

Conflict the wonder of  
getting lost in



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Conflict is a crucial element in the process of self-discovery, as it is times of struggle that catalyse a reassessment of personal paradigms. William Shakespeare's last play 'The Tempest' (1610), canvasses the consequences of shaping our understanding of how our flaws incite a willingness to change. Prospero, the usurped Duke of Milan, shows this to be true, moving from a mindset focused on vengeance to a profound discovery of compassion. Similarly, in Viktor Frankl's Holocaust memoir 'Man's Search for Meaning' (1946), fulfillment with discovering how we find meaning and cope through unrelenting struggle is illustrated. Frankl's two distinctive writing styles guides us to recognise the innate need to find purpose and overcome obstacles leading to doorway of self-transcendence. Thus, composers shape our understanding of the process as well as the experience of discovery. An obsession with power and control can limit the ability to discover our potential.

Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' uses the distinctive characterisation of main protagonist Prospero as a vengeful exile revealing how twelve years of harbouring bitterness causes imbalance of one's self. Shakespeare's pathetic fallacy "a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard" mirrors the immense power of Prospero's magic as well as his inner turmoil which he desires to inflict on others. Thus, Shakespeare's distinctive metatheatrical device of the storm positions the audience to experience the conflict that catalyses his discovery process.

Moreover, Prospero's reflective tone in Act 1 when relaying to Miranda his neglect of Milan, "and to my state grew stranger, being transported and rapt in secret studies.... neglecting of worldly ends all dedicated to closeness"

connotes his loss of control of real political power preferring “ closeness” of spiritual knowledge. The Renaissance was an era of change- individuals moved away from restrictive ideas of the Catholic church, questioning the nature of God and started to pursue occult lore. The outbreak Bubonic plague had a catastrophic effect on human life and the Catholic church in turn extensively blamed magic leading to many persecutions. Shakespeare sets a tone for the beginning play capturing a cultural anxiety about magic: the wonder of getting lost in “ secret studies.” Thus, Prospero’s inner conflict that is established from the outset invites us to rediscover Renaissance paradigmatic paradoxes and how they underscored the universal human need to see and recover control.

Through Prospero’s journey from virtue to vengeance, we discover the need to seek intrinsic rather than extrinsic power.