

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

The Shakespeare

PROSPERO

I have done nothing but in care of thee,
Of thee, my dear one, thee my daughter, who
Art ignorant of what thou art, naught knowing
Of whence I am, nor that I am more better
Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell,
And thy no greater father.

MIRANDA

More to know
Did never meddle with my thoughts.

PROSPERO

'Tis time
I should inform thee further. Lend thy hand
And pluck my magic garment from me. So,
Lie there my art. Wipe thou thine eyes, have comfort:
The direful spectacle of the wreck which touched
The very virtue of compassion in thee,
I have with such provision in mine art
So safely ordered, that there is no soul —
No, not so much perdition as an hair,
Betid to any creature in the vessel
Which thou heard'st cry, which thou sawst sink. Sit down,
For thou must now know further.

MIRANDA

You have often
Begun to tell me what I am, but stopped
And left me to a bootless inquisition,
Concluding, 'Stay, not yet!'

PROSPERO

The hour's now come;
The very minute bids thee open thine ear.
Obey and be attentive. Canst thou remember
A time before we came unto this cell?
I do not think thou canst, for then thou wast not
Out three years old.

MIRANDA

Certainly, sir, I can.

PROSPERO

By what? By any other house or person?
Of any thing the image, tell me, that
Hath kept with thy remembrance.

MIRANDA

'Tis far off,
And rather like a dream than an assurance
That my remembrance warrants. Had I not
Four or five women once, that tended me?

PROSPERO

Thou hadst, and more, Miranda. But how is it
That this lives in thy mind? What seest thou else
In the dark backward and abysm of time?
If thou rememb'rest ought ere thou cam'st here,
How thou cam'st here thou mayst.

MIRANDA

But that I do not.

PROSPERO

Twelve year since, Miranda, twelve year since,
Thy father was the Duke of Milan and
A prince of power.

MIRANDA

Sir, are not you my father?

PROSPERO

Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and
She said thou wast my daughter; and thy father
Was Duke of Milan, and his only heir
And princess, no worse issued.

MIRANDA

O, the heavens!
What foul play had we that we came from thence?
Or blesséd was't we did?

PROSPERO

Both, both, my girl.
By foul play, as thou sayst, were we heaved thence,
But blessedly holla hither.

MIRANDA

O, my heart bleeds
To think o' th' teen that I have turned you to,
Which is from my remembrance. Please you, farther.

PROSPERO

My brother and thy uncle, called Antonio —
I pray thee mark me, that a brother should
Be so perfidious — he, whom next thyself
Of all the world I loved, and to him put
The manage of my state, as at that time
Through all the signories it was the first,

Prospero used to be sitting pretty as the Duke of Milan. But his brother, Antonio, overthrew him and took control of Milan. Jerk!

After the coup, Prospero and his daughter, Miranda, get put out to sea in a leaky boat with no sail. Somehow, they survive and wash up on an island, where they spend the next twelve years, until Antonio goes sailing by!

Prospero has a trick up his sleeve: He's a magician! He casts spells and even takes a magical spirit, Ariel, as a servant (you may remember Ariel from a previous pack). So Prospero has Ariel whip up a storm (a *tempest!*) to crash the ship. That's Scene One. In Scene Two, Prospero takes Miranda aside for a chat...

And Prospero the prime Duke, being so reputed
In dignity, and for the liberal arts
Without a parallel; those being all my study,
The government I cast upon my brother
And to my state grew stranger, being transported
And rap't in secret studies. Thy false uncle —
Dost thou attend me?

MIRANDA

Sir, most heedfully.

PROSPERO

Being once perfected how to grant suits,
How to deny them, who 't advance and who
To trash for overtopping, new created
The creatures that were mine, I say, or changed 'em,
Or else new formed 'em; having both the key
Of officer and office, set all hearts i' th' state
To what tune pleased his ear, and that now he was
The ivy which had hid my princely trunk
And sucked my verdure out on't. Thou attend'st not!

MIRANDA

O, good sir, I do.

PROSPERO

I pray thee, mark me.
I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
To closeness and the bettering of my mind
With that which, but by being so retired,
O'er-prized all popular rate, in my false brother
Awaked an evil nature, and my trust,
Like a good parent, did beget of him
A falsehood in its contrary as great
As my trust was, which had indeed no limit,
A confidence sans bound. He being thus lorded,
Not only with what my revenue yielded
But what my power might else exact, like one
Who, having into truth by telling of it,
Made such a sinner of his memory
To credit his own lie, he did believe
He was indeed the duke, out o' th' substitution
And executing th' outward face of royalty
With all prerogative. Hence his ambition growing —
Dost thou hear?

MIRANDA

Your tale, sir, would cure deafness.

PROSPERO

To have no screen between this part he played
And him he played it for, he needs will be
Absolute Milan. Me, poor man, my library
Was dukedom large enough. Of temporal royalties
He thinks me now incapable; confederates,
So dry he was for sway, wi' th' King of Naples
To give him annual tribute, do him homage,
Subject his coronet to his crown, and bend
The dukedom yet unbowed (alas, poor Milan)
To most ignoble stooping.

MIRANDA

O, the heavens!

PROSPERO

Mark his condition and th' event, then tell me
If this might be a brother.

MIRANDA

I should sin
To think but nobly of my grandmother;
Good wombs have borne bad sons.

PROSPERO

Now the condition.
The King of Naples, being an enemy
To me inveterate, hearkens my brother's suit,
Which was that he, in lieu o' th' premises
Of homage, and I know not how much tribute,
Should presently extirpate me and mine
Out of the dukedom and confer fair Milan,
With all the honours, on my brother. Whereon —
A treacherous army levied — one midnight
Fated to th' purpose did Antonio open
The gates of Milan and i' th' dead of darkness
The ministers for th' purpose hurried thence
Me and thy crying self.

MIRANDA

Alack, for pity,
I, not rememb'ring how I cried out then,
Will cry it o'er again. It is a hint
That wrings mine eyes to't.

PROSPERO

Hear a little further.
And then I'll bring thee to the present business
Which now's upon's, without the which this story
Were most impertinent.

MIRANDA

Wherefore did they not
That hour destroy us?

PROSPERO

Well demanded, wench:
My tale provokes that question. Dear, they durst not.
So dear the love my people bore me, nor set
A mark so bloody on the business, but
With colors fairer painted their foul ends.
In few, they hurried us aboard a bark,
Bore us some leagues to sea, where they prepared
A rotten carcass of a butt, not rigged,
Nor tackle, sail, nor mast — the very rats
Instinctively have quit it. There they hoist us
To cry to th' sea that roared us, to sigh
To th' winds, whose pity, sighing back again,
Did us but loving wrong.

MIRANDA

Alack, what trouble
Was I then to you?

PROSPERO

O, a cherubim.
Thou wast that did preserve me. Thou didst smile,
Infused with a fortitude from heaven.
When I have decked the sea with drops full salt,
Under my burden groaned, which raised in me
An undergoing stomach to bear up
Against what should ensue.

MIRANDA

How came we ashore?

PROSPERO

By providence divine.
Some food we had, and some fresh water, that
A noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo,
Out of his charity — who, being then appointed
Master of this design — did give us, with
Rich garments, linens, stuffs and necessaries,
Which since have steaded much; so of his gentleness,
Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me
From mine own library with volumes that
I prize above my dukedom.

MIRANDA

Would I might
But ever see that man!

PROSPERO

Now I arise,
Sit still and hear the last of our sea-sorrow.
Here in this island we arrived, and here
Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit
Than other princes can that have more time
For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful.

MIRANDA

Heavens thank you for't. And now I pray you, sir,
For still 'tis beating in my mind, your reason
For raising this sea-storm?

PROSPERO

Know thus far forth:
By accident most strange, bountiful fortune
(Now, my dear lady) hath mine enemies
Brought to this shore; and by my prescience
I find my zenith doth depend upon
A most auspicious star, whose influence
If I now court not, but omit, my fortunes
Will ever after droop. Here cease more questions,
Thou art inclined to sleep; 'tis a good dullness,
And give it way. I know thou canst not choose.

- **cell** - isolated place
- **my art** - his magic staff (see below)
- **art** - magic
- **not so much... any creature** - not so much as a hair was harmed
- **ope** - open
- **rather like... warrants** - more like a dream than a solid memory
- **ought** - anything
- **help** - helped
- **perfidious** - treacherous
- **signories** - ranks
- **liberal arts** - study in many subjects
- **rap't** - completely focused
- **false** - in this case: two-faced
- **perfected** - expert
- **creatures** - in this case, he's talking about laws
- **verdure** - freshness, fitness
- **sans** - without
- **prerogative** - the special powers given to people in leadership positions
- **confederates** - allies himself with
- **ignoble** - the opposite of "noble"
- **extirpate** - pull up by the roots
- **impertinent** - inappropriate
- **durst not** - did not dare to
- **bark** - a sailboat
- **butt** - a large barrel (in this case, it's slang for a very small, cheap boat)
- **cherubim** - angel
- **providence** - fate
- **steaded** - been of use
- **prescience** - foresight, ability to see the future
- **zenith** - the highest part of an arc (in this case: the high point of his life)
- **auspicious** - fortunate



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You can respond to these in any way you choose:

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Write

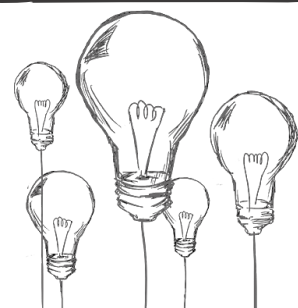
ACT IT OUT

Talk about it

Draw

THINK ABOUT IT

... up to you!



Miranda says she has often asked Prospero to tell the full story of how they got to this stupid island, and he would start to tell her but then stop.

So: Why does Prospero want to tell her all of this stuff NOW? (Hint: Some of the answer is in the text, but some of it is up to you, the actor or director or designer or whatever!)


Prospero practices magic—he calls it "my art." We know he learned it from books, and that he uses a staff with magical powers. But other than that, who knows?

What do you think? In the world of the play, could anyone learn magic with the right books and enough practice? Or would they need to be a certain type of person? Is the magic "in" Prospero beforehand, or did he "get" the magic through learning?

BONUS: How does this magic work? Does he cast spells? Or conjure things up? Does he have to say anything, or move the staff around? Is the magic coming from him, or is it something in the world around him that he controls? (There's nothing in the text about this, so let your imagination run wild!)

This scene is a lot of *talking*. Blah, blah, blah, blah.
BORING!

How would you make it interesting on stage?
Or how would you make it work in a movie?
What would it sound like in TEMPEST: THE MUSICAL?
Could it be an opera? A rock opera? A rap opera?
What would it look like in a comic book... or a novel... or, like, a hip-hoppin', tap-dancin' ballet extravaganza?



How does Prospero dress?





(And what does that staff look like??)

Shakespeare's plays are pretty dude-heavy—there are a lot of male characters. So directors will often turn male characters into female characters to balance the plays. (This doesn't include having female actors play male characters, which also happens, but is a little different.)




In recent years, there have been major productions of *King Lear*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Hamlet* with the title characters reimagined as women. The Royal Shakespeare Company had a female Mercutio in *Romeo & Juliet*, and The National Theatre's production of *Twelfth Night* changed Malvolio to Malvolia, a woman.

But no character in Shakespeare has been given the gender-swap treatment as often as Prospero. (Often, but not always, the name is changed to Prospera, because Italian women's names always end in "a.") There's even a big-budget movie version of the play starring Helen Mirren as Prospera.

Does it change this scene to have a female Prospero (remember, she would be Miranda's mother). If so, how? Is it more interesting? Less interesting? The same?

If you were stranded on an island, how would you spend your time?
What would you do?
What would your island look like?
How big would it be?
What would grow there?

I PUT A SPELL ON YOU!


At the end of the scene, Miranda wants to know why Prospero caused the storm. Prospero doesn't give Miranda a straight answer, then he uses magic to make her go to sleep.
Why?

Prospero and Miranda have been stranded on this island for 12 years when the play begins.

How is that time different for the two of them? (We don't know Prospero's age, but he was a grown man when they were kicked out of Milan. Miranda was a "not out three years old." Now Prospero is middle-aged and Miranda is a 15-year-old.)

How would that time change each of them?
And, thinking about Prospero, how might 12 years of stewing about this betrayal change a person?

I would get the world's smallest island!



Is Prospero at all responsible for what happened in Milan twelve years ago? Look carefully at his story and see what you think.