

# Y8 The Tempest

## Why?

This unit focusses on the Shakespearean Comedy The Tempest and allows you to build on your prior knowledge of Shakespeare and his plays.

## Key Characters

<b>Prospero:</b> the play’s protagonist. He wields power over his enemies through magic and, having been usurped as Duke of Milan, now rules the island.
<b>Miranda:</b> Prospero’s 15-year-old daughter. Naïve, compassionate and loyal.
<b>Caliban:</b> an original inhabitant of the island who is enslaved by Prospero.
<b>Ariel:</b> an original inhabitant of the island who works for Prospero but wants his freedom.
<b>Alonso:</b> King of Naples who aided Antonio in usurping Prospero.
<b>Ferdinand:</b> son of Alonso and heir to the throne.
<b>Antonio:</b> Prospero’s brother. Power-hungry & foolish.
<b>Sebastian:</b> Alonso’s brother. Aggressive, cowardly and disloyal (like Antonio).
<b>Gonzalo:</b> An old, honest Lord. He helps Prospero & Miranda when Antonio sends them off in a leaky boat.

## Context

The play	The Tempest was written between 1610-1611.
The Renaissance	The Renaissance (French word for rebirth) is a cultural period in history that represented the search for knowledge and power. Prospero can be seen to be a ‘Renaissance man’ because he devotes himself to his books and explores a new land.
Colonisation	Shakespeare’s audiences would have been very interested in England’s effort to colonise distant lands. England was fast becoming a world power and Shakespeare explores the problematic relationship between coloniser and native people through Prospero and Caliban.

Key Concepts:

The Supernatural:

magic is at the heart of the Tempest and is the tool Prospero uses to cause the shipwreck. Magic is used for both good (Prospero) and evil (Prospero and Sycorax) and is shown to be a craft, much like writing a play.

Freedom and confinement:

Prospero is exiled and confined to the island. Here he enslaves Caliban and Ariel. Shakespeare raises important questions about slavery, power and freedom.

The Quest for Knowledge:

Shakespeare was writing at the height of the Renaissance movement, and Prospero’s ceaseless quest for knowledge in The Tempest personifies the ideals of the quintessential ‘Renaissance Man’

Men and Monsters:

Caliban is referred to both as a monster and as a man. Interestingly, the men in the play often behave in a more monstrous way than Caliban.

Justice, Forgiveness, and Repentance:

Prospero is usurped and attempts to seek justice by regaining power. However, his view of justice is somewhat subjective, as he sees no issue with enslaving Ariel in Caliban in order to achieve his goals. Regardless, he speaks of the need for and power of forgiveness.

<u>The Tempest – Vocabulary List</u>	
Word	Definition
Aggrieved	Feeling resentment at having been unfairly treated.
Civilised	Bring (a place or people) to a stage of social development considered to be more advanced.
Colonise	Taking full or partial political control by settling in another country.
Bigotry	unreasonable attachment to a belief or opinion in particular prejudice
Hierarchy	a ranking system according to importance/status
Imperious	Arrogant and domineering