

**PART I: THE PLOT**

**A. SUMMARY:** A tempest sinks the ship of Alonso, King of Naples, his son Ferdinand, and Antonio, Duke of Milan. We soon discover that the storm was created by a powerful magician Prospero, who is trapped on a nearby island with his daughter Miranda. Prospero was the Duke of Milan until his brother Antonio supplanted him and set him adrift to die. No one is harmed in the storm but the characters are separated into different groups, each thinking the others are dead. Prospero's intention is to make Ferdinand fall in love with Miranda and to forgive everyone after most have repented. This is achieved with the help of the spirit Ariel and a "brave new world" is created.

**B. STRUCTURE:** Shakespeare follows Aristotle's three unities of time, place and action in this short and compact play

**PART II: THE BACKGROUND**

**A. DISCOVERY OF NEW LANDS**

1. Columbus discovered America in 1492
2. By 1611, people were crossing the Atlantic, discovering new places, and settling in them
3. The Caribbean was discovered, but was considered to be full of strange creatures and evil spirits
4. A famous shipwreck occurred off the Bermuda islands in 1609 but the two explorers on the ship appeared alive and well soon after

**B. THE ROLE OF MAGIC**

1. Magic, black and white, was widely believed in and studied in Shakespeare's day
2. King James I, Shakespeare's patron, wrote a book on witches and witchcraft

**PART III MAIN THEMES**

**A. THE COLONIAL THEME (Does it exist?)**

1. Caliban is the original inhabitant of the island Prospero is marooned on
2. Prospero enslaves Caliban, but only after the latter tries to rape his daughter
3. Caliban often sounds like a "freedom fighter" attacking a European colonialist invader (QUOTATION 1)
4. Many critics feel that this is a clear colonialist theme but many others regard the colonial theme as nonsense (QUOTATION 2)

**B. KNOWLEDGE AND POWER**

1. Prospero abandons political power for the private virtue of knowledge
2. He loses his power but acquires it again through knowledge

**C. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY**

1. There are levels of authority in the play
2. Authority is vital for order but needs to be used responsibly
3. Misplaced or irresponsible authority leads to disaster (QUOTATION 3)
4. Responsibility is the ultimate public virtue in *The Tempest*

**D. DISCIPLINE AND SELF-DISCIPLINE**

1. Prospero disciplines himself into studying magic for several years
2. He achieves great self-discipline and is finally able to discipline Naples and Milan
3. Antonio and Caliban lack self-discipline, Ferdinand and Miranda have it

**E. REGENERATION**

1. The marriage of a virgin daughter and a continent prince promises a better world than the old fragile and sinful one
2. Some members of the old generation, notably Alonso, experience a spiritual rebirth

**F. FORGIVENESS**

1. The divine virtue that makes regeneration possible

2. The "brave new world" will be built on love and forgiveness, not revenge
3. It requires sacrifice and self-discipline--it does not come naturally
4. Shakespeare makes fun of Montaigne's (1533-92) essay *On the Cannibals* (1580), in which Montaigne argued that the natural man is in a state of utopia far superior to Plato's republic

#### **PART IV : THE MAIN CHARACTERS**

##### **A. PROSPERO**

1. He is the magician prince of Romance presented as philosopher-king
2. His chief virtue is discipline, especially self-discipline
3. He is virtuous and very tender, although he does have a harsh side (QUOTATION 4)
4. He uses his power to good service, not revenge
5. In the end, he destroys his books and renounces power (QUOTATION 5), probably because the new world needs to be based on love, not fear (QUOTATION 6)

##### **B. CALIBAN**

1. The son of a witch (Sycorax) and a sea-devil, he is half-human, half-monster
2. He is what man might have been without the redeeming features of reason and morality--a "thing of darkness" (V. i. 274)
3. He represents the baser instincts, but is he also the colonized Indian native?

##### **C. ARIEL**

1. The opposite of Caliban, he is an ethereal spirit whose symbols are fire and air
2. He is Prospero's other servant, who works for good and eventually earns his freedom

##### **D. FERDINAND AND MIRANDA**

1. Miranda is the dream virgin-princess of Romance while Ferdinand is Prince Charming
2. Both exercise sexual self-discipline--sex outside marriage is seen throughout the play as a great evil (QUOTATION 7)
3. Miranda is the innocent daughter of the old world and mother-to-be of the new world, the untainted child of a world about to be redeemed
4. Ferdinand is the pure, gallant father-to-be of a new world and race
5. The chess game they play together symbolizes their ability to rule and is also the game of love and seduction

##### **E. ALONSO**

1. Ferdinand's father, an old enemy of Prospero, he is nonetheless not presented as an evil man
2. His sinfulness is in the past
3. He is tormented by guilt
4. He is born again spiritually in the play (QUOTATION 8)

##### **F. ANTONIO**

1. Prospero's evil brother, the most wicked of his enemies
2. He has no conscience (QUOTATION 9) and will commit any crime for political power
3. He is not capable of regeneration
4. Prospero forgives him but deprives him of all power

##### **G. TRINCULO AND STEPHANO**

1. A court jester and drunken butler respectively--comic figures
2. They behave towards Caliban as any true colonialist would to the American Indians, and they see themselves as the gods and kings of the island
3. Trinculo and Stephano are drunken, worthless members of European society
4. Caliban soon realizes this and rejects them (QUOTATION 10)
5. Through Trinculo and Stephano, Shakespeare makes fun of colonialism and racial superiority

#### **WORKS CONSULTED**

1. Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998).
2. Patrick Murphy, editor, *The Tempest: Critical Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

## SOME CENTRAL QUOTATIONS

- 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,  
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile.  
Cursed be I that did so! All the charms  
of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!  
For I am all the subjects that you have,  
Which first was mine own King! and here you sty me  
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me  
The rest o' th' island.  
**PROSPERO:** Thou most lying slave,  
Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have used thee,  
Filth as thou art, with human care, and lodged thee  
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate  
The honour of my child.  
**CALIBAN:** Oh ho, oh ho! Would't had been done! (Act I, sc. 2, 33-349)
- "Caliban, a poignant but cowardly (and murderous) half-human creature . . . has become an African-Caribbean heroic Freedom Fighter. This is not even a weak misreading; anyone who arrives at that view is simply not interested in reading the play at all." (Bloom, p. 662)
- ANTONIO:** Good boatswain, have care. Where's the master? Play the men.  
**BOATSWAIN:** I pray now, keep below.  
**ANTONIO:** Where is the master, bosun?  
**BOATSWAIN:** Do you not hear him? You mar our labour: keep your cabins: you do assist the storm.  
**GONZALO:** Nay, good, be patient.  
**BOATSWAIN:** When the sea is. Hence! What cares these roarers for the name of King? To cabin! Silence! Trouble us not. (Act 1, sc.1, 9-17)
- PROSPERO:** Be collected.  
No more amazement. Tell your piteous heart  
There's no harm done.  
**MIRANDA:** Oh, woe the day!  
**PROSPERO:** No harm.  
I have done nothing but in care of thee--  
Of thee, my dear one; thee, my daughter (Act 1, sc. 2, 13-17)
- PROSPERO:** Graves at my command  
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth  
By my so potent Art. But this rough magic  
I here abjure; .....  
..... I'll break my staff,  
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,  
And deeper than did ever plummet sound  
I'll drown my book. (Act V, sc. 1, 48-57)
- PROSPERO:** 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 V, sc. 1, 25-28)

7. **PROSPERO:** Then, as my gift, and thine own acquisition  
Worthily purchased, take my daughter; but  
If thou dost break her virgin-knot before  
All sanctimonious ceremonies may  
With full and holy rite be ministered,  
No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall  
To make this contract grow; but barren hate,  
Sour-eyed disdain and discord shall bestrew  
The union of your bed with weeds so loathly  
That you shall hate it both. (Act IV, sc. 1, 13-22)
8. **ARIEL:** Full fathom five thy father lies;  
Of his bones are coral made;  
Those are pearls that were his eyes.  
Nothing of him that doth fade,  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange. (Act I, sc.2, 397-402)
9. **SEBASTIAN:** But for your conscience?  
**ANTONIO:** Ay, sir; where lies that? if 'twere a kibe,  
'T would put me to my slipper: but I feel not  
This deity in my bosom: twenty consciences,  
That stand 'twixt me and Milan, candied be they,  
And melt, ere they molest! (Act II, sc. 1, 273-278)
10. **CALIBAN:** What a thrice-double ass  
Was I, to take this drunkard for a god,  
And worship this dull fool! (Act V, sc. 1, 29-297)