

Caliban from a different mirror essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Caliban in "The Tempest" was the son of Sycorax, and his character is a symbolic representation of indigenous or "savage" people. His character represents the stereotypes of indigenous or uncivilized people and a direct contradiction of his more "civilized" counterparts, most specifically Prospero who is seen as his conqueror or master, and how he is below that of Prospero and therefore the indigenous people of the Americas were below that of the European colonists. This can also be seen as a reflection of William Shakespeare's view of colonizing North America and what was imagined the American indigenous people were like.

Caliban being both the son of Sycorax and the devil, also seen as the product of nature, is very representative of how European people at the time viewed the natives in the Americas and his treatment foreshadows the brutal interactions between colonists and the American natives. As we see in Prospero's view his impression of him is that of distaste as he calls Caliban "not honored with human shape (I. i. 17)". This can be interpreted as Prospero seeing Caliban as not having "human shape" due to his clothing, skin color and earthly look which automatically positions him below that of Prospero and Miranda. It can also be seen as possibly a first impression of a colonialists and how they would see natives in the Americas as inferior due to their lack of clothing and cleanliness.

This initial view of Caliban can also be seen to represent the "De-evolution" or "dehumanization" of natives and of what was seen at the time in the African people, as referenced by Takaki in his analyzation of the play where Shakespeare depicted him as a "barbarian" and "savage incapable of nurture (I. ii. 37)". Using this as not only a description of Caliban's nature but

also as justification for the treatment of not only him but also referencing a justification for the mistreatment of indigenous people in Africa and the future mistreatment of the American natives. Overall Caliban's character is a crude and overly exaggerated of a common stereotypical description of that of already enslaved individuals and biased assumption of other indigenous people that would be found in the Americas throughout the play.

In the play Shakespeare's imagery and how he represents Caliban can be seen as a direct foreshadowing of the experience European colonists' interactions and future treatment of American natives. Caliban's being seen as inferior as clearly stated in many instances in the play including Miranda describing him as having "vile race, / Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures / Could not abide to be with" (I. ii. 361-363). This referring to her and Prospero teaching him and how their teachings could possibly drive out the "devilish" side of him with their "nurturing" of his intelligence. They see him as an inferior monster of which they can change with their imposition of their teaching him to be more "British". We can also take Caliban being the only previously colonized person before that of Prospero and how he is viewed as a skewed vision of how maybe a small group of natives or what has already been previously seen in previously enslaved indigenous peoples as representative in European colonists' eyes of all native people and therefore automatically assuming they are of low intelligence and below that of "civilized" colonists.

Also interpretation of actions by Caliban did a number on his treatment, where he felt he was kind to Prospero which in turn was repaid by Prospero "imprisoning him" (I. ii. 347) and Prospero would beg to differ claiming his

mistreatment was due to Caliban trying to rape Miranda (I. ii. 347-351). This misinformation dealt greatly on the treatment of Caliban and further did a number to skew the view placed upon him which was already dehumanizing and degrading. Also using this as justification to treating Caliban badly Prospero felt he did nothing wrong, as Europeans felt the need to provide skewed explanations for their mistreatment of enslaved African natives and furthering the conclusion that the same would be done to American natives during the colonization of North America. These examples and Takaki's explanation of how the judgement of natives in early settlers as "lacking everything identifiable in civilized society" can be seen as both foreshadow of future settlers in the Americas and the treatment of the natives in North America.

Due to the European bias of natives whether it be African, North American or in Shakespeare one can infer that there is a stereotypical view that because natives lack the same education, understanding and culturalization of that of "civilized" society it has lead to mistreatment to people who may have even tried to be peaceful with them. Whether from Shakespeare or Ronald Takaki we can see that "civilized" people lack the sense of compassion that is require in interacting with natives and how the play foreshadowed the further abuse of Europeans on indigenous people during colonization.