

# Prospero in "the tempest" by william shakespeare

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



Prospero (the rightful Duke of Milan) is the protagonist of *The Tempest*, William Shakespeare's final written play. Finding himself deserted on an island with his daughter Miranda after being betrayed by his own brother for power, Prospero ends up having twelve years of built up anger and revenge to dish out on those who have wronged him.

From early on the readers see how Prospero's use of magical powers from his spell books almost guarantee his authority on the island. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare depicts Prospero as like a controlling puppet master whose desire to manipulate everyone and everything around him is shown consistently, with the use of magic.

Prospero's motivation is fueled by two main things. According to R. D Gooder, "The first is Prospero's ambition to marry his daughter to the right sort of person; the second is his desire to be revenged upon his enemies" (4). From early on readers can see the protective nature that Prospero has for Miranda. He shelters her from knowledge about their past until the boat carrying his betrayers arrive. Prospero says to Miranda, "The hour's now come.

Obey and be attentive, the very minute bids thee open thine ear"

(Shakespeare 1. 2. 46-48). Prospero is finally about to tell Miranda how and why they ended up on the island. This scene lets the readers sympathize with his selfishness, shows the justification of his reasonings for using his spirit Ariel to stir up *The Tempest* (storm), and why he brings his betrayers on land. Prospero's love for his daughter motivates him to make sure that she ends up with the right type of person.

This should portray him as being a caring father at this point but his motivation for revenge shows the audience his bluff. The play slowly reveals that " the true internal necessity for his opposition being feigned lies in his double nature" (Snider 197). Miranda meeting and eventually marrying Ferdinand, who is the prince of Naples, isn't by chance. Prospero uses his magic and hold over Ariel to help them meet. This is just another little piece in Prospero's real agenda to get revenge and his eventually dukedom back.

Prospero is like a two-faced person; on the outside he seems like a dad wanting what is best for his daughter, but his real motives are what helps benefit him in the end. The relationships between Prospero and the people on the island seem different but he uses magic to manipulate every single person in some way shape or form. At first the readers catch a glimpse of the relationship between him and his brother.

Antonio takes advantage of Prospero being so into the studying of his magic and books, " While Prospero's nose was buried in his extensive library, his snaky brother manages to steal his title and gets him thrown out of Italy" (Shmoop Editorial Team). So, going forward from this, the audience can somewhat relate to why he acts the way he does. He uses Ariel as he pleases; it is always either him or Prospero manipulating every moment of everyone on the island.

No one on this island is truly free; Prospero uses his magic to ensure that. Prospero also uses Ariel to spy on Caliban, who is described as a fish like man and a servant to Prospero. Caliban encounters Trinculo and Stephano,

who are a Lester and a drunken butler. Caliban begs them to let him be their servant, saying " Ill show thee every fertile inch o' th' island, and I will kiss thy foot. I prithee, be my god" (Shakespeare 2. 2. 154-155).

Caliban eventually talks them into killing Prospero, all while Ariel is listening. Betrayal for power is a big theme in Shakespeare's The Tempest. First with Alonso and his pupils and now his servant Caliban. The way he puts them all through hell associates with the justice and revenge themes also plotted throughout the play. Illusion vs reality is also a big theme carried out by Prospero throughout this play. The whole time everyone is on the island, they are in an altered state of reality, tailored specifically to how he sees fit.

The way this is used throughout the play forces both the characters and readers to wonder if something is real or the result of Prospero or Ariel's doing. The audience can see it being used on his daughter Miranda, when he asks her to remember about her past and she says " tis far off, and rather like a dream than an assurance that my remembrance warrants" (Shakespeare 1. 2. 56-58).

She is telling the audience that her memory of her life up to this point seems like a dream, with only Prospero's illusions using magic to blame. Prospero stands for Prospero is portrayed to be a certain stereotypical character, the forceful, controlling, protective one. This is seen time and time again in the play. On the island Prospero and Miranda live among of his now servant Caliban, the son of a witch that was on the island before they arrive.

Prospero takes the island from him, which is another way he shows the audience how controlling he is. At first, they live together nicely, and Miranda and Prospero even teach Caliban how to speak their language. The way they treat Caliban abruptly stops when Prospero catches Caliban trying to rape his daughter. Prospero says " Filth as thou art, with human care, and lodged thee in mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate the honor of my child (Shakespeare 1. 2. 415-418).

Caliban becomes Prospero's servant from this point on. Prospero's stereotype is however, crafted to be broken. The way he changes throughout the play from how he is and becomes this forgiving, almost new person, makes for a very intriguing character. This also puts Prospero into the Round character category. Round characters are complex and develop through their stories, sometimes adequately to shock the readers.

Prospero does end up surprising the audience in The Tempest in the last act of the play. Although Prospero remains the same self-centered, controlling man throughout the entire play, he changes from an unsympathetic character into a sympathetic one. He makes his servant Ariel to do much of the dirty work for him. He doesn't care about his enemies and puts them through a lot while he sits back and watches. This is seen almost immediately in the beginning of the play as Prospero has Ariel disperse his brother Antonio, the king of Naples Alonso and his son Ferdinand, and everyone else that is on the boat onto different places on the island.

Watching them scramble around, he is getting pleasure out of their disarray. All these things show Prospero's superiority complex for control. According to the Shmoop webpage, " in Prospero, Shakespeare creates a figure who decides to forgive his enemies even though they betray him in the worst possible ways" (Shmoop Editorial Team). This is where he changes into a sympathetic character, surprising the audience by forgiving all his betrayers.