

# The role of caliban in the play "the tempest" by william shakespeare

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



Who is Caliban? In the play “ The Tempest” by William Shakespeare, Shakespeare portrays the character Caliban as a savage beast and a slave of the witch, Prospero. Caliban is the son of Sycorax, an evil witch who had passed away but once held control over the island now ruled by Prospero. After the death of Caliban’s mother, Sycorax, Caliban falls under the rule of Prospero and becomes one his servants. Through Prospero’s now ownership of the island, Prospero regards Caliban as a “ lesser being”. Prospero can be symbolized as the European powers who dominated African countries and their inhabitants back in the 1880’s. Caliban therefore, represents the African natives who were forcefully controlled by the Westerners. Shakespeare’s representation of Caliban, seems to be case of racial injustice and European dominance back in the 1800’s.

Relationship with Prospero: The relationship between Prospero and Caliban seems to be ironic. At first, Caliban and Prospero seem to have a good relationship, as it was Caliban who found Prospero and Miranda who were washed off shore and he showed them the island. In return, Prospero and Miranda taught Caliban how to speak their language. Caliban who was owned by the vicious and wicked witch, Sycorax, was freed by Prospero from Sycorax’s spell. Prospero then later took supreme control of the island and then enslaves Caliban and makes him to carry wood. This is a representation of the indigenous natives who could not escape the harsh brutality of their colonial masters. Often in the play, we hear Caliban making remarks against Prospero’s exploitation of the island and curses her for enslaving him and taking his island away from him.

Caliban's Revenge: Caliban seeks revenge when he meets two men named Trinculo and Stefano. Trinculo was a clown and Stefan an alcoholic butler to the King. Caliban takes these two men for gods and vows to serve them if they help him kill the evil Prospero who took over his island. Caliban's plot does not go as planned.

Caliban can be regarded as an embodiment of slavery on the island that Prospero now rules over. Caliban has been put in to slavery by Prospero as she says, " We'll visit Caliban, my slave – he does make our fire, fetch in our wood and services in offices that profit us." Again, " He is that Caliban, whom now I keep in service." Caliban represents slavery and the revolt against slavery in all its forms. Prospero at one time might have liked Caliban and treated him nicely, but in the final analysis, Caliban is his slave and Prospero herself makes no bones about calling him his slave without feeling embarrassed. The relationship between Caliban and Prospero is that of a slave and a slave-owner. Caliban's reluctance to carry out Prospero's commands shows a slave rebelling against the authority. Caliban, therefore, represents the oppressed and the indigenous slaves in an unequal world.