

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

*The Tempest*

by William Shakespeare

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# *The Tempest*

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit the student should be able to:

1. discuss how the theme of repentance and forgiveness is developed in the play by
  - identifying which characters are repentant
  - citing incidents in the play which support the idea that forgiveness itself is what is important.
2. point out the significance of the title of the play.
3. understand the meaning of the words “providence” and “patience” as they apply to this play; point out which characters believe in providence.
4. discuss the Elizabethan belief that a man is predetermined at birth to be either a noble or a servant; point out how he uses prose for the servants and verse for nobles.
5. discuss the ways Shakespeare equates physical beauty with the nobility and emphasizes the idea that people are happiest when they accept their God-given place in society.
6. define vocabulary words using the context of the story.
7. identify examples of the comic elements in the play including slapstick comedy and the use of puns.
8. write a character sketch of Gonzalo noting his role as a mediator and loyal friend; point out the speeches that indicate his belief in providence.
9. discuss the scope of Prospero’s magical powers and the willingness of the Elizabethan audience to accept magic in the play.
10. comment on Ariel’s nature and mention these four points:
  - the various forms he can assume
  - his lack of emotions
  - his ability to summon other spirits
  - his desire to be free.
11. cite incidents in the story where Prospero exhibits God-like qualities (judging, punishing, and forgiving)

# *The Tempest*

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. At the conclusion of the play, which characters are repentant and which characters never ask for forgiveness?
2. Assume that the storm is a blessing in disguise. Who benefits from the storm and why?
3. Select two characters from the play who believe in providence. Cite incidents from the story to support your choices.
4. Why does Caliban, a servant, speak in verse? What other indicators, besides his occupation, identify Caliban as a low-class character?
5. Define the words “bark,” “butt of sack,” and “harpy.”
6. What are the differences between an aside and a soliloquy? Find an example of each in the play.
7. Point out examples of slapstick comedy in Act II Scene I.
8. List three ways Prospero uses his magical powers to control his enemies.
9. Some critics believe Prospero is too harsh on Ariel. Cite incidents from the play to support or refute this idea.
10. In what ways does Prospero exhibit God-like behavior toward Ferdinand, Antonio, and Sebastian? (God-like behavior includes judging, punishing, and forgiving.)
11. Define the character flaws that cost Prospero his dukedom. Do you believe he has overcome these flaws while living on the island? Cite incidents from the play to support your answer.
12. Compare the ways Caliban and Ariel each serve Prospero. Discuss their willingness to be his servant and his subsequent treatment of them.
13. What is the purpose of the many songs in the play?

# *The Tempest*

## Study Guide Student Copy

### ACT I, Scene I

*On a ship at sea; A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard.*

#### Vocabulary

**blasphemous** – verbally abusive; insulting to God

**cur** – a coward; an undesirable dog (this insult works in conjunction with Sebastian’s previous insult when he refers to the Boatswain as an “incharitable dog.”)

**furlongs** – measures of distance; a *furlong* is one-eighth of a mile

**insolent** – arrogant

**mar** – to damage; spoil

**pox** – a disease (usually smallpox)

**whoreson** – a son of a whore

1. This first scene is very short, but begins to establish the personalities of the characters. In what ways does Gonzalo try to calm the frightened nobles?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Define “providence” as it applies to the following quotation. What does this passage suggest to the audience about Gonzalo’s belief in providence?

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.

3. What do Sebastian’s and Antonio’s behavior toward the boatswain suggest to the audience about their personalities?

## ACT II, Scene I

*Another part of the island.*

### Vocabulary

**Beseech** – to ask

**contentious** – quarrelsome, combative

**cubit** – a measure of distance; it was originally determined by the length of a person's forearm, which resulted in varying measurements. A cubit usually measured between 18 and 22 inches.

**docks** – hardy weed-like herbs that were said to remedy the stings from the nettle plants

**doublet** – a jacket

**enmity** – hatred

**importuned** – begged, pleaded

**kibe** – a sore on the heel of a foot; chilblain

**mallows** – weeds; the roots excrete a type of ointment that also soothe the “nettle stings.”

**nettle-seed** – a type of plant with leaves that irritate the skin

**paragon** – a perfect example; perfection

**plantation** – the power to colonize

**prate** – to talk senselessly

**repose** – a rest, period of relaxation; sleep

**sloth** – laziness

**succession** – the ability to inherit property

**supplant** – to remove

1. Briefly identify the following characters and describe the relationships between the following pairs of characters:

Alonso and Sebastian

Prospero and Antonio

Adrian and Francisco

2. Find an example of a pun in the conversation between Gonzalo, Sebastian, and Alonso at the beginning of this scene.

ACT III, Scene I  
*Before Prospero's Cell.*

Vocabulary

**baseness** – low, common; not decent

**crabbed** – crabby, morose

**dower** – dowry; money or property given to the groom from the bride's family before marriage

**injunction** – an order, command

**invert** – to turn upside down

**odious** – repulsive

**precepts** – orders, instructions

**sinews** – ligaments, tendons

1. Fer.      ...This my mean task  
              Would be as heavy to me as odious, but  
              The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead,  
              And makes my labours pleasures.

What task is Ferdinand referring to in this quotation? Why does he take pleasure in his labor? In what way does this quotation support the fairy-tale atmosphere of this play?

2.      What does Ferdinand tell the audience about himself when he reveals his thoughts to them in this opening soliloquy?

3. Mir.      Alas, now, pray yo,  
              Work not so hard. I would the lightning had  
              Burnt up those logs that you are enjoind to pile!  
              Pray, set it down, and rest you. When this burns,  
              'Twill weep for having wearied you.

What literary term is used in the above quotation?

ACT IV, Scene I  
*Before Prospero's Cell*

Vocabulary

**abstemious** – sparing, restricted; stingy

**austerely** – sternly, severely

**betrimms** – covered with flowers

**bosky** – covered with thickets and shrubs

**broom-groves** – thickets filled with broom bushes (shrubs with yellow flowers)

**cleave** – to stick to; to be faithful to

**furzes** – thorny shrubs

**garners** – storage buildings for grain

**hogshead** – a large barrel

**infirmity** – weakness, frailty

**lass-lorn** – abandoned by the girl he pursued

**marred** – damaged, destroyed

**pionèd** – dug, excavated

**revels** – merrymaking

**saffron** – orange-yellow in color

**sanctimonious** – holy

**sedged** – referring to grass-like plants; reeds

**smote** – past tense of *smite*; to hit

**vetches** – pea-like plants

**vexations** – annoyances, irritations

**wetting** – “my becoming wet”

1. What punishment will Ferdinand receive if he takes Miranda's virginity before they are married?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. In the following quotation, Ariel rhymes each line. Why do you think Shakespeare wrote Ariel's speech in this unusual format?

Ari.     Before you can say, 'Come,' and 'go,'  
          And breathe twice, and cry, 'So, so,'  
          Each one, tripping on his toe  
          Will be here with mop and mow.  
          Do you love me, master? No?

ACT V, Scene I  
*Before Prospero's cell.*

Vocabulary

abjure – to give up

auspicious – good, favorable

penitent – feeling remorse

rapier – a sword

1. Pros. Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling  
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,  
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply  
Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?

What does this passage reveal about the spirit Ariel?

2. Some critics believe Prospero acts like a god to the other characters by understanding and evaluating their sins, imposing discipline on them, and, ultimately, pardoning them. What god-like behavior is expressed in the quotation in question 1? Do you agree or disagree with the critical opinion that Prospero has dealt with Alonso and Antonio the way a god deals with humans? Cite incidents from the play to support your answer.
3. In Prospero's soliloquy, he talks about his magic. List four ways Prospero has used his magic powers in the past.
4. Pros. You, brother mine, that entertain'd ambition,  
Expell'd remorse and nature; whom with Sebastian—  
Whose inward pinches therefore are most strong—  
Would here have kill'd your king; I do forgive thee,  
Unnatural though thou art.

One of the major themes of this play is the Christian idea of repentance and forgiveness. In what ways does this passage from the play support or refute this idea?