

THE TEMPEST | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shakespeare's language can seem scary, but give it a try! *Go at your own pace, and have fun!*



SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S
SIGNATURE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Long story short: Twelve years ago, Prospero (who knows lots of magic) was betrayed by his brother, banished from Milan, and left (with his daughter Miranda) out at sea in a rickety boat... which washed up on an island inhabited mostly by spirits like Ariel, who becomes Prospero's assistant of sorts. (Whew! That was a long sentence!) Conveniently for Prospero—who has spent twelve years stewing about the betrayal—all of the people who were part of that betrayal sail near the island on one ship at the same time... So he uses his magic (and Ariel) to whip up a huge storm that shipwrecks them here.

Which brings us to this scene...
And two things to keep in mind:

1 Prospero and Ariel are very close, loving relationship—almost like parent and child. This is their only negative interaction in the play.

2 Shakespeare never specifies Ariel's gender.

The Shakespeare

ARIEL

Is there more toil? Since thou dost give me pains,
Let me remember thee what thou hast promised,
Which is not yet performed me.

PROSPERO

How now? Moody?
What is't thou canst demand?

ARIEL

My liberty.

PROSPERO

Before the time be out? No more!

ARIEL

I prithee
Remember I have done thee worthy service,
Told thee no lies, made thee no mistaking served
Without or grudge or grumblings. Thou did promise
To bate me a full year.

PROSPERO

Dost thou forget
From what a torment I did free thee?

ARIEL

No.

PROSPERO

Thou dost, and think'st it much to tread the ooze
Of the salt deep,
To run upon the sharp wind of the north,
To do me business in the veins o'th' earth
When it is baked with frost.

ARIEL

I do not, sir.

PROSPERO

Thou liest, malignant thing: hast thou forgot
The foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy
Was grown into a hoop? Hast thou forgot her?

ARIEL

No, sir.

PROSPERO

Thou hast! Where was she born? Speak; tell me.

ARIEL

Sir, in Algiers.

PROSPERO

O, was she so? I must
Once in a month recount what thou hast been,
Which thou forget'st. This damned witch Sycorax,
For mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible
To enter human hearing, from Algiers,
Thou knowst, was banished. For one thing she did
They would not take her life; is not this true?

ARIEL

Ay, sir.

PROSPERO

This blue-eyed hag was hither brought with child,
And here was left by th' sailors Thou, my slave,
As thou report'st thyself, was then her servant,
And — for thou wast a spirit too delicate
To act her earthy and abhorred commands,
Refusing her grand hests — she did confine thee,
By help of her more potent ministers
And in her most unmitigable rage,
Into a cloven pine, within which rift
Imprisoned thou didst painfully remain
A dozen years, within which space she died
And left thee there, where thou didst vent thy groans
As fast as mill wheels strike. Then was this island
(save for the son that she did litter here,
A freckled whelp, hag-born) not honored with
A human shape.

ARIEL

Yes, Caliban, her son.

PROSPERO

Dull thing, I say so — he, that Caliban,
Whom now I keep in service. Thou best knowst
What torment I did find thee in: thy groans
Did make wolves howl and penetrate the breasts
Of ever-angry bears. It was a torment
To lay upon the damned, which Sycorax
Could not again undo. It was mine art,
When I arrived and heard thee, that made gape
The pine and let thee out.

ARIEL

I thank thee, master.

PROSPERO

If thou more murmur'st, I will rend an oak
And peg thee in his knotty entrails till
Thou hast howled away twelve winters.

ARIEL

I will be correspondent to command
And do my springing gently.

Pardon, master.

PROSPERO

Do, and after two days
I will discharge thee.

ARIEL

That's my noble master.
What shall I do? Say what? What shall I do?

PROSPERO

Go make thyself like a nymph o'th' sea;
Be subject to no sight but thine and mine, invisible
To every eyeball else. Go take this shape
And hither come in't. Go! Hence with diligence. *Exit Ariel.*

In case you're wondering, Algiers is a city in Algeria, which is in Northern Africa. Now you don't have to look it up. You're welcome.

The Translation

ARIEL

Is there more work to do? Since you're giving me new assignments, let me remind you what you promised me but haven't come through with yet.

PROSPERO

What? You're in a bad mood? What could you possibly ask for?

ARIEL

My freedom.

PROSPERO

Before your sentence has been completed? Don't say anything else.

ARIEL

I beg you, remember the good work I've done for you, and how I've never lied to you, never made mistakes, and never grumbled in my work. You promised to take a full year off my sentence.

PROSPERO

Have you forgotten the torture I freed you from?

ARIEL

No.

PROSPERO

You have forgotten, and you think it's a burden when I ask you to walk through the ocean, or run on the north wind, or do business for me underground when the earth's frozen solid.

ARIEL

No, I don't, sir.

PROSPERO

You lie, you nasty, ungrateful thing! Have you forgotten the horrid witch Sycorax, stooped over with old age and ill will? Have you forgotten her?

ARIEL

No, sir.

PROSPERO

You have. Where was she born? Speak. Tell me.

ARIEL

In Algiers, sir.

PROSPERO

Oh, was she now? I'll have to tell the story again every month, since you seem to forget it. This damned witch Sycorax was kicked out of Algiers for various witching crimes too terrible for humans to hear about. But for one reason they refused to execute her. Isn't that true?

ARIEL

Yes, sir.

PROSPERO

This sunken-eyed hag was brought here pregnant and left by the sailors. You, my slave, were her servant at the time, as you admit yourself. You were too delicate to carry out her horrible orders, and you refused. In a fit of rage she locked you up in a hollow pine tree, with the help of her powerful assistants, and left you there for twelve years. During that time she died, and you were trapped, moaning and groaning as fast as the blades of a mill wheel strike the water. At that time there were no people here. This island was not honored with a human being—except for the son that Sycorax gave birth to here, a freckled baby born of an old hag.

ARIEL

Yes, Caliban, her son.

PROSPERO

That's right, you stupid thing, Caliban, who now serves me. You know better than anyone how tortured you were when I found you. Your groans made wolves howl, and even made bears feel sorry for you. Nobody but the damned souls of hell deserves the spell that Sycorax put on you and couldn't undo. It was my magic that saved you when I arrived on the island and heard you, making the pine tree open and let you out.

ARIEL

Thank you, master.

PROSPERO

If you complain any more, I'll split an oak tree and lock you up in it till you've howled for twelve years.

ARIEL

Please forgive me, master. I'll be obedient and do all my tasks without complaining.

PROSPERO

Do that, and I'll set you free in two days.

ARIEL

That's noble of you, master. What shall I do for you? Just tell me. What shall I do?

PROSPERO

Go disguise yourself as a sea nymph. Be invisible to everyone except yourself and me. Take this garment, put it on, and then come back here. Hurry, go! *Ariel exits.*



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You can respond to these in any way you choose:

Write

ACT IT OUT

Talk about it

Draw

THINK ABOUT IT

... up to you!

Ariel and Prospero have a close relationship—more than you might guess from this scene. They are friends and partners; they really respect each other. But Prospero threatens Ariel with something pretty serious in this scene.

What makes Prospero so mad? Do you think Ariel expected such an over-the-top response? What's going through their heads during this exchange?

Pretend the scene ends at "twelve winters." How else could Ariel respond to Prospero? How would Prospero respond to that? Write out a few lines—or a whole scene!

The Tempest is a visual play. It starts with a shipwreck and moves to a magical island. You meet spirits and wizards and a creature called Caliban.

In your mind's eye, what does Prospero look like?
What about Sycorax?
Caliban?
Ariel?

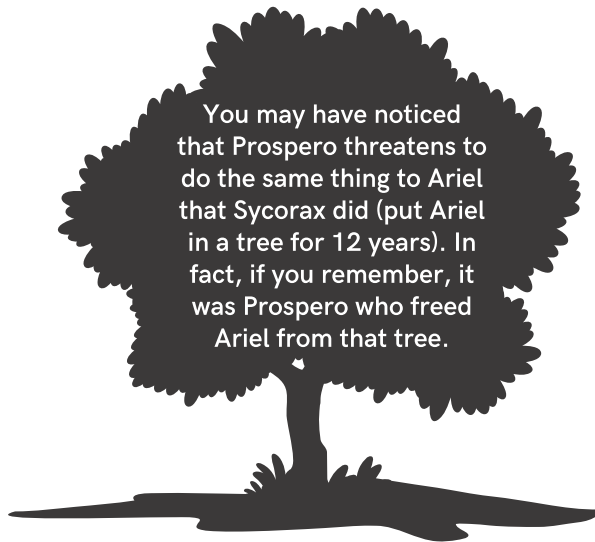
NOTE: Ariel is the most open-ended character in all of Shakespeare. There's so much we don't know... It's not clear how large Ariel is—or if Ariel even stays the same size. Ariel's gender is never mentioned, and it doesn't matter to the story. (Do magical spirit creatures even have genders??) So, as you think about Ariel, the sky's the limit!

THERE ARE LOTS OF GREAT IMAGES IN PROSPERO'S STORY ABOUT ARIEL AND SYCORAX.

SO... WHAT WOULD THAT STORY LOOK LIKE AS A COMIC BOOK?

Ariel is a spirit... and that could mean just about anything when it comes to staging this play. How would you make sure the audience knows that Ariel isn't human? Think about movement, costume, makeup/hair... maybe even lighting and sound.

ARIEL HAS QUITE THE ORIGIN STORY (A WITCH! A WIZARD! MAGIC!). CAN YOU SUMMARIZE IT IN JUST A FEW SENTENCES? WHAT HAPPENED? How would you TELL THIS STORY...?



You may have noticed that Prospero threatens to do the same thing to Ariel that Sycorax did (put Ariel in a tree for 12 years). In fact, if you remember, it was Prospero who freed Ariel from that tree.

Do you think Prospero knows that these punishments are the same? If so, why would he do that? If not, why do you think it occurred to him?

If Prospero actually went through with it, would he be any different from Sycorax?

THINK ABOUT THIS SCENE AS A SCRIPT FOR A MOVIE.

What would you want it to look like? Where is it set? How is it lit? Would the camera move a lot or stay in one place? Would you use flashbacks while Prospero tells Ariel's backstory?

Filmmakers use a **STORYBOARD** to plan out a movie. Storyboards are actually a lot like comic books, except that their goal is to visually represent the action in scene, shot by shot. They include things like lighting, camera movement (represented by arrows), and the way objects and people are positioned in each frame. They usually include a description of each shot. They don't need to be beautiful... They can even be done with stick figures!

So: storyboard this scene.

Here's a potential storyboard for the first fight scene in *Romeo and Juliet*.



A fight breaks out.



Benvolio shouts at fighters.



Close up on two fighters.