

Explore the roles of ariel and caliban in the tempest essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Tempest is a play written by William Shakespeare and is based on an event that actually happened in 1609. A great storm engulfed the flagship of nine ships that had set out to establish the colony of Virginia. This ship was driven against Bermuda and everyone mourned over the loss of 150 people.

However the colonists survived and the following year the ships reached Virginia. Rebellion occurred on the island just like in the play: Caliban: ' Having first seized his books, or with a logBatter his skull, or paunch him with a stake', This sub-plot of the play expresses Caliban's role in the Tempest of how he up sets the normal balance of power. Caliban tries to upset the ' master-slave' relationship he has with Prospero, as he believes the island was stolen from him. However by breaking his relationship with Prospero he creates a new one with Triculo, and hence is still a slave. The Tempest is a tragicomedy, because there is lots of potential for tragedy. This is important for the theme of master-servant relationships, as it shows the two different roles Caliban's character performs.

One is more serious, for example when Caliban is forced to do Prospero's work. While the other role between Trinculo and Caliban is more comical: their drunkenness is a parody of drowning and the shipwreck in the first scene. Caliban: ' I'll swear upon that bottle, to be they true subject, For the liquid is not earthly. Caliban declares to Trinculo that he his slave, as he wants to overthrow Prospero (the audience can relate to the sub-plot of the play to the Gunpowder plot). The Gunpowder plot was an attempt on James's 1st life (Prospero's life).

It was made to free the Catholics (Caliban) from the cruelty and new laws made against them. This showing that Shakespeare used Caliban to represent the slaves, the Catholics had become. Caliban's name is simply an anagram of 'cannibal', and although no characters in the Tempest link him to this, they think of him as being evil by nature and uncivilised: Prospero: 'Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself Upon thy wicked dam, come forth' Miranda: 'One thing or another, when thou didst not, savage,' This shows that Caliban was regarded as the lowest animal in the nature hierarchy that had god at the top and inanimate nature at the bottom. Caliban is kept under control by 'civilised people' as Prospero threatens Caliban with physical punishments: 'side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up'. However when Caliban tries to respond he is unable to due to he is drunk. The historical context of this is when colonists found a new land they gave the natives alcohol.

The alcohol affected the natives badly as they were unable to fight back. This tactic used by soldiers was very effective because it neutralised the enemy quickly. Caliban is intelligent, although he does not show it when he swaps one harsh master for a drunken one. Caliban maybe showed as a 'base' character but he appreciates beauty, and hence is given by Shakespeare some of the best lines in the play: Caliban: 'Sometimes a thousand twanging instruments Will hum about...

.... I cried to dream again' This oral imagery is a 'dream like' and shows us that Caliban has changed during the course of the play. I noticed the speech is very dream like by the fact there is 11 syllables instead of the usual number.

<https://assignbuster.com/explore-the-roles-of-ariel-and-caliban-in-the-tempest-essay/>

I believe Caliban has changed over the play as at the beginning we regarded him as evil because he raped Miranda, but if you compare this to Act 4 Scene 1 we portray Caliban more sympathetically. Ariel's main role in the Tempest is to be a slave to Prospero and although Caliban upsets power of his own accord, Ariel is forced to: Prospero: 'Thou my slave, as thou report'st thyself' Ariel feels obliged to work for Prospero, as he set her free from the imprisonment the witch Sycorax forced on her. Ariel is different from Caliban, as she has no choice when she is freed. However Ariel yearns for freedom but is kept in line by Prospero: Prospero: 'dost thou forget From what a torment I did free thee' Prospero uses his influence over Ariel to make her perform near impossible feats like when she created the tempest. Therefore Ariel serves an important structure role as the whole plot revolves around magic. However Ariel has influence over Prospero as she encourages him to be lenient: Ariel: 'if you now beheld them, your affections Would become tender' This moral role that Ariel performs shows us that she encourages the process of forgiveness.

Throughout the play we are told Ariel is not human, but she shows human emotion as she is moved by the plight of the royal family. Ariel's key role is to provide music and her melodies are heard throughout the island: 'Enter Ariel, invisible, playing solemn music' These songs are heard all over the island and can control the actions of the characters. For example Ariel uses her magic to put Alonso to sleep as to incriminate Antonio and Sebastian, as they reveal their true nature. Music is also therapeutic and helps the healing process. Ariel uses music to express her spontaneous joy which shows how child like she is.

Although Ariel's nature does excite the audience admiration and her music gives pleasure, I believe she is not full of depth like Caliban as he changes she does not. Ariel role in the play is to work for Prospero and she does this with her magical powers of changing shape: Prospero: ' go make thyself like a nymph o' the sea' In Shakespeare's time everyone knew most of the ancient myths and so Shakespeare includes these in his plays. In Greek myths nymphs were the personification of various nature objects like rivers trees or lakes. This shows the supernatural powers that Ariel has as she uses it when Prospero asks. Ariel and Caliban are similar yet contrasting characters.

Shakespeare uses them together to reinforce the theme of master servant relationship to the audience. While Caliban is used alone to explore the theme of colonialism. Ariel's role in the play maybe less significant compared to Caliban's, but she is still vital as she performs all tasks magical. Caliban's role throughout the play varies, as he is a victim a savage a servant a contrast and a noble savage. Caliban is shown as a victim as he is forced into slavery when a ruthless exploiter takes over Caliban's island, but he is a savage due to his violent and vindictive nature when he plots against Prospero.

Caliban is a slave as he exchanges one master for another and wants to serve as a foot licker. Unlike Ariel, Caliban's role is to act as a contrast to other characters, as he has natural violence when he plots against Prospero while Antonio shows civilised evil as he tries to kill the King. Caliban's role as a noble savage shows us he loves the island, and his language tells us the most haunting poetry in the play. Ariel's roles are to provide prospero with <https://assignbuster.com/explore-the-roles-of-ariel-and-caliban-in-the-tempest-essay/>

magical powers but I believe she also teaches him compassion and this hence allows him to forgive his enemies. The characters Caliban and Ariel can be viewed in many ways and hence their roles are too profound to be understood properly by just reading the Tempest.