

# The theme of good and evil in the tempest and heart of darkness

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



“ The battleline between good and evil runs through the heart of every man”  
– Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

In both the play “ The Tempest” by William Shakespeare and the novel “ Heart of Darkness” by Joseph Conrad, they mirror a variety of literary techniques utilized by the authors to dispute and encompass the issues of power and good and evil. On the other hand, there are also differences between both play and novel pertaining to the settings of the two and the supernatural and loss of restoration that’s only shown in “ The Tempest” and alienation that is only portrayed in “ Heart of Darkness”.

One of the similarities mirrored between the two pieces, is the good and evil displayed in characters from both novel and play. Shakespeare starts “ The Tempest” off by challenging the perspectives of the readers on the limitation of a person being entirely evil, or entirely good. In the play, Prospero is established as the main protagonist of “ The Tempest”. In “ The Tempest” Prospero’s good and bad are mainly paired together, making it difficult to truly identify Prospero as truly evil or good. “ 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”. Prospero’s magic is seen to be used for evil, yet it isn’t black magic and he is instead being cautious to insure that everyone on the ship is safe. Good and evil is also mirrored in the novel “ Heart of Darkness”, Conrad instills in the reader’s how corruptible the minds of people are and how vulnerable it can be to evil. He has the characters display both the good and evil side of themselves

starting off with Marlow. Marlow is the narrator of the novel, and gradually he demonstrates his good side by exhibiting sympathy for the Africans in chains. “ A slight clinking behind me made me turn my head. Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path...before I climbed the hill”. This portrays some goodness in Marlow’s heart because the sight of the slaves was something he couldn’t bare. Sadly, he also demonstrates the evil side of himself. “ Black shapes crouched... They were dying slowly... I didn’t want anymore loitering in the shade and I made haste to the situation”. Instead of helping them himself, he couldn’t bare the sight of them and left them in that state and doesn’t even tell the manager anything. Both characters have the capability of remaining good, but at times evil sidetracks them into becoming more evil in some ways.

Another similarity that “ The Tempest” and “ Heart of Darkness” share, is the role power plays in both novel and play. In “ The Tempest” there is a great desire for power. Prospero constantly misuses his magical powers for his ambitions and by doing so, he utilizes this to his advantage to excel in his social standing and his power makes him the leader of the enchanted island. Prospero also uses his power to have authority over Ariel pushing him to do things that he wouldn’t do himself if it was his choice, even though Ariel has a lot of power, Prospero having authority over him makes Ariel the most powerful thing he has control over. Due to Prospero stealing the land from Caliban and enslaving him on his very own island, it pushed him to retaliate and also seek for power. “ Remember first to possess his books for without them he’s but a sot”. While power made Prospero’s feelings had leave him,

Caliban also lost his dignity. In "Heart of Darkness" the audience can sense the obvious hatred Kurt has for the natives and their ways. "Exterminate all Brutes!". This portrays that if Kurt doesn't have the power to change the ways of the natives, the natives should be thrown out. Power had overtaken Kurt and Prospero and it became the main influence of their lives. Immense power, corrupts the mind and opposes a logical and reasonable mind.

A major difference between "The Tempest" and "Heart of Darkness" is the setting of the novel and play and the supernatural that only occurs in "The Tempest". In "Heart of Darkness" The play takes place in the Thames of London. On the other hand, "The Tempest" is set on an island in the Mediterranean. The world of the supernatural also is another difference, which is only depicted in "The Tempest". "It was a torment to lie upon the damned, which Sycorax Could not again undoes. It was mine art, when I arrived and heard thee, that made gape the pine and let thee out" the readers/ audience can coney from this text, that Prospero is aware of the powerful magic he holds and how strong it is to actually revoke Sycotax spell. This also portrays the significance of magic and how Prospero can use his magic for his own gain. One thing that's mainly shown in "Heart of Darkness" that does not occur much in "The Tempest" alienation and loneliness, especially with Kurt. Kurt puts himself in the position in inviting loneliness to his life because he was so carried away with the wealth of the ivory and the thought of natives worshipping him had him trapped in his own world. "Everything belonged to him but that was a trifle. The thing was to

know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own”.

In conclusion, both “ The Tempest” and “ Heart of Darkness” mirror the similarities of good and evil and power, portraying the fact that immense power corrupts the mind and opposes the a rational mind. Even both play and novel share similarities they do have there differences with the supernatural world of ‘ the Tempest” such as Prospero’s magic and the alienation and loneliness of Kurt and Marlow depicted the flaws in the Europeans imperialism and the corruption it beholds.