

'The Tempest' Key Information Sheets

1. Context

- Written in the Jacobean era (James I) to celebrate the marriage of King James' daughter
- The play is a **masque**: a celebration play with music and song
- European explorers were sailing around the globe discovering 'new' lands – **colonisation**
- The play is often seen as Shakespeare's final solo play: it could have been his farewell play
- Many people in Jacobean England believed in magic and the supernatural – they would have admired and feared its power
- There are many subplots of treason and betrayal, perhaps warning of the impact of chaotic overthrows, such as the Gunpowder Plot, which threatened to kill King James

2. Themes

- Justice
- The supernatural and monsters
- Power and control
- Treason, betrayal and loyalty
- Nature and beauty

3. Key events

Act 1: Starts with a big (magical) storm. We hear Prospero's story of ending up on the island with Miranda. Ariel and Caliban are introduced. Miranda meets Ferdinand – the first man she's seen other than her father.

Act 2: We meet all the nobles who have been 'shipwrecked' by Ariel's illusions. They think Ferdinand, the King's son, has been killed. Antonio and Sebastian plot to kill King Alonso whilst he's asleep, but Ariel interrupts by waking them up. Caliban meets Trinculo and Stephano, the play's fools and is captivated by them as they have drink.

Act 3: Prospero sets Ferdinand an impossible task of moving logs as a test to check that he is in love with Miranda. Caliban and Stephano decide to kill Prospero and take over the island, but Ariel confuses them with island music. A magical banquet is set up to confuse Antonio, Sebastian and the others. Ariel appears as a scary harpy to punish them for their attempted treason.

Act 4: Miranda and Ferdinand get married. Prospero gets Ariel to capture Caliban by hanging out clothes to tempt him and Trinculo/Stephano.

Act 5: Ariel tells Prospero that he has captured all the nobles. Prospero decides to forgive them and let them go if they are sorry. Prospero decides to give up magic and transforms back to being Duke of Milan. He forgives his brother and shows Alonso that his son is still alive. The ship is found to be undamaged by the magical tempest of the opening and all prepare to sail away from the island.

4. Literary features (AO2)

- A masque play
- Ends in restoring order from chaos – elements of comedy
- Dramatic irony – when audience knows more than the characters
- Soliloquy – actors speaking their minds alone on stage (we hear the truth)

5. Key characters

Prospero: the former duke of Milan, now a magician on a Mediterranean island

Miranda: Prospero's daughter

Ariel: a spirit, servant to Prospero

Caliban: an inhabitant of the island, servant to Prospero

Ferdinand: Prince of Naples and Alonso's son

Alonso: King of Naples

Antonio: Duke of Milan and Prospero's brother

Sebastian: Alonso's brother

Gonzalo: councillor to Alonso and friend to Prospero

Adrian and Francisco: courtiers in attendance on Alonso

Trinculo: servant to Alonso

Stephano: Alonso's butler

Shipmaster

Boatswain

Mariners

Players who, as spirits, take the roles of Iris, Ceres, Juno, Nymphs, and Reapers in Prospero's masque, and who, in other scenes, take the roles of "islanders" and of hunting dogs

6. Prepared Introduction

Shakespeare presents [key focus] to reveal the **complex nature of power**. The play warns of the consequences of betrayal and treason and explores the mysteries of the supernatural. Prospero is presented as a flawed leader – one who is ready to relinquish his power and creativity. The play is both a celebration of love and beauty as well as a warning of the dangers of the corruption of power.

7. Paired quotations

<p>"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!"</p> <p>Caliban to Prospero and Miranda Act 1 scene 2</p>	<p>"This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first, Thou strok'st me and mad'st 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 show'd 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."</p> <p>Caliban to Prospero Act 1 scene 2</p>
<p>"This my mean task Would be as heavy to me as odious, but The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead And makes my labours pleasures."</p> <p>Ferdinand to Miranda Act 3 scene 1</p>	<p>"I am your wife, if you will marry me. If not, I'll die your maid. To be your fellow You may deny me, but I'll be your servant Whether you will or no"</p> <p>Miranda to Ferdinand Act 3 scene 1</p> <p>"There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple: If the ill spirit have so fair a house, Good things will strive to dwell with't."</p> <p>Miranda about Ferdinand Act 1 scene 2</p>
<p>"The air breathes upon us here most sweetly"</p> <p>Adrian (a lord) to Alonso on first arrival Act 2 scene 1</p>	<p>"Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises, Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not."</p> <p>Caliban to Stephano and Trinculo Act 3 scene 2</p>
<p>"Be collected. No more amazement. Tell your piteous heart There's no harm done."</p> <p>Prospero to Miranda Act 1 scene 2</p>	<p>"We are such stuff As dreams are made on, and our little life Is rounded with a sleep."</p> <p>Prospero Act 4 scene 1</p>

<p>"O, I have suffered With those that I saw suffer." Miranda, Act 1 Scene 2</p>	<p>"Ferdinand, With hair up-staring – then like reeds, not hair – Was the first man that leaped; cried 'Hell is empty And all the devils are here.'" Ariel, Act 1 Scene 2</p>
<p>"My library was dukedom large enough." Prospero, Act 1 Scene 2</p>	<p>"I'll break my staff...I'll down my book" Prospero, Act 5 scene 1</p>
<p>"abhorred slave...vile race" Miranda to Caliban, Act 1 scene 2</p>	<p>"O, wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, That has such people in't." Miranda, Act 5 Scene 1</p>
<p>"For this, be sure, tonight thou shalt have cramps, Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up" Prospero to Caliban Act 1 scene 2 "in my false brother Awaked an evil nature." Prospero, Act 1 scene 2</p>	<p>"As you from crimes would pardoned be, Let your indulgence set me free." Prospero, Epilogue</p>
<p>"Is there more toil? Since thou dost give me pains, Let me remember thee what thou hast promised, Which is not yet performed me." Ariel to Prospero Act 1 scene 2</p>	<p>"I shall miss thee, But yet thou shalt have freedom." Prospero to Ariel Act 5 scene 1</p>