

The Tempest

A summary of the story:

Find out what happens in the story with our handy ten-point summary and then test your knowledge with the Triptico games.

A ship is wrecked in a great storm. Prospero (a wizard) explains to his daughter (Miranda) how his brother Antonio usurped him and a faithful Lord Gonzalo helped them escape to the island 12 years ago.

Ariel reports to Prospero that he has conjured the storm and brought everyone safely to the island. Prospero sends Ariel to find Ferdinand (a survivor from the storm and the king's son) and then orders his slave, Caliban, to bring in more firewood.

Miranda and Ferdinand meet and fall in love at first sight. Prospero accuses Ferdinand of treachery and takes him captive.

Ariel plays music to send the King and Gonzalo to sleep, whilst Sebastian and Antonio plot to kill the King, however Ariel wakes Gonzalo just in time to save the king.

Caliban and Trinculo (another survivor and a court jester) are frightened by the storm and found by Stephano (a butler). Stephano and Trinculo recognise each other, and Caliban takes Stephano as his new master.

Miranda and Ferdinand agree to marry, which pleases Prospero.

Caliban persuades Stephano to try to kill Prospero and become king himself. Prospero sends Ariel and other spirits to scare the noblemen, then Ariel puts them into a trance and leads them to Prospero.

On their way to kill Prospero, Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban are chased by spirit dogs.

Prospero reveals himself to the company and reclaims his Dukedom. Ferdinand and King Alonso are joyfully reunited. Prospero returns Stephano and Trinculo to their crew, but sends Caliban back home to tidy up. Finally, he sets Ariel free.

Triptico Games

Play our digital Triptico games by following the hyperlinks.

- **Story starter:** Put the events of the story into the correct order [here](#).
- **Connections:** Test your knowledge of the play by finding the connections across the board. Can you work out what links them all? Do that [here](#)
- **True or false:** Thinking about the character of Prospero, sort these cards into True or False [here](#).

We split, we split!

Create a magical storm and a terrifying shipwreck. Read the story extract below and have a go at one of the following tasks:

1. Make a picture of the shipwreck. Use whichever medium you prefer, including drawing, painting, collage or computer design.
2. Create a shipwreck in your house – think imaginatively about the different fabrics, materials and household objects you could use to build the sensory world of the shipwreck. Then invite one of your family to visit your shipwreck. How did it feel?
3. Design a shipwreck to put on stage for a production of *The Tempest* – how will you convince an audience that there is an actual sea storm taking place? How can you use tech (lights, sound and special effects) creatively? You might like to choose a theatre and find images of the stage to help plan the shape and size of your set. For an extra challenge, stick to a tight budget of £100.

Story extract

An enigmatic figure stood at the very edge of a sharp precipice, high above the calm and noiseless sea. He was rather stooped, and his hair was wild and grey, but he still looked strong and mighty. He wore a long robe; once magnificent but now torn and muddied with time. In his right hand was an ornate gold staff; the kind you might see carried by a wizard in a children's picture book. After a while, the mysterious old man looked up to the heavens and then out to the silent sea, where he could just make out the shape of an important looking ship on the horizon. Then, with an unexpectedly swift and powerful movement, Prospero the magician (for he really was a magician) raised his staff over his head and sang a powerful spell.

At the sound of his words the calm sea began to swell, with eddying colours of purple, green and blue. Stillness gave way to a whooshing wind, and dark clouds gathered in a suddenly ink-black sky. As the waves rose and fell, bashing and crashing against the craggy cliff, the distant ship was tossed and flung this way and that.

The old man turned from the brink of the cliff, and walked away.

Out at sea, the sailors on the ship ran from port to starboard, and back again. Some climbed the rigging, others dashed about the deck. Some hid in the sleeping quarters below, praying for protection from the sudden storm.

The ship was indeed an important vessel. Its passengers were made up of royalty, including the Duke of Milan and the King of Naples, together with his son Ferdinand, the crown prince. But the great tempest didn't care whether its passengers were rich or poor. Nobles and paupers alike were flung like ragdolls by the windstorm and drenched like rats by the towering waves.

A sudden bolt of lightning ripped the skies apart and slashed at the ship's main sail. The sail caught light and fire rapidly engulfed it. Flames spread from the main sail to the topmast's crossbars, then to the bow and waist of the ship, as the men and women above and below deck screamed in terror.

In amongst the lightning and the darkening clouds, one or two sailors swore they saw a ghostly figure or sprite, darting from one part of the ship to another, igniting fires and cackling with glee. This airy creature seemed composed of the wind; a chameleon who could

flame like fire one moment and roar like thunder the next. Those who saw it swore that this was no ordinary storm, but the work of a terrible sorcerer.

The wild waters continued to roar. The dark sky seemed to pour down stinking tar. Sea and sky seemed to meet in a violent battle to decide which was the mightiest!

“Take in the topsail! Down with the topmast!” yelled the Boatswain

Many of the sailors continued to gibber and squeal, and beneath his breath the brave Boatswain muttered, “A plague upon their howling. They are louder than the weather!”

“We are all lost!” shrieked a desperate sailor, as a huge wave rolled over the ship’s sides and flooded the deck. He watched in desperation as two or three men were carried, helpless and screaming into the whirling waters of the sea.

“Where is the king?” shouted another of the sailors.

A calm, soothing voice spoke at his side. “The king and the prince are at prayers below deck.” It was Gonzalo, a noble advisor to the royal family. He was old and tired now, but he was philosophical too. Whilst he would prefer to die a dry death on a desert plain or a barren field, he was prepared for whatever God above had in store for him.

Below deck, the water was flooding the cabins. The ship listed ferociously from side to side. Men and women huddled together in terrified prayer. They wailed and moaned and mumbled. At the centre of the group was the King’s handsome son Ferdinand. As the sulphurous roars of the storm raged on, and the fires blazed on the mast and topsail, Ferdinand suddenly rose from his prayers, as if forced by an enchantment, and broke free from the group. He ran to the deck, his hair standing up like reeds by a stream. Ferdinand was the very first man – but not the last - to leap from the ship into the foaming mouth of the sea.

And as the whirling waves consumed him he cried at the top of his voice, “Hell is empty and all the devils are here!”

And as his words trailed off, he thought that he heard a strange and ghostly laugh from the centre of the storm. Then the waves overcame him, and he remembered nothing more...

Top Trumps cards

Using our character descriptions below, create Top Trumps cards. Decide on five categories (e.g. magical power, loyalty, ambition, greed, kindness) and score each character out of ten on each.

ALONSO

Alonso is the King of Naples. Twelve years previously he had helped Antonio depose his brother Prospero and make himself the Duke of Milan. He is on board the ship that runs aground, along with his brother Sebastian and son Ferdinand. During the course of the play, Alonso comes to regret his past actions, desiring (and getting) reconciliation with Prospero.

ANTONIO

Prospero's thoroughly wicked brother who betrayed Prospero's trust and stole his dukedom years before the play begins. Once on the island, Antonio wastes no time demonstrating that he is still power-hungry and murderous, persuading Sebastian to help him kill his brother Alonso and make himself the King of Naples. Though Prospero forgives him at the end of the play, Antonio never repents for his misdeeds.

ARIEL

Ariel is an airy spirit. When Prospero first arrived on the island he found Ariel imprisoned in a tree and released him. Ariel's independent and feisty character had annoyed his former owner, the witch Sycorax and she had used her magic to place him there. At the beginning of the play Ariel asks Prospero when he is going to release him – after all he has been his servant for twelve long years. Prospero explains that he has one last task for him – basically the plot to take revenge on his enemies. At the end of the play, when Prospero releases Ariel, both find the parting painful. Ariel acts as Prospero's eyes and ears throughout the play, using his magical abilities to create the storm, safeguard the ship and sailors and foil the other characters' plots to bring down his master.

BOATSWAIN AND SAILORS

The crew on board the stricken ship who are kept hidden, safe and in a trance by Prospero's magic until the end of the play.

CALIBAN

One of Prospero's slaves, Caliban is a deformed, non-human inhabitant of the island. His mother, the evil witch Sycorax, ruled the island when Prospero arrived. Understandably, he believes that the island rightfully belongs to him and that Prospero stole it, and he resents being treated by Prospero as a slave. Prospero, on the other hand, maintains that he treated Caliban well until he threatened his daughter, Miranda. For a while he believes that his new friends Trinculo and Stephano admire him and will treat him better than Prospero should they succeed in becoming the new rulers of the island. In some productions Caliban is depicted as a wild man, or a beast man, or sometimes a mix of fish and man, stemming from the confusion of two of the characters about what he is. The discovery of new lands was topical at the time that Shakespeare was writing, and along with it the notion of claiming ownership over new lands and their people.

FERDINAND

Ferdinand is the pure, if naïve, son and heir of Alonso, who is also ship-wrecked. Ferdinand is separated from his father and friends in the storm and assumes they are all dead and that he has unhappily become the King of Naples. He becomes infatuated with Prospero's daughter Miranda and proposes marriage. Prospero initially disapproves of Ferdinand because his father betrayed him, and because he fears that he will hurt Miranda. He puts their love to the test, therefore, and is eventually convinced. At the end of the play, Ferdinand is reunited with his father and friends.

GONZALO

Gonzalo is an honest old counsellor, who tried to save the lives of Prospero and his daughter by putting food, water and Prospero's books into the rickety boat they were cast adrift in. He is good hearted and faithful, maintaining his dignity throughout.

MIRANDA

Brought to the island by her father Prospero when she was very young, Miranda has never known any other human being. She is trusting and naïve, and loyal to her father. When she sees Ferdinand for the first time she falls head over heels in love. The discovery of more humans at the end of the play also fills her with amazement.

PROSPERO

Prospero was the rightful Duke of Milan who (with his daughter, Miranda) was sent off on a boat to die by his usurping brother, Antonio. Prospero and Miranda survived on the boat (chiefly because their honest old counselor, Gonzalo, equipped the boat with food and water and Prospero's precious books). They found safety on a small island where they remained. Whilst on the island, Prospero uses his knowledge of sorcery to control its inhuman inhabitants: Caliban and Ariel. By chance, Antonio sails near this island and Prospero conjures the tempest which forces him (and others) ashore. Prospero ensures that the ship and the sailors are kept safe and hidden until he is ready to leave the island at the end of the play. Prospero takes revenge upon his enemies during the play, finally forgiving those who plotted against him. Some scholars see Prospero as representing God, or even Shakespeare himself.

SEBASTIAN

Wicked Sebastian is easily persuaded by Antonio to try to kill his brother Alonso so that he, Sebastian, can become King. Though he is forgiven by Prospero at the end of the play, he shows no remorse.

TRINCULO AND STEPHANO

Trinculo, a Jester, and Stephano, a Butler, are two drunkards who provide a comic foil to the other characters. They fall in with Caliban and when they hear that his mother used to rule the island, and believe that they have a chance of overthrowing Prospero. Caliban provides them with the inside information they need to bring Prospero down but their ineptitude undoes them.

The Isle is Full of noises – but what else?

Write a description of the magical island in *The Tempest*

You can use any of the resources shared to help you with inspiration.

Remember to use the key features of narrative descriptive writing:

- Powerful and figurative language (similes, metaphors, personification)
- A range of sentence starters – fronted adverbials, connectives, powerful verbs, nouns or pronouns
- Reference to Shakespeare’s descriptions
- Variety of sentence types to build pace, tension and create atmosphere

You could also challenge yourself to use some of the words or Caliban’s descriptive speech to inspire your description:

Be not afeard. 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.

Then vs now

Compare the special effects tools at hand for modern day film makers against those from the early 1900s by watching the first filmed version of *The Tempest*.

Blackfriars was an indoor playhouse used by Shakespeare in his later career. Plays would often be performed during the summer at the outdoor Globe theatre and during winter in the more intimate, indoor Blackfriars. The indoor theatre of Shakespeare's time used all sorts of new technology, including use of candlelight on pulleys to create different lighting effects, ceiling winches, trapdoors from above and below and the use of pyrotechnics and even guided rockets on wire to create magical explosions.

Many hundreds of years later in 1908, the very first filmed adaptation of Shakespeare was a silent production of the *Tempest* by director Percy Stow. Watch it [HERE](#).

The film uses two special effects that would have been revolutionary at the time - the creation of the storm and the transformation of Ariel into a monkey.

Compare that version with a more recent film version of the play, starring Helen Mirren, by watching the trailer [HERE](#).

Complete the comparison sheet below to explain how the 1908 movie effect was created and how you predict the same effect would be created in today's cinema (such as the recent Helen Mirren version).

	In the 1908 film	In a modern film
A special effect for Ariel		
A special effect for the storm		

Now you get to write the script!

Write your own narration and dialogue for the 1908 movie (or a short extract of it).

- You can remind yourself how scripts are laid out by looking at the example of Coram SSF's script for the *Tempest* below which features narration, dialogue and stage directions.
- You could then rehearse and record your finished scripts, incorporating any of your own sound effects.
- These could then be played back simultaneously with the part of the *Tempest* movie you intended it to accompany.

Extract from Coram SSF's script

PROSPERO Go, make thyself invisible. Find me Ferdinand, the King's son.
Exit ARIEL.

PROSPERO Miranda, awake!

MIRANDA wakes.

Thou hast slept well.

Come on, we'll visit Caliban, my slave.

MIRANDA 'Tis a villain, sir, I do not love to look on.

NARRATION Caliban, the other creature on the island when they arrived, is the son of the witch who died. He thinks the island belongs to him and resents Prospero and his magic.

PROSPERO Thou poisonous slave! Caliban, come forth!
Enter CALIBAN.

Want more?

Science focus – Complete a research project on the history of special effects in both Shakespearean and modern theatre.

Focus on fireworks and pyrotechnics by investigating the chemistry of the explosive compounds used in fireworks to create stage effects.

Once you have made some discoveries about how they would have created these effects in Shakespeare's time, think about the differences in theatrical entertainment from the sixteenth century to today. Consider the following aspects:

- How thunder and lightning is created in a current film or stage production
- How Ariel might be created in a current film or stage production
- How are radio 'folio artists', who create sound effects for radio productions, like Shakespearean special effects makers? Are there any similar techniques that are used by modern folio artists?

Exploring further

If you are hungry for more of the Tempest, there have been many different interpretations of the play. **Here are** a few ideas for where to start:

Films:

- The film with Helen Mirren as Prospera - great for showing different gender roles (2010)
- Shakespeare's Globe adaptation with Roger Allam available on DVD (2013) which you can watch for free on BBC iplayer as part of the Culture in Quarantine programme. Find that [here](#)
- The Forbidden Planet (1956)

Books:

- 'Mr William Shakespeare's Plays' animated stories and 'Tales from Shakespeare: The Bard's Greatest Plays' both by Marcia Williams
- 'The Shakespeare Stories' by Andrew Matthews and Tony Ross

Experiences/Talking points/Music:

- Gather descriptions of the island from the text and use them to draw/map it. You could do a similar thing for Caliban.
- Research colonisation and slavery in relation to Caliban.
- Do some wider reading around the fact that Shakespeare follows Aristotle's Three Unities for this play and for only one other in his canon –The Comedy of Errors. The principals being that they take place in one location, in one day and every incident should contribute to the main plot and there should be no irrelevant information or action.