

# Character analysis of prospero

Literature, William Shakespeare



Prospero, of course, is the play. He is the exiled duke of Milan and the father of Miranda, as well as a powerful magician ruler of a remote island. The play revolves around him. He has more lines than any other character. His presence is felt continuously, even in those scenes in which he does not appear personally. He is the manipulator of the action in the play. The sometimes-godlike character is well rounded and full of contradictions, making him a difficult character to evaluate. In his judging, punishing, forgiving, and in many other ways, he is godlike compare to the rest of the characters in the play. Thanks to Ariel, he is also knows everything as well. Like a god, he punishes the guilty, but with grace he shows mercy and gives second chances. After Caliban attempts to rape Miranda, Prospero does not get rid of him. If I were Prospero, I would have a severe monthly payment punishment-plan installed for Caliban. Near the end of the play, after Properso reveals the conspiracies of all those against him, there is no harsh punishment as one would imagine. He basically just demands repentance. Forgiveness is one of the themes in this play, and here Prospero demonstrates it. Even though Caliban conspires with Stephano and Trinculo to kill him, he refrains from punishing Caliban (" Go, sirrah, to my cell;/Take with you your companions. As you look/To have my pardon, trim it handsomely." 5. ii. 291-293). Prospero, however, also shows that he is not perfect, unlike a god. He makes the mistake of leaving the governing to his brother Antonio who then drove him out of Milan. Later, he lovingly educates the monster Caliban and gives him freedom. Caliban returns the kindness by trying to rape his daughter. Prospero makes the same mistake with both of them. He fails to keep them in their proper position. As a perfect ruler, this

would be his responsibility. Late in the fourth act, Prospero interrupts Ariel masque when he suddenly overcome with rage at the thought of Caliban's plot against him (" Go charge my goblins that they grind their joints/With dry convulsions, shorten up their sinews/With aged cramps, and more pinch-spotted make them/Than pard or cat o' mountain." 4. i. 259-262). This fury makes him a flesh-and-blood human being rather than a godlike figure. In that same scene, Prospero shows his human quality again when, for a while there, he is absentminded in forgetting the plot of Caliban against him. Is Prospero a tyrant? He controls and manipulates people in every scene with his magic. He is domineering and exploitative. He manipulates his own daughter and Ferdinand. He exploits Ariel and Caliban. He demonstrates his goodness by freeing Ariel and educating Caliban but at the same time, enslaving them under his service. Furthermore, he shows signs of being cruel and harsh. He responds to Ariel's impatience for freedom with threats (" If thou more murmur'st, I will rend an oak/And peg thee in his knotty entrails till/Thou hast howled away twelve winters." 1. ii. 294-296). He torments Caliban (" For this be sure tonight thou shalt have cramps,/Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up." 1. ii. 328-329). As mentioned earlier, at the end of the play, his punishment for Caliban was no punishment really. But however, it is kind of cruel how he toys with Alonso by leading him to think that his son is dead. In revealing Ferdinand being alive is godlike as well, it is like bringing him back from the dead. And even though it is obvious that he loves Miranda very much, there is something cruel about how he lets her think that he hates Ferdinand (" Speak not you for him: he's a traitor.—Come,/I'll manacle thy neck and feet together./Sea-water shalt thou drink; thy food

shall be/The fresh-brook mussels, withered roots, and husks/Wherein the acorn cradled.” 1. ii. 461-465). It nearly breaks her heart. And also, if Prospero is so godlike and fair, then why is he letting good old Gonzalo, who was kind to him and Miranda twelve years ago, suffer along with the rest during the play? You face a fundamental problem in trying to analyzing Prospero because of his inconsistency. As a ruler and a high figure, and with attitude, response, and even his tone toward others, and in dealing with Caliban and with his own evil brother, he is never a tyrant. He seeks just enough justice, while leaning on the side of mercy. He merely demonstrates the control of situations and people that any smart ruler would have been expected to demonstrate. This is not tyranny. There are many themes in this play, and one of them is transfiguration. That is when a character like Prospero undergoes transformation that, in acknowledging it, would help understand and accept his contradictories. At first he is a scholar of magic, then becomes vengeful in his attitude through supernatural means, and by the closing of the play he recognizes his limitations and learns forgiveness, and also transcends magic altogether. In the beginning he says “ my library/Was dukedom large enough” (1. ii. 109-110), but at the end he returns to Milan to resume his proper position as a leader of society. He is indeed a complex character.