

List of characters

The island

- PROSPERO the rightful Duke of Milan
 - MIRANDA his daughter
 - ARIEL an airy spirit
 - CALIBAN a savage and deformed slave
 - SPIRITS in Prospero’s service
 - IRIS
 - CERES
 - JUNO
 - NYMPHS
 - REAPERS
- } characters in the masque

The shipwrecked royal court

- ALONSO King of Naples
 - FERDINAND Alonso’s son
 - SEBASTIAN Alonso’s brother
 - ANTONIO Prospero’s brother, the usurping Duke of Milan
 - GONZALO an honest old councillor
 - ADRIAN
 - FRANCISCO
 - STEPHANO a drunken butler
 - TRINCULO a jester
- } lords

The ship’s crew

- MASTER the captain
- BOATSWAIN
- MARINERS

The play takes place on a ship and an island



The Master commands the Boatswain to save the ship from running aground. The Boatswain gives instructions to the sailors but finds his work hampered by the courtiers. He orders them to go back to their cabins.

Stagecraft

Staging the storm (in large groups)

This opening scene is very dramatic: it takes place on a ship at sea during a terrible storm. How can the fury of the waves and wind be shown on stage? In some productions, the scene is played on a bare stage, without props or scenery – the illusion of a ship caught in a tempest is created only by lighting, sounds and the actors' movements. Other productions use an elaborate set to create a realistic ship.

- a** Begin a Director's Journal, in which you write down ideas relating to the play in performance. Try to think like a director, focusing on bringing the words to life. Add to your journal as you read the play.
- b** Consider how you would perform this opening scene. In your group, hold a discussion using the prompts below, then act out the scene. There are six individual speaking parts, and you can have as many sailors as you want.
 - Explore ways of performing the first stage direction: *'A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard'*.
 - How can actors' movements suggest a ship caught in a storm?
 - How might you convey the sense of fear and crisis? These are people who are desperately trying to save their lives: do they panic or are they well disciplined?
 - What simple props might suggest a ship? One production had only a large ship's wheel at the back of the stage, and the sailors struggled to turn it to keep the ship on course. What would you use?

tempestuous very stormy and loud

Boatswain (pronounced 'bo-s'n') the man in charge of discipline on board a ship

What cheer? what news?

Good friend

mariners sailors

Fall to't yarely get a move on

Bestir quickly

Tend attend, listen

Blow ... room enough you can blow as much as you like as long as we have space to sail in safety

Play the men act like men, command the sailors

keep below stay in your cabins

mar spoil, hinder

roarers wild waves and winds

whom (King Alonso)

Themes

Challenging authority (in pairs)

Throughout the play, traditional authority is challenged. The Boatswain is the character with the lowest social status in this scene, but it is he who takes charge. He orders the king and the other aristocrats off the deck.

- Do you think the Boatswain should defer to his social superiors, or is it important that he assumes control at this critical moment? Consider the possible consequences of the Boatswain's actions. Share your conclusions with other pairs.

The Tempest

Act 1 Scene 1

A ship at sea

A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard. Enter a

SHIPMASTER, a BOATSWAIN and MARINERS

MASTER Boatswain!

BOATSWAIN Here, master. What cheer?

MASTER Good; speak to th'mariners. Fall to't yarely, or we run ourselves aground. Bestir, bestir! *Exit*

BOATSWAIN Heigh, my hearts! Cheerly, cheerly, my hearts! Yare, yare! 5
 Take in the topsail. Tend to th'master's whistle. [*To the storm*] Blow till thou burst thy wind, if room enough!

Enter ALONSO, SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, FERDINAND,

GONZALO and others

ALONSO Good boatswain, have care. Where's the master? Play the men.

BOATSWAIN I pray now, keep below. 10


ANTONIO Where is the master, boatswain?

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. 15

GONZALO Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard.

 The Boatswain reminds Gonzalo of humanity’s weakness in the face of nature’s violence. Gonzalo finds comfort in the Boatswain’s face. The Boatswain again rebukes the courtiers, and is cursed in return.

Themes

Humans and nature (whole class)

In the script opposite, the Boatswain raises another theme that recurs throughout the play – the relationship between humans and nature: ‘if you can command these elements to silence ... use your authority’ (lines 19–20).

- Hold a class debate. One side argues that nature is humanity’s opponent and must be controlled. The other side argues that nature is humanity’s friend and should be respected.

1 ‘he hath no drowning mark upon him’ (in pairs)

Gonzalo seems to ‘read’ the Boatswain’s face, deciding that he is not destined to die by drowning, but rather by hanging. Is Gonzalo trusting to fate, being cynical, or trying to find humour in a desperate situation?

- a How would you advise the actor playing Gonzalo to deliver these words? Try out different readings.
- b Write down the ideas that are explored in lines 18–29, considering in particular the themes of fate and chance.

2 ‘the rope of his destiny’

This play is rich in **imagery** (see ‘The language of *The Tempest*’, pp. 164–5). In lines 25–9, Gonzalo uses complex imagery of a hangman’s noose beginning to resemble an umbilical cord.

- a Draw this image in a way that captures the richness of the language and the idea being expressed here.
- b With others in your class, discuss what is lost and what is gained by turning these words into an image.

Characters

What does the language tell us? (in fours)

Look at the language used by the Boatswain and Gonzalo in the script opposite. Compare it to that used by Sebastian and Antonio.

- Discuss what each character’s choice of words reveals about them and then act out lines 32–41. What are the dominant emotions expressed here? Anger? Fear? Acceptance? Denial? Think about the humour as well as the terror of the scene.

None ... myself I am nearest to myself
councillor advisor
work ... present stop the storm
hand a rope work (handle a rope)
mischance disaster
hap happen

Methinks I think
complexion face, appearance

cable three-twisted rope for an anchor
for our own ... advantage our own anchor is of little help

Bring her ... main-course use the mainsail

office captain’s whistle
give o’er stop work
mind deliberate intention

whoreson son of a prostitute

I’ll warrant ... drowning I guarantee he won’t drown
unstanched wench talkative or immoral woman



BOATSWAIN None that I more love than myself. You are a councillor;
 if you can command these elements to silence, and work a peace of
 the present, we will not hand a rope more – use your authority. If 20
 you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself
 ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap. [*To*
the Mariners] Cheerly, good hearts. [*To the courtiers*] Out of our way,
 I say.

*[Exeunt Boatswain with Mariners, followed by Alonso,
 Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand]*

GONZALO I have great comfort from this fellow. Methinks he hath no 25
 drowning mark upon him, his complexion is perfect gallows. Stand
 fast, good Fate, to his hanging; 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. *Exit*

Enter BOATSWAIN

BOATSWAIN Down with the topmast! Yare, lower, lower! Bring her to 30
 try with main-course.

A cry within

Enter SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO and GONZALO

A plague upon this howling! They are louder than the weather, or
 our office. [*To the lords*] Yet again? What do you here? Shall we give
 o'er and drown? Have you a mind to sink?


SEBASTIAN A pox o'your throat, you bawling, blasphemous, in- 35
 charitable dog.

BOATSWAIN Work you then.

ANTONIO Hang, cur, hang, you whoreson, insolent noisemaker, we are
 less afraid to be drowned than thou art.

GONZALO I'll warrant him from drowning, though the ship were no 40
 stronger than a nutshell, and as leaky as an unstanch'd wench.

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[More information](#)

 The Boatswain orders action to save the ship, but disaster strikes. Antonio again curses the Boatswain. The crew abandon hope. Gonzalo accepts whatever is to come, but wishes for death on land.

1 'All lost ... all lost' (in small groups)

There is complete chaos on stage during the final part of this first scene. In what they believe are their final moments, all the characters behave in different ways. Some call on God's mercy in prayer: Others say farewell to each other. The Boatswain takes a drink (line 45).

- Each person takes a character from the script opposite. Prepare a tableau (a 'freeze-frame', like a photograph) of these final moments. Think carefully about the expression on each character's face – what emotions do you want to portray? Practise your tableau, then show it to the rest of the class.
- Take it in turns to break out of your tableau and describe – in your own words – how your character feels at this moment.

Write about it

The forces of fate

The fate of the sailors and their royal passengers seems to be decided. However, as we shall see, there are other forces at work that will decide whether they live or die.

- Read Scene 1 again, then write three paragraphs explaining how much control you think the characters have over their lives at this point. What forces are shaping their actions? Think about what most affects what they are doing and saying. Remember to refer to the script in your writing.

Lay her a-hold heave-to
(furl the sail)

lay her off sail out to sea
(the Boatswain changes his order)

must ... cold? let us have a
warming drink (of alcohol)

merely utterly

wide-chopped big-mouthed

ten tides (pirates were condemned
to be hanged and to have three
tides wash over their bodies
before being taken down; Antonio's
comment is an exaggeration)

gape at wid'st to glut him
open up to swallow him

a thousand furlongs
(a furlong is about 200 metres)

long heath heather

brown furze gorse

The wills above God's will

fain rather





BOATSWAIN Lay her a-hold, a-hold; set her two courses. Off to sea
 again; lay her off!

Enter MARINERS, wet

MARINERS All lost! To prayers, to prayers, all lost!
 BOATSWAIN What, must our mouths be cold? 45

GONZALO The king and prince at prayers! Let's assist them,
 For our case is as theirs.

SEBASTIAN I'm out of patience.

ANTONIO We're merely cheated of our lives by drunkards.
 This wide-chopped rascal – would thou mightst lie drowning
 The washing of ten tides!

GONZALO He'll be hanged yet, 50
 Though every drop of water swear against it,
 And gape at wid'st to glut him.

[Exeunt Boatswain and Mariners]

A confused noise within

Mercy on us!

[VOICES OFF STAGE] 'We split, we split!' – 'Farewell, my wife and children!' –
 'Farewell, brother!' – 'We split, we split, we split!'

ANTONIO Let's all sink wi'th'king.

SEBASTIAN Let's take leave of him. 55

[Exeunt Sebastian and Antonio]

GONZALO Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of
 barren ground – long heath, brown furze, anything. The wills above
 be done, but I would fain die a dry death. *Exit*

 Miranda begs her father, Prospero, to calm the tempest. She feels the suffering of the shipwrecked people, and is full of pity for them. Prospero assures her that no harm has been done.

1 Visualising Prospero (in pairs)

We learn from Miranda's first speech that her father, Prospero, has the power to create storms and control the seas.

- How do you visualise Prospero? With a partner, talk about how he might appear.
- Look at the ways in which different productions have presented Prospero in the photographs throughout this book. Which one is closest to your own imagining of this character? How would you present him differently? Sketch your own ideas for Prospero's 'look'.

Language in the play

Conjuring the storm (in fours)

Miranda's first speech (lines 1–13) is a vivid description of the storm as it is happening.

- Take it in turns to read the speech aloud, changing speaker at each punctuation mark. Emphasise the imagery she uses to describe the storm.
- Talk together about Miranda's 'storm' imagery. How does it create atmosphere for the audience? Make some notes and then share your thoughts with other groups.
- What does Miranda's language in the script opposite tell us about her character? Draw up a list of adjectives you would use to describe her.

art magical powers

roar great noise

allay calm

The sky ... fire out the sky seems filled with tar; which would become liquid and rain down as it is heated by the lightning but for the waves that rise up to extinguish the flames

welkin's cheek sky's face

brave noble, fine

creature human being

or ere before

fraughting souls

terrified passengers

Be collected be calm

amazement wonder

2 'no harm done?' (in pairs)

- Look at the exchange between Prospero and Miranda in lines 13–21. Shakespeare uses **anaphora** – the repetition of words in successive clauses (see p. 167) – in Prospero's words 'No harm'. It is as though he is trying to reassure his daughter that he is benevolent. But what do you think are his motives? Discuss this in your pairs.
- What are your first impressions of Prospero and Miranda, and of their relationship? By yourself, write down your thoughts, then swap these notes with your partner. How are your impressions similar? How do they differ?

Act 1 Scene 2

The island

Enter PROSPERO and MIRANDA

MIRANDA	<p>If by your art, my dearest father, you have Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them. The sky it seems would pour down stinking pitch, But that the sea, mounting to th'welkin's cheek, Dashes the fire out. O, I have suffered</p>	5
	<p>With those that I saw suffer! A brave vessel, Who had no doubt some noble creature in her, Dashed all to pieces. O, the cry did knock Against my very heart! Poor souls, they perished. Had I been any god of power, I would</p>	10
	<p>Have sunk the sea within the earth, or ere It should the good ship so have swallowed, and The fraughting souls within her.</p>	
PROSPERO	<p>Be collected; No more amazement. Tell your piteous heart There's no harm done.</p>	
MIRANDA	<p>O, woe the day.</p>	
PROSPERO	<p>No harm.</p>	15
	<p>I have done nothing but in care of thee – Of thee my dear one, thee my daughter – who Art ignorant of what thou art, nought knowing Of whence I am, nor that I am more better Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell, And thy no greater father.</p>	20
MIRANDA	<p>More to know Did never meddle with my thoughts.</p>	



Prospero decides to tell Miranda her life story. He again assures her that no one was hurt in the shipwreck. He questions her about what she remembers, then reveals that he was once duke of Milan.

1 Prospero’s ‘magic garment’

Prospero wears a ‘magic garment’, which gives him the supernatural powers that he calls his ‘art’. In stage productions, this garment is often a cloak, richly decorated with magical symbols.

- Design your own version of Prospero’s ‘magic garment’, using symbols to suggest particular powers.

Language in the play

‘In the dark backward and abysm of time’ (in pairs)

Line 50 is a good example of the rich imagery in *The Tempest*. Instead of saying ‘long ago’ or ‘in the dim and distant past’, Prospero says ‘In the dark backward and abysm of time’.

- Try translating this line into modern English prose, then discuss your different versions. What has been lost from the original in your modern version?

2 ‘A prince of power’

Over the course of lines 53–88, we discover many things about Prospero and Miranda.

- After you have read this important exchange, write a short account (between one and three paragraphs) that explains their change of fortunes and their link with the passengers on the sunken ship.

Characters

Prospero’s story: a first impression (in pairs)

In lines 53–186, Prospero tells the story of how he and Miranda came to the island.

- Take parts and read the first part of this story (lines 53–88). Don’t worry about words and phrases you may not understand. Just treat the read-through as a way of gaining a first impression of Prospero’s overthrow and his journey to the island.
- Read through this part of the script again, taking turns in role as Prospero and as a voice coach, offering advice. What suggestions would you make about pitch, pace, pause and accompanying gestures to best portray Prospero’s character and emotions?

direful spectacle terrible sight
very virtue essence
provision foresight
soul person
perdition loss
Betid happened

bootless inquisition
unsuccessful enquiry

Out ... old over three years old

Of any thing ... remembrance
describe to me any memories that you recall

And ... warrants it’s more like a dream than a clear memory
tended waited on

aught ere anything before
thou mayst you might remember