

The tempest: characters, theme, and personal opinion essay

[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



In his drama *The Tempest*, Shakespeare combines the supernatural dimension with real, when describing the details of the royal intrigues in the Kingdom of Naples. Dated back to the seventeenth century, the play depicts the power of compassion and forgiveness, showing that men of real integrity can overcome betrayal, raising through confinement to spiritual freedom. A brief analysis of the story's plot, theme, and discussion of the main characters convey the idea of personal liberation through mercy.

Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* is a story of the magical loss and restoration of the man's power, wherein actions develop in the unchronological order, simultaneously showing past and present events. According to Blair, Pettit and Page (2018), long before the present days, the ascendancy in Milan belonged to Prospero, a lawful ruler of the city. However, through corruption and deceit, Prospero's brother, Antonio, usurped the power and exiled his relative to the remote island, where he now lives in the company of Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban (Blair, Pettit and Page, 2018). Enslaved by the deposed ruler, Ariel, a magical spirit, and Caliban, a native of the island, have to serve Prospero, following his orders.

The present action begins with Antonio, a Duke of Milan, and Alonso, King of Naples, captured on a ship in a severe storm. As explained by Blair, Pettit and Page (2018), scared by the power of the tempest, the two men do not surmise that the squall can be caused by the magical intervention of Prospero and his mystical friend. Through supernatural powers and deception, the deposed ruler hopes to shipwreck the betrayers and take revenge, eventually regaining his title.

However, when Prospero's plans come to reality, the man unexpectedly decides to grant mercy to Antonio and Alonso in exchange for his dukedom (Blair, Pettit and Page, 2018). "Thou shalt be free /As mountain winds: but then exactly do/All points of my command" (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 92).

Realizing the power of forgiveness, the man returns to Milan and blesses the marriage of his daughter, Miranda, and Alonso's son, Prince Ferdinand (Blair, Pettit and Page, 2018). By restoring his lawful rule, Prospero defeats the evil, proving that love is stronger than hate, and forgiveness is stronger than revenge.

Relationships of the two brothers, Antonio and Prospero, lay in the core of Shakespeare's play. The author uses sharp contrast to emphasize the distinctions in their personalities. On the one hand, Antonio is depicted as a despicable, sordid traitor with little moral principles (Blair, Pettit and Page, 2018). Willing to sacrifice the well-being of his brother in exchange for the crown, he violently seizes power from his relative. "What thou shouldst be. /Th' occasion speaks thee, and/My strong imagination sees a crown/Dropping upon thy head" (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 118). Obsessed with the desire for power, Antonio persuades Sebastien to kill his brother, Alonso, following his example of the rule's expropriation (Blair, Pettit and Page, 2018). Though the man's intent never comes true, the situation demonstrates the extent of his infamy.

On the other hand, Shakespeare creates an image of Prospero, a noble and merciful ruler of Milan. Though, as stated by Blair, Pettit, and Page (2018), the duke sometimes appears delinquent to his duties, his order is lawful.

When deposed after Antonio's betrayal, the man attempts to take revenge over his brother, using magic, cruelty, and intimidation (Blair, Pettit and Page, 2018). " This thing of darkness I/ Acknowledge mine" (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 277). However, by the end of the play, he comes to the revelation that such methods confront his nature. Consequently, instead of torturing his affronters, the man grants them forgiveness, showing an example of kindness and compassion.

Apart from the reoccurring theme of forgiveness and compassion discussed at length earlier in the essay, Shakespeare conveys the topic of colonization in his work. As noted by Asif (2017), the historical context of the drama is linked to the active process of British colonization. Through relationships between Prospero and Caliban, the author condemns the unjustified inequality in conquerors' attitudes toward natives. Furthermore, Shakespeare takes a step forward, suggesting that colonization created a basis for slavery and racism. A vivid example of the statement above is Sebastian's comment regarding Alonso's permission for his daughter to marry an African (Asif, 2017). In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare thrives on explaining that native people should not be humiliated for their order of life and adherence to old traditions.

Another significant theme present in the drama is magic, illusion, and true identity. Tuglu (2016) suggested that Shakespeare's decision to incorporate supernatural powers in the play is intended at revealing characters' and the playwright's true selves. From one perspective, Prospero's magic and illusion help the audience to see the corrupt nature of Antonio and Sebastien.

Another interpretation concerns the fact that *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's last theatrical creation (Tuglu, 2016). Similar to the way Prospero sets his offenders free with magic, the playwright takes a final bow with the final lines of the epilogue, wherein he asks the audience to release him with their applause. "Let your indulgence set me free" (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 233). While some literary critics still argue about the relevance of this phrase to the end of Shakespeare's career, a clear connection can be seen between the writer's actions and the last words of Prospero.

For me, Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* serves as an eternal warning for humanity regarding the danger of power. Just like Antonio, who was ready to sacrifice his brother's life for the crown, thousands of people now put their pursuit for ascendancy before personal relationships. The play describes the horrific extent to which the illusion over dominance and mastery can extend, apprising the audience of this misapprehension. "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep" (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 63).

In other words, individuals who consistently seek power are compared with those dreaming, which symbolizes their misconceptions. Instead of finding actual value in human relationships, they fall for the superficiality of money and authority. Apart from the adherence to material things, the endeavor for power deprives people of their inborn qualities of humanity and compassion, creating a basis for discrimination. Similar to Prospero in *The Tempest*, who declared his supremacy over Caliban, those disillusioned with authority might feel superior to others.

Ultimately, the topic of forgiveness and humanity constitutes the central moral component of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. A brief overview of the play's plot and relationships between the main characters shows that an unhealthy obsession with power often deprives people of their inborn compassion and kindness. Instead of falling for the illusions of material assets, individuals should value human relationships, respecting other's ways of life and unique personalities.

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