech is prosaic; but he is perhaps used to addressing his superiors as appears in Act V, where, in polite and eloquent **verse**, he tells the king that the ship is safe and sound.

The Masque requires a more **literary** or **formal style** than the usual unrhymed verse; this would be tedious if kept up for the whole play - but it seems appropriate to the occasion and the performance by spirits.

**Imagery In The Tempest**

In most of Shakespeare's plays **metaphor** and **simile** abound so much that it is impossible to comment generally without either writing at length and without coherence, or missing out much of importance. The Tempest is unusual, in that conventional comparisons are more sparing than elsewhere. It is unusual in another sense, too. In this play a number of ideas are expressed in terms which recur, alone or in compounds, as well as being, in the world of the play, directly present.

It can easily be seen that Shakespeare moves from an idea of justice and balance in nature, to an idea of a world composed of the four elements, to which reference is repeatedly made in the play.

Caliban and Sycorax are associated with the earth, a word which appears ten times in the play (he is called ‘thou earth’, her commands are ‘too earthy’ for Ariel to perform) and various characters express affection for the land. Gonzalo asks in I, i for just an ‘acre of barren ground’ and in II, I, he, Antonio and Sebastian discuss the ground of the island.

Ariel is of course an inhabitant of the air (the word or its forms appear fourteen times, though often in the sense of melody), while the storm he raises makes the ship ‘all afire’ with him as he flames ‘amazement,’ and flames ‘distinctly’ with ‘Jove's lightnings’ and ‘the fire and cracks/Of sulphurous roaring’ (‘fire’ or its forms appear seven times).

But the most important element, by far, is water - in this play, the sea. It appears repeatedly in compounds (‘sea-sorrow’, ‘sea-nymphs’, ‘sea-change’, ‘sea-swallowed’, ‘sea-marge’) and thirty times in all in dialogue, apart from other references to it. The essential justice of the natural universe is stated in the condemnation of the ‘three men of sin’, where we learn that ‘the powers delaying, not forgetting’ have incensed the seas against the offenders: the sea is the agent, in this play, of change, justice and redemption. Ferdinand sees this as he recovers his seeming-drowned father: ‘Though the seas threaten, they are merciful’.

Among the other poetic images in the play, several are notable as they recur. There is an interest in clothes, which leads to such things as Ariel's marvellous cleaning of the nobles garments (despite being in sea-water, which would make the dye run, they ‘hold their freshness and glosses); Trinculo's sheltering under Caliban's gaberdine; Prospero's use of the ‘trumpery’ as ‘stale to catch thieves’, and Prospero's discussing and presenting himself as he was ‘sometime Milan.’ This idea is picked up as poetic **image** by Antonio - told by Sebastian that he recalls his usurping the Milanese throne, he tells him to ‘look how well’ his ‘garments sit upon’ him, ‘Much feater than before’. Like Stephano and Trinculo, he sees the office he unjustly holds, in terms of wearing the robes it brings with it.

There are various references to swallowing and regurgitation. In II, i, Alonso asks ‘what strange fish’ has ‘made a meal on’ his ‘heir’, while Antonio says that he and his fellows have been ‘sea-swallowed’ but some ‘cast again’. We see plenty of swallowing of liquor in II, ii and III, ii, and Stephano notes that his ‘stomach is not constant’, while in III, iii, a banquet is prepared, but miraculously taken away before it can.

**Music** is a reality of life on the island, but also provides us with poetic **images** on occasion. The most notable of these is Prospero's **description** of his brother as having the (musical) ‘key of officer and office’ so he was able to ‘set all hearts i' the state/To what tune pleased his ear.’ In I, ii, it is the music which allays the waters' ‘fury’ and Ferdinand's ‘passion/With its sweet air,’ while the same idea recurs in V, I, where Prospero invokes a ‘solemn air the best comforter to an unsettled fancy’ to ‘cure’ the ‘useless’ brains of his former enemies. Of course, the ambiguous ‘air’ connects the music, usually performed by Ariel, with the element he inhabits and of which he, being ‘but air’, is formed. This in turn leads to a scheme, not unlike that of the four vital humours, whereby passion (=fire) is subdued by the soothing influence of music (=air).