The Tempest

by William Shakespeare

directed by Kate Whoriskey

March 22 — May 22, 2005
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Welcome to The Shakespeare Theatre’s production of The Tempest by William Shakespeare!

Each season, The Shakespeare Theatre presents five plays by William Shakespeare and other classic playwrights. The Education Department continues to work to deepen understanding, appreciation and connection to these plays and classic theatre in learners of all ages. One approach is the publication of First Folio: Teacher Curriculum Guides.

In the 2004-05 season, the Education Department will publish First Folio: Teacher Curriculum Guides for our productions of Macbeth, Pericles and The Tempest. The Guides provide information and activities to help students form a personal connection to the play before attending the production at The Shakespeare Theatre. First Folio guides are full of material about the playwrights, their world and the plays they penned. Also included are approaches to explore the plays and productions in the classroom before and after the performance. First Folio is designed as a resource both for teachers and students.

The Shakespeare Theatre’s Education Department provides an array of School, Community, Training and Audience Enrichment programs. A full listing of our programs is available on our website at www.shakespearetheatre.org/edu.html or in our Education Programs Brochure. If you would like more information on how you can participate in other Shakespeare Theatre programs, please call the Education Hotline at 202.547.5688.

Enjoy the show!

Note: Throughout the articles in the Folio, key words or phrases will be underlined to highlight important ideas and concepts. Definitions can be found in the margins. Please review these key words with your students.
A Brief History of the Audience

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged. —Peter Brook, The Empty Space

The nature of the audience has changed throughout history, evolving from a participatory crowd to a group of people sitting behind an imaginary line, silently observing the performers. The audience is continually growing and changing. There has always been a need for human beings to communicate their wants, needs, perceptions and disagreements to others. This need to communicate is the foundation of art and the foundation of theatre’s relationship to its audience.

In the Beginning
Theatre began as ritual, with tribal dances and festivals celebrating the harvest, marriages, gods, war and basically any other event that warranted a party. People all over the world congregated in villages. It was a participatory kind of theatre, the performers would be joined by the villagers who believed that their lives depended on a successful celebration—the harvest had to be plentiful or the battle victorious, or simply to be in good graces with their god or gods. Sometimes these festivals would last for days and the village proved tireless in their ability to celebrate. Many of these types of festivals survive today in the folk history of areas such as Scandinavia, Asia, Greece and other countries throughout Europe.

It’s Greek to Me
The first recorded plays come from the Greeks (fourth and fifth centuries BCE). Their form of theatre began in much the same way as previous forms did. It stemmed from the celebration of the wine harvest and the gods who brought citizens a fruitful harvest—specifically Dionysus, the god of wine. Spectators had a great deal of respect for their gods, and thousands would flock to the theatre to experience a full day of celebration. The day of drama and song made for a lively crowd. Staff-bearers patrolled the aisles to keep the rowdies under control. While theatre was free, your seat was determined by your station in life. The rich had cushioned seats at the front, while the peasants, artisans and women were forced to take seats at the back. In the later years, after a full day of drink, Greek audiences were not above showing disapproval at a less-than-spectacular performance. Stones were thrown, as well as other sloppy objects, hissing was popular and loud groanings of discontent could usher any actor into early retirement.

The Romans, or the inspiration for Gladiator
The Romans took the idea of “spectator” an inch or so further. Their theatre (first through third centuries BCE) developed in much the same way as the Greeks; with comedy, tragedy and festivals, but unfortunately ended with what the Christians called “morally inappropriate” dancing mimes, violent spectator sports such as gladiator fights, and the public executions for which the Romans were famous. The Romans loved violence, and the audience was a lively crowd. Because theatre was free, it was enjoyed by people of every social class. They were vocal, enjoyed hissing bad actors off the stage, and loved to watch criminals meet large ferocious animals, and soon after, enjoyed watching those same criminals meet their death.

The Far East
In Asia, theatre developed in much the same way it has elsewhere, through agricultural festivals and religious worship. The Chinese and Japanese audiences have always been tireless, mainly because their theatre forms, such as the Japanese “Kabuki” and “Noh” plays and Chinese operas, could last anywhere between a full day, if not three days, beginning between six to nine in the morning! In China, the audience was separated; the higher classes sat closer to the action of the play, and the lower classes, generally a louder, more talkative bunch, would be placed in stalls at the back. The audience expected a superior performance, and if it lacked in any way, the audience could stop the production and insist on a different presentation. In Japan, theatre began with all-day rice festivals and temple plays sponsored by priests. These evolved into “street performances” where the performers led the audience on a trip through the village. In theatre houses, the upper classes sat in constructed boxes, and women in disguise (it was not considered proper for a respectable woman to be seen at the theatre) and lower classes would stand below with the “inspector” standing on a high platform in the middle, keeping a strict eye on everyone.

A Couple of Hundred Years Without Art
Tolerance took a holiday during the period of European history known as the Dark Ages. During this time period culture of all kind went on hiatus—most especially that frivolous, godless display of lewd and licentious behavior known as theatre. Fortunately it
the audience could see each other better, not the often right on stage! The house lights were up full so hallway of boxes. The best seats in the house were the almost entirely upper class audience, the purpose during Shakespeare’s era—the Elizabethan period—theatre companies were awarded status and privilege based on patronage from wealthy landholders or the royal family. With patronage came money so the companies began building theatres. The theatre of Shakespeare’s day was attended by all, was inexpensive, and was known to be an incredibly good time. Surrounding the stage was the lower “pit” where the “groundlings” (or lower classes) congregated and above, octagonally surrounding the pit, were the stalls reserved for the upper classes. If you were stationed in the pit, it was not uncommon to have a goblet of wine dumped on your head—or to be drooled or spat upon by the “more civilized” people above you. Elizabethan audiences did not know what it meant to be quiet for a performance and would talk back to the actors. Thought to be involved in spreading the “black plague,” the good time abruptly ended with the closing of the theatres in 1592.

**Look at me, look at me...**
During the Restoration, theatre became a luxury. For the almost entirely upper class audience, the purpose of going to the theatre was “to see, and to be seen.” The stage was a rectangular area between a long hallway of boxes. The best seats in the house were often right on stage! The house lights were up full so the audience could see each other better, not the action on stage. The theatre of the Restoration consisted mainly of light, fluffy comedies performed in an oratory style—actors posing, wearing BIG costumes and practically screaming over the din of the audience. Theatre companies still existed on the patronage of the very wealthy and often performed plays exclusively in the salons of the rich, famous and powerful. A few hundred years later, opera composer Richard Wagner figured out that to focus the audience’s attention away from themselves and onto the stage, the lights needed to be off—forcing the audience to watch the performance. Since that time the audience has taken its cue that the performance is about to begin from the lights overhead beginning to dim. This small adjustment in lighting effectively erected a permanent barrier between the action onstage and the audience.

**Freud...Tell Me About Your Mother**
While dimming the house lights has drastically changed the overall aesthetic of theatre, another modern movement has had even greater impact on theatre in the 20th century. Psycho-analysis—Id, ego, super-ego and subconscious desires—made theatre more introspective in its search for truth. As theatre became more psychological, more a representation of real life, the audience felt as if they were eavesdropping. Twentieth century theatre workers spend a great deal of time and thought pondering the psychological motivations of characters. There is now an imaginary wall, called the “fourth wall,” separating the performers and the audience. It affects how we view the performance and how actors portray characters—we can observe the people onstage as they relate their problems, fears and desires without them noticing us at all.

**Now the Options are Endless**
Today, for the audience, just about anything goes. History has shared with us many types of theatre and we, the spectators, bring our own experiences and histories to the event, causing us to react differently to different productions. Unlike movies or television, the actor-audience relationship is a “live” relationship: each is in the other’s presence, in the same place at the same time. It is the exchange between the two that gives theatre its unique quality. As audience members we have an obligation to be attentive, allowing the performers to fulfill their obligation—to entertain and enlighten us. There is always a dialogue between audience and performer, whether visual or vocal. All individuals participating in the theatrical event, whether as audience or performer, bring to it a personal background and experience that becomes vital to their response to the interaction. In the same way, participants leave the performance enriched both by their own individual experience and that of the larger community to which they belong for a brief moment within the confines of the theatre walls. We must listen to capture and understand what the performers are trying to communicate, and at the same time, they must listen to us.
No man’s life has been the subject of more speculation than William Shakespeare’s. For all his fame and celebration, Shakespeare’s personal history remains a mystery. There are two primary sources for information on the Bard—his works, and various legal and church documents that have survived from Elizabethan times. Unfortunately, there are many gaps in this information and much room for conjecture.

We know a man named William Shakespeare was baptized at Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564, and was buried at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford on April 25, 1616. Tradition holds that he was born three days earlier, and that he died on his birthday—April 23—but this is perhaps more romantic myth than fact. Young William was born of John Shakespeare, a glover and leather merchant, and Mary Arden, a landed heiress. William, according to the church register, was the third of eight children in the Shakespeare household, three of whom died in childhood. We assume that Shakespeare went to grammar school, since his father was first a member of the Stratford Council and later high bailiff (the equivalent of town mayor). A grammar school education would have meant that Shakespeare was exposed to the rudiments of Latin rhetoric, logic and literature.

In 1575, John Shakespeare suddenly disappears from Stratford’s political records. Some believe that his removal from office necessitated his son’s quitting school and taking a position as a butcher’s apprentice. Church records tell us that banns (announcements) were published for the marriage of a William Shakespeare to an Ann Whatley in 1582 (there are no records indicating that this arrangement was solemnized, however). On November 27 of the same year a marriage license was granted to 18-year-old William and 26-year-old Anne Hathaway. A daughter, Susanna, was born to the couple six months later. We know that twins, Hamnet and Judith, were born soon after and that the twins were baptized. We also know that Hamnet died in childhood at the age of 11, on August 11, 1596. We don’t know how the young Shakespeare came to travel to London or how he first came to the stage. One theory holds that young Will was arrested as a poacher (one who hunts illegally on someone else’s property) and escaped to London to avoid prosecution in Stratford. Another holds that he left home to work in the city as a school teacher. Neither is corroborated by contemporary testimony or public record. Whatever the truth may be, it is clear that in the years between 1582 and 1592, William Shakespeare did become involved in the London theatre scene as a principal actor and playwright with one of several repertory companies.

By 1594, Shakespeare was listed as a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, one of the most popular acting companies in London. He was a member of this company for the rest of his career, which lasted until approximately 1611. When James I came to the throne in 1603, he issued a royal license to Shakespeare and his fellow players, inviting them to call themselves the King’s Men. In 1608, the King’s Men leased the Blackfriar’s Theatre in London. This theatre, which had artificial lighting and was probably heated, served as their winter playhouse. The famous Globe Theatre was their summer performance space.

In 1616 Shakespeare’s daughter Judith married Thomas Quiney, the son of a neighbor in Stratford. Her father revised his will six weeks later; within a month he had died. The revised version of William Shakespeare’s will bequeathed his house and all the goods therein to his daughter and her new husband; his wife, who survived him, received the couple’s second best bed.

In the years since Shakespeare’s death, he has risen to the position of patron saint of English literature and drama. In the 1800s especially, his plays were so popular that many refused to believe that an actor from Stratford had written them. To this day some believe that Sir Francis Bacon was the real author of the plays; others choose to believe Edward DeVere, the Earl of Oxford, was the author. Still others would prefer to believe Walter Raleigh or Christopher Marlowe penned the lines attributed to Shakespeare. While most people are content to believe that genius can spring up in any social class or rural setting, the gap between the known facts and the myths that surround Shakespeare’s life leaves ample room for speculation.
The age of Shakespeare was a great time in English history. During the reign of Elizabeth I (1558—1603), England emerged as the leading naval and commercial power of the Western world, consolidating this position with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Elizabeth I firmly established the Church of England (begun by her father Henry VIII after a dispute with the Pope) during this time. London in the 16th century underwent a dramatic transformation; the population grew 400% between 1500 and 1600, swelling to nearly 200,000 people in the city proper and outlying region by the time an emerging artist from Stratford came to town. A rising merchant middle class was carving out a productive livelihood, and the economy was booming.

During Shakespeare’s lifetime, England also experienced a tremendous cultural revival. This so-called English Renaissance found expression in architecture, music, literature and drama. Shakespeare both drew inspiration from and enhanced high and popular culture of the English Renaissance. Popular entertainment during the 16th century tended to be boisterous and often violent. Many men, women and children attended public executions of criminals that took place on a regular basis, and persons of all social classes and genders attended theatre performances. The trade of book-making flourished during the period as public education fueled the appetite for great works in print.

During the years 1590-1593, England suffered from an outbreak of terrible proportions; the bubonic plague or “Black Death” claimed so many lives that English society stood on the verge of collapse. Many businesses, including theatres, closed, in part to keep people from spreading the disease and in part because of the labor shortage that resulted from such widespread illness and death. Once the epidemic subsided, the theatres re-opened and quickly regained their former popularity.

This explosion of commerce and culture lasted throughout Elizabeth’s reign and into that of her successor, James I. James’ rule brought many changes to English life; the two most pivotal were a bankrupt economy and an intense dissatisfaction from a minority religious group—the Puritans. In September 1642, the Puritan Parliament issued an edict that forbade all stage plays and closed the theatres; an act that effectively brought to a close the Elizabethan Renaissance. Theatres rapidly fell into disrepair and neglect until the Restoration in 1660.

In writing his plays and sonnets, William Shakespeare drew ideas from many different sources. His keen eye for detail and his sharp understanding of human nature enabled him to create some of the most enduring works of drama and poetry ever produced. But his work also provides an insightful commentary on 16th-century English values, life, history and thought.
The “Dewitt” sketch of the Swan Theatre is thought to be the only contemporary visual account of an Elizabethan playhouse.

Plays are also categorized in the First Folio as Histories, done so because these works chronicled the lives of English Kings. These plays tended toward tragedy (Richard II or Richard III, for instance) or comedy (the Falstaff subplots of both parts of Henry IV and the Pistol-Fluellen encounters of Henry V.) Through the effort to categorize Shakespeare’s plays in publication, we can see that his writing style mingled the antagonistic visions of comedy and tragedy in ways that still seem novel and startling. The recognition of this has led scholars since the publication of the First Folio to add additional genres—problem plays, romances, tragicomedies—to help classify the works of Shakespeare. Still other scholars have augmented these genres by grouping the plays chronologically, separating by time periods.

The first period, pre-1594 including Richard III and The Comedy of Errors, has its roots in Roman and medieval drama—the construction of the plays, while good, is obvious and shows the author’s hand more so than his later works. The second period, 1594-1600 including Henry V and A Midsummer Night’s Dream, shows more growth in style and a less-labored construction. The histories of this period are considered Shakespeare’s best, portraying the lives of royalty in human terms. He also begins the interweaving of genres that would become one of his stylistic signatures. His comedies mature in this period, developing deeper characterization and subjects than previously.
The third period, 1600-1608 including *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, includes the great tragedies—the principal works that would earn Shakespeare his fame in later centuries. The comedies of this period show Shakespeare at a literary crossroads—they are often darker and without the clear comic resolution of previous comedies—hence the term "problem plays" to describe them. The fourth period, post-1608 including *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*, encompasses what have been referred to as the romances or tragicomedies. Shakespeare at the end of his career seemed preoccupied with themes of redemption. The writing is more serious yet more lyrical, and the plays show Shakespeare at his most symbolic. Scholars argue whether this period owes more to Shakespeare’s maturity as a playwright or merely signifies a changing trend in Elizabethan theatre.

It is important for scholars, teachers and students to keep in mind that these "genre" classifications were not determined by Shakespeare during the writing of each play but imposed after his death to help readers better understand his work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Performed</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1590-91</td>
<td>Henry VI, Part II</td>
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<td>1590-91</td>
<td>Henry VI, Part III</td>
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<td>1591-92</td>
<td>Henry VI, Part I</td>
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<td>1592-93</td>
<td>Richard III</td>
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<td>1592-93</td>
<td>The Comedy of Errors</td>
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<td>1593-94</td>
<td>Titus Andronicus</td>
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<td>1593-94</td>
<td>The Taming of the Shrew</td>
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<td>1594-95</td>
<td>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</td>
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<td>1594-95</td>
<td>Love’s Labour’s Lost</td>
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<td>1594-95</td>
<td>Romeo and Juliet</td>
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<td>1595-96</td>
<td>Richard II</td>
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<td>1595-96</td>
<td>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</td>
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<td>1596-97</td>
<td>King John</td>
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<td>1596-97</td>
<td>The Merchant of Venice</td>
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<td>1597-98</td>
<td>Henry IV, Part I</td>
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<td>1597-98</td>
<td>Henry IV, Part II</td>
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<td>1598-99</td>
<td>Much Ado About Nothing</td>
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<td>1598-99</td>
<td>Henry V</td>
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<td>1599-1600</td>
<td>Julius Caesar</td>
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<td>1599-1600</td>
<td>As You Like It</td>
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<td>1599-1600</td>
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<td>1600-01</td>
<td>Hamlet</td>
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<td>1600-01</td>
<td>The Merry Wives of Windsor</td>
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<td>1601-02</td>
<td>Troilus and Cressida</td>
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<td>1602-03</td>
<td>All’s Well That Ends Well</td>
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<td>1604-05</td>
<td>Measure for Measure</td>
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<td>1604-05</td>
<td>Othello</td>
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<td>1605-06</td>
<td>King Lear</td>
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<td>1605-06</td>
<td>Macbeth</td>
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<td>1606-07</td>
<td>Antony and Cleopatra</td>
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<td>1607-08</td>
<td>Coriolanus</td>
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<td>1607-08</td>
<td>Timon of Athens</td>
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<td>1611-12</td>
<td>The Tempest</td>
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<tr>
<td>1612-13</td>
<td>Henry VIII</td>
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<td>1612-13</td>
<td>The Two Noble Kinsmen*</td>
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*The Two Noble Kinsmen* is listed although a few scholars do not believe it is an original Shakespeare work. The majority of the play was probably written by John Fletcher, Shakespeare’s close friend who succeeded him as foremost dramatist for the King’s Men.
During the Elizabethan period, “English” was a relatively young language (only about 160 years old) combining Latin, French and Anglo-Saxon. There was no dictionary or standardized literacy education. People in Shakespeare’s London spoke much more than they read, causing the rules of grammar and spelling to be quite fluid. Writers created new words daily and poets expressed themselves in a new form of writing known as blank verse, first appearing in 1557 in Certain Bokes of Virgiles Aenis by the Earl of Surrey:

They whistled all, with fixed face attent
When Prince Aeneas from the royal seat
Thus gan to speak, O Queene, it is thy will,
I should renew a woe can not be told:

(Book II, 1-4)

That the verse was “blank” simply meant that the poetry did not rhyme, allowing rhyme-less poets such as Virgil and Ovid to be translated and Elizabethan playwrights to emulate the natural rhythms of English speech within iambic pentameter.

A typical line of verse from this time contains five units of meter or feet. Each foot contains two syllables. When the first syllable is unstressed and the second syllable is stressed (dee DUM), it is an iamb (iambic meaning push, persistency or determination). The prefix penta means five, as in the five-sided shape—a pentagon. Iambic pentameter is therefore one line of poetry consisting of five forward-moving feet.

It was this new tradition of blank verse in iambic pentameter that Shakespeare inherited as he embarked on his career as playwright and poet. Similar to the human heartbeat, a horse gallop or the beat of a piece of music, iambic pentameter drives and supports Shakespeare’s verse, moving the language along in a forward flow that emulates the natural speech and rhythms of life. Here is a standard line of verse in iambic pentameter from Romeo and Juliet.

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

(Book II, 2)

If we were to say the rhythm and not the words, it would sound like this:

dee DUM  dee DUM  dee DUM  dee DUM  dee DUM

When we scan a piece of text (marking it with a for the unstressed and / for stressed), we simply tap out the rhythm of the line, based on dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM, to see if the line is structured in iambic pentameter:

/ / /

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

(Book II, 2)

Embracing the rules of this new verse, Shakespeare’s early writing operated almost entirely within strict iambic pentameter.

Prose in Shakespeare’s work is not in iambic pentameter and relies more heavily on other literary devices for its speed and rhythm. These devices include: antithesis (setting opposite words against each other), lists (series of actions or descriptive words that build to a climax) and puns (the use or misuse of a word to mean another word). Shakespeare used prose to express conversation between the lower classes, like the Mechanicals in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, or familiar or intimate scenes, as with Henry and Katherine at the end of Henry V. He also utilized prose to express madness or vulgarity, as in the nunnery scene of Hamlet. The exact meaning of a shift from verse to prose is not constant, but it always signals a change in the situation, characters or tone of a scene. Only Much Ado About Nothing and The Merry Wives of Windsor rely almost entirely on prose.

In the following passage from The Merry Wives of Windsor, note antithesis in Ford’s comparison of himself with Page and of other men’s possessions with Mistress Ford, see the list of things Ford would rather trust others with than his “wife with herself” and observe the pun on “effect”:

Ford

Page is an ass, a secure ass; he will trust his wife, he will not be jealous. I will rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh the Welshman with my cheese, an Irishman with my aqua-vitae bottle, or a thief to walk my ambling gelding, than my wife with herself. Then she plots, then she ruminates, then she devises; and what they think in their hearts they may effect; they will break their hearts but they will effect. God be praised for my jealousy!

(Book II, 300-314)
As his writing skill level increased, Shakespeare gradually employed alliteration (the repetition of a vowel or consonant in two or more words in a phrase), assonance (resembling vowel sounds in a line) and onomatopoeia (words with sounds imitating their meaning) to create deeply poetic, vibrant images on stage for the characters and his audience. Examples of these three literary devices are found in the following four lines:

Chorus
From camp to camp through the foul womb of night
The hum of either army stilly sounds,
That the fixed sentinels almost receive
The secret whispers of each other's watch.

(Henry V, IV.4-7)

The hard “C” is repeated in the first line (alliteration), the “O” is heard in “through”, “foul” and “womb” (assonance) and the word “whispers” in the last line imitates the sound whispers produce (onomatopoeia).

By the time Shakespeare wrote Hamlet, he sometimes allowed a character’s thoughts to overflow their usual pentameter lines with an extra beat, often ending with a soft or feminine ending. He also utilized more and more enjambed or run-on lines, allowing thoughts to continue from line to line, rather than finishing a thought per line. He grew to express the inner life of his characters and the size of their thoughts within the structure and the scansion of the text. In this famous passage from Hamlet, notice the overflow in the first line of Hamlet’s huge thought beyond the regular pentameter, forming a feminine ending:

\[ / / \ / / / \ / / \ / \]
To be, or not to be: that is the question:

(III.i.55)

With this overflow, Shakespeare expresses the enormity of Hamlet’s thought, his situation and the uneasy exploration of this argument. (It is important to remember, however, scanning is subjective and must be decided by the individual actor or reader.) This line might also be scanned:

\[ / / \ / / / / \ / \ / \]
To be, or not to be: that is the question:

(III.i.55)

This creates a trochee, or an iamb of reversed stress—DEE dum.

Eventually, in Othello, King Lear and Macbeth, Shakespeare became a master of building, breaking and reinventing rhythms and language to create an entire tone or world for a play. Continuously experimenting and exploring the combination of form, meaning and language, he used short and shared lines between characters more and more, as in Macbeth, allowing the speed and rhythm of characters’ thoughts to meet and collide.

Lady Macbeth I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
Did not you speak?

Macbeth When?

Lady Macbeth Now.

Macbeth As I descended?

(II.ii.15-19)

By the time Shakespeare gives his final farewell in The Tempest, believed by many to be his last play, his verse is so varied and specific to character and situation that it is extremely difficult to scan. Shakespeare broke, rebuilt and reinvented the verse form so many times that he plays the equivalent of jazz in the rhythms of Cymbeline, The Winter’s Tale and The Tempest. At the end of The Tempest, in Prospero’s powerfully simple epilogue, Shakespeare brings his work full circle by returning to the simplicity of regular verse. Having created almost 1,700 words, timeless characters and the greatest poetry in the history of the English language, Shakespeare “buries his art” and returns to the form with which he began.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Shakespeare's Life and Works</strong></th>
<th><strong>Events in Western History</strong></th>
<th><strong>Events in Western Art, Science &amp; Culture</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1564 William Shakespeare born to John and Mary Shakespeare in Stratford-Upon-Avon.</td>
<td>1558 Queen Elizabeth I takes the throne.</td>
<td>1540 Michelangelo finishes painting <em>The Last Judgment</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1570 John Shakespeare first applies for a family coat of arms. His application is denied.</td>
<td>1562 A series of civil wars between Catholics and Protestants, known as the Wars of Religion, begin in France.</td>
<td>1543 Copernicus' heliocentric theory, claiming the sun is the center of the universe, is first published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1583 Shakespeare's daughter Susanna born.</td>
<td>1568 A revolt of the Spanish-ruled Netherlands against Philip II, King of Spain, begins the Eighty Years War.</td>
<td>1565 Arthur Golding translates Ovid's <em>Metamorphoses</em>. The text later influenced Shakespeare's work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1585 Shakespeare's twins Judith and Hamnet born.</td>
<td>1587 Shakespeare goes to London to pursue life in the theatre.</td>
<td>1567 Richard Burbage, a tragedian who portrayed many of Shakespeare's characters, born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1593 Shakespeare writes <em>Venus and Adonis</em>. Also begins writing the <em>Sonnets</em>.</td>
<td>1586 Mary Queen of Scots is tried for treason and executed by beheading.</td>
<td>1576 The first permanent theatre in England, The Theatre, is built.</td>
</tr>
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<td>1594 Shakespeare becomes a founding member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men.</td>
<td>1588 The British Navy defeats the Spanish Armada, avoiding a long war between England and Spain.</td>
<td>1577 Raphael Holinshed publishes <em>The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland</em>, which becomes Shakespeare's primary source for the history plays.</td>
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<td>1596 Hamnet Shakespeare dies at age 11.</td>
<td>1589 The Wars of Religion end when Henry of Navarre ascends to the throne to become King Henry IV of France.</td>
<td>1580 Thomas Middleton, a playwright who collaboratively wrote many plays, born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1597 Shakespeare purchases New Place in Stratford.</td>
<td>1598 Philip II of Spain dies. The French Protestants are permitted to freely practice their religion by the Edict of Nantes.</td>
<td>1588 Marlowe's play <em>Dr. Faustus</em> first produced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1599 Shakespeare's family is granted a coat of arms.</td>
<td>1601 The Earl of Essex attempts to rebel against Queen Elizabeth, fails and is executed.</td>
<td>1590 Marlowe's play <em>The Jew of Malta</em> first produced; it influenced Shakespeare's <em>The Merchant of Venice</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1601 Shakespeare's father dies.</td>
<td>1603 Sir Walter Raleigh is arrested, tried and imprisoned for disobeying the Queen by secretly marrying one of her maids of honor. Queen Elizabeth dies. King James VI of Scotland, son of Mary Queen of Scots, becomes King James I of England. The plague once again ravages London.</td>
<td>1592 Thomas Kyd's <em>The Spanish Tragedy</em> first produced. It influenced Shakespeare's <em>Hamlet</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1603 The Lord Chamberlain's Men are renamed the King's Men. They perform at the Court of King James I more than any other company.</td>
<td>1604 England establishes a peace treaty with Spain.</td>
<td>1597 The Theatre permanently closes due to the expiration of its lease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1605 Shakespeare purchases more land in Stratford.</td>
<td>1607 Jamestown, one of the first English colonies in the Americas, is founded.</td>
<td>1599 The Globe Theatre is built on Bankside from the timbers of The Theatre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1608 The King's Men begin playing at the Blackfriars Theatre, a prominent indoor theatre.</td>
<td>1610 King Henry IV of France is murdered. He is succeeded by his son, Louis XIII.</td>
<td>1603 The &quot;Scientific Revolution&quot; begins with Johann Kepler's recordings of planetary movements and Galileo Galilei's perfection of the telescope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1609 Shakespeare's <em>Sonnets</em> published.</td>
<td>1611 The King James Bible first published.</td>
<td>1606 Ben Jonson's play <em>Volpone</em> is written.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1616 In March, Shakespeare, apparently ill, revises his will. On April 23rd he dies and is buried at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford.</td>
<td>1610 The Protestant German princes and their foreign supporters begin their struggle against the Holy Roman Empire. This marks the start of the Thirty Years War.</td>
<td>1607 Burbage leases the Blackfriars Theatre for indoor performances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623 Shakespeare's <em>First Folio</em> published.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1611 Ben Jonson's <em>Works</em> published in folio.</td>
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</table>
The play opens with a shipwreck on an enchanted isle where the usurped Duke of Milan, Prospero, and his lovely daughter, Miranda, have been living for 12 years. Prospero has become a master magician, and Miranda has grown into a charming maiden. Prospero, with the aide of his sprite Ariel, has conjured a violent storm to cause the shipwreck. All those aboard the ship—Alonso, the King of Naples, his brother Sebastian, Alonso’s son Ferdinand, Alonso’s counselor Gonzalo, and Prospero’s brother Antonio—jump overboard for fear of dying in the storm. Miranda, having watched the storm wrack the ship, is assured by her father that it was all a magical illusion. He relates the tale of their journey to the isle—how his brother Antonio teamed with Alonso to overthrow him. Though Prospero and Miranda were abandoned at sea, they were able to survive because Gonzalo secretly stowed money, clothes and Prospero’s sorcery books on the boat. Prospero and Miranda eventually landed on the island and encountered Caliban, a demon son of the witch Sycorax, now slave to Prospero.

After relating their history, Prospero causes Miranda to sleep and commands Ariel to ensure that the nobles are safe on the island. Ariel informs Prospero that the rest of the fleet has returned to Naples believing that Alonso is dead. Ariel has pledged allegiance to Prospero because Prospero freed Ariel from Sycorax’s curse. Prospero, in return, promises to free Ariel when his plans are complete. Ariel scatters the nobles around the island, leading Ferdinand into a cave where Miranda, never having seen any other man besides her father, falls instantly in love. Though Prospero approves of the match, he pretends to be critical of Ferdinand and sets him to work hauling logs.

Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo and the lords Adrian and Francisco wander the island, presuming Ferdinand dead. Gonzalo conjectures that Ferdinand could still be alive since they survived the shipwreck. Ariel lulls all to sleep except Sebastian and Antonio, who plot the murder of Alonso to take over Naples. Ariel, cloaked in invisibility, overhears the plan and wakes Gonzalo, who warns Alonso just in time. On another part of the island, the drunken Trinculo, another survivor of the shipwreck, encounters Caliban; they are soon joined by the king’s butler, Stephano. After tasting “spirits” from Stephano, Caliban declares him to be a god and vows devotion.

Back at the cave, Prospero spies as Miranda and Ferdinand exchange vows of love and promise to marry. Prospero, happy with the match, blesses their union. Caliban encourages Stephano to kill Prospero, marry Miranda and take over the island. Ariel overhears the scheme and leaves to warn his master. To torment the nobles, Ariel and other spirits reveal a lavish banquet that vanishes as they try to eat. Ariel appears in the form of a Harpy to rebuke them for their cruel behavior toward Prospero, declaring it the cause of their current sorrow. At the cave, Prospero conjures a performance by goddesses and nymphs. When Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo show up to enact their plot, Prospero sends Ariel and other fairies after them to torment them and keep them out of the way.

The royal party is brought, spellbound, to Prospero, where he forgives them for the injuries of the past. He reveals the supposed-dead Ferdinand and his own daughter, Miranda—both safe, playing chess and newly engaged. As father and son reunite, Prospero frees Ariel and returns the island to Caliban’s control. Stephano and Trinculo repent their scheming, and Alonso restores Prospero’s dukedom. All board the ship to return to Italy. Prospero renounces his magical powers and requests that Ariel provide calm seas for the voyage home.
By the time Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest* in 1611, Londoners were accustomed to stories of fantastic voyages abroad. More than a hundred years after Christopher Columbus first landed in the Americas, colonization and exploration of the unknown islands west of England continued to be frequent topics of conversation as many travelers returned with amazing stories of the unknown. On June 2, 1609, a fleet of ships from the Virginia Company left Plymouth, England, and headed toward the colony of Jamestown, Virginia, with supplies and new colonists. On their way past the islands of Bermuda on July 24, a storm scattered the fleet. The flagship, the Sea Adventure, (carrying Admiral George Somers and the future governor of Virginia, Sir Thomas Gates) disappeared and was presumed lost at sea. Amazingly, almost a full year later on May 23, 1610, two pinnaces, or light sailing ships, appeared at Jamestown carrying the crew and passengers from the Sea Adventure. The ship had crashed on the island of Bermuda where the crew found that this notoriously dangerous island, often referred to as the “Isle of Devils,” was actually quite delightful, with plenty of food and shelter, as well as wood to build their new sailing ships to complete the voyage to Jamestown. Their survival caused a sensation in England and led to the publishing of several accounts of their adventure, including *A Discovery of the Bermudas, Otherwise Called the Isle of Devils* by Sylvester Jourdain and *The True Repertory of the Wrack and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates* by William Strachey. The Virginia Company also wrote an account of the story, titled *The True Declaration of the Estate of the Colony in Virginia*.
In his account dated July 15, 1610, William Strachey describes some harrowing experiences in the storm that Shakespeare appears to echo in some of Ariel’s manipulation of the crew in *The Tempest*.

**Strachey’s Account:**
“A dreadful storm and hedeous began to blow, which swelling and roaring as it were by fits, at length did beat all light from heaven: which like a hell of darkness turned black upon us, so much the more fuller of horror...and over mastered the senses of all...” Four days into the storm they saw “an apparition of a little round light, like a faint Starre trembling and streaming along with a sparkling blaze, half the height upon the mainmast and shooting sometimes from shroud to shroud...”

Both Strachey and Ariel describe *St. Elmo’s fire*, a natural phenomenon that legendarily guided lost sailors to safety. The light was, in fact, a glow that occurred on dark stormy nights produced by gathering static electricity. Shakespeare’s audience would have read or heard some of these accounts and would have immediately identified with Ariel’s descriptions.

**ARIEL**
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin, I flam’d amazement: sometime I’d divide, And burn in many places; on the topmast, The yards and boresprit, would I flame distinctly. (I.ii.197-200)

The shipwrecked vessel in *The Tempest* is returning to Naples, Italy, not from the New World but from Tunis in northern Africa, where a royal wedding has taken place. Shakespeare’s audience might have been familiar with Tunis as the Moslem city that was conquered and temporarily converted to Christianity by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1535. This would place Prospero’s island somewhere in the Mediterranean. Shakespeare, however, plays to his audience by intermingling Mediterranean and North American influences. Londoners during Shakespeare’s time had become fascinated with and sometimes terrified by stories of the native peoples in the New World.
In opposition to this portrayal of the perfection of native people, Shakespeare creates Caliban, the only mortal native of the island. A rough and uncivilized character who resents Prospero and violently opposes his oppression, Caliban embodies the potential dangers of colonization and society's attempts to tame the natural world. Even his name, Caliban, is an original play on the word “cannibal” which had recently worked its way into the vocabulary of Elizabethan Englanders from New World accounts. The word “cannibal” came into use after Columbus' voyage in 1492, when man-eating habits were discovered among a group of Indians in the islands now known as the West Indies. Assuming that they could tame and teach him, Prospero and Miranda allow Caliban to live with them. Caliban attempts to rape Miranda, shattering their trust and leading Prospero to treat Caliban as his slave. In some ways, however, it is too late for Prospero to enslave Caliban. Prospero and Miranda had already transformed Caliban beyond being “primitive” when they taught him their language. Just as Gonzalo states “letters should not be known,” Shakespeare seems to warn against this injection of modern language into native life, as Caliban deeply resents Prospero's influence and uses his new gift of language to curse and argue with him:

**CALIBAN**

You taught me language; and my profit on’t
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

[(I.ii.365-367)]

Caliban eventually attempts to murder Prospero. After his plan fails, Prospero forgives him and finally leaves the island with Miranda and the others.

Only then can Caliban regain control of the island and find peace, free of men who would enslave or exploit him but also totally alone. Arguments of whether colonization saved or ruined the inhabitants of newly colonized areas such as the Americas were rampant in Elizabethan society. Shakespeare, in *The Tempest*, raises questions about his society's obsession with colonization. Out of wonderful firsthand accounts from explorers, a miraculous shipwreck story from Jamestown and perhaps his own desire for his world to find hope in a new land, Shakespeare crafts *The Tempest* and creates a tale of love, redemption and the possibilities of a new beginning.

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**From Montaigne's Essay:**

“It is a nation, would I answer Plato, that hath no kind of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politic superiority; no use of service, of riches, or of poverty; no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupation but idle; no respect of kindred but common, no apparel but natural, no manuring of lands, no use of wine, corn, or metal.”

**GONZALO**

I’ th’ commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, thith, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation; all men idle, all;
And women too, but innocent and pure:

[(II.i.143-151)]

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The great Renaissance essayist Michel Eyguem De Montaigne published “Of the Cannibals” in 1603. In it Montaigne describes primitive American Indian society as an ideal state, as related to him by explorers. Gonzalo, in depicting his ideal society in Act II, seems to echo Montaigne’s account.

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Photo by Carol Rosegg.

Chad Coleman as Caliban in *The Shakespeare Theatre’s 1997 production of The Tempest.*
**It’s a Long, Long Road**

*The Tempest* is considered by most scholars to be the last play written by Shakespeare without collaborators. As with most of his plays, the dates and circumstances of *The Tempest*'s publication and first production are not accurately known. Clues gathered from the play and accounts from the time indicate that the play was probably written sometime in 1611, and was first performed at Whitehall, most likely before James I. *The Tempest*'s position at the end of Shakespeare’s career is an important one, particularly if Shakespeare was aware that this would be his last play. It is very tempting to think of *The Tempest* as Shakespeare’s “goodbye to the stage.” Many readers see a strong parallel between Shakespeare and the character of Prospero, who at the end of the play announces:

> I’ll break my staff,  
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,  
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound  
> I’ll drown my book.  
> (V.i.54-57)

Just as Prospero, a master sorcerer, gives up his art to return home, so does the master playwright, Shakespeare. However, there exists no evidence to support that Shakespeare knew that *The Tempest* would be his final play. Shakespeare does not give up his art; he goes on to collaborate on two more plays. He does return to his home in Stratford, although unlike Prospero’s immediate departure from the island, Shakespeare gradually removes himself from life in London. Shakespeare’s final play, though an interesting culmination of the life’s work of a major playwright, may or may not be his way of announcing his retirement.

When Shakespeare’s friends and fellow company members Heminges and Condell published his collected works in 1623 (known to us as the First Folio), they included *The Tempest* first. This was more an issue of popularity than chronological precision—as Shakespeare’s last play, it would have been one of the most familiar to the original readers of the First Folio.

![First page of *The Tempest* from the First Folio, published in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare’s death.](image-url)
story, but one that is full of improbable adventure and many highs and lows. Characters in romances travel to the depths of misery and, generally, recover what they have lost by the end of the play. The romances tend to have much more substantive subject matter than comedies; the subjects of slavery, exile and death dealt with in *The Tempest* are rarely seen in the lighter comedies. Shakespeare's trend toward romances at the end of his career is significant—after 1605, Shakespeare wrote only tragedies and romances. It could have been a growing trend in audience taste, or Shakespeare's recognition of his own mortality, that caused this abandonment of comedy in favor of darker, more complex writing styles. Or perhaps Shakespeare, his craft improving with age and practice, was better able to deal with more serious subject matter.

In his last play, Shakespeare chooses to include a device rarely found in any of his other plays—the masque. Characterized by an emphasis on spectacle, masques became popular after James I became king. Prior to *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's plays were visually fairly plain—very little or no set, simple costumes, natural light—and so actors and audience alike tended to rely heavily on the text of the play. *The Tempest* was first performed at the palace at Whitehall, a venue that demanded much more spectacle and fanfare than the Globe or the Blackfriar's Theatre. Scenes such as the banquet scene or Ferdinand and Miranda's wedding masque lend themselves to a more elaborate staging. Foreknowledge that the play would be premiering at Whitehall may have prompted Shakespeare to include uncharacteristically lavish scenes. Some scholars claim that Shakespeare added the wedding masque two years after the play's debut, when it was performed at the wedding of James I's daughter Elizabeth, who was married in February of 1613.

*The Tempest* provides much fodder for scholars hoping to get a glimpse of Shakespeare's later years from what he wrote in his last play. As much as *The Tempest* is a play about the end of Prospero's art (or Shakespeare's), it is also a play about new worlds, new love and a fresh start for Prospero and Miranda.
The Elizabethan economy was one of great disparity of wealth between the classes. The wealthiest families could afford to keep many servants for the maintenance of their household. As the mid-level merchant class began to grow, the most visible sign of success was the ability to employ servants. In Elizabethan England there was an understood relationship between master and servant known as “credit.” A servant did his master credit by obeying him in all things and making sure his master always looked his best. In turn the master dressed his servants in good clothes and never abused his power so his servants would represent him well outside of the house.

The ideal servant was almost psychic. He would anticipate his master’s wants before the master asked. The worst quality a servant could demonstrate was ingratitude. While Elizabethan England was not a democracy, it was possible to rise in status. Through hard work and obedience, the stable boy could become master of the horses, the kitchen maid could become head cook. The new merchant economy meant that anyone who invested what little money they had in the right business could find themselves members of the emerging middle class. Those with new money did not necessarily have the same respect as those with old, but they began to demand a voice in how that country was run. The audiences of Shakespeare’s time would most likely have been more comfortable with the depictions of masters and servants in The Tempest than audiences today.

The Tempest provides audiences with a variety of master and servant relationships. Prospero is served by Caliban, a sort of half-human, and the spirit Ariel. Prospero lavishes praise on Ariel since he believes the spirit can be trusted. Caliban was also once a trusted servant. Caliban overstepped his bounds and became Prospero’s despised slave. Then there are the relationships between those on the ship. Alonso the king is served by a trustworthy counselor, noblemen, Trinculo the jester and Stephano the butler. Even the king who appears fair to all who follow him is deceived and almost murdered.

As a master, Prospero has received both criticism and sympathy from audiences. His harsh treatment of Caliban and enslavement of Ariel may seem cruel to modern theatregoers. Elizabethan audiences may have seen Prospero’s initial kind treatment toward Caliban as his mistake as a master and his authoritarian approach in the play as restoring the balance. Ariel’s constant reminders that he is owed freedom might smack of ingratitude to an Elizabethan theatregoer.

The play ends with Prospero and Alonso forgiving all who have wronged them—wayward family and servants alike. Elizabethan audiences may have seen this as the structure of their society having been toppled for a day. Servants were allowed to plot and run wild and, though unsuccessful in their pursuits, they did not suffer retribution. A modern audience might see these as the actions of just rulers. Perhaps Shakespeare recognized the excitement of the New World—a new land where the authority of the crown and government was significantly weaker. Shakespeare’s audience might have found the ending not only happy but also a little thrilling.
Many of Shakespeare’s plays include elements of the supernatural—from ghosts to fairies, witches to goddesses. *The Tempest* is the only play, however, with a magician as the main character and a magical setting at the heart of the play.

**Prospero’s Art**
Prospero is a powerful magician, able to control all aspects of his island and its inhabitants. Caliban reveals to us that Prospero’s power lies in his vast library of books:

> Remember,  
> First to possess his books, for without them  
> He’s but a sot, as I am, nor hath not  
> One spirit to command. (III.i.89-92)

When Prospero speaks of his time in Milan as the rightful duke, he brags about his reputation as a scholar. He gave the leadership of the land to his brother, saying that “my library / Was dukedom large enough” (I.ii.109-110). Instead of carrying out the affairs of state, he became “rapt in secret studies” (I.ii.77).

Prospero’s command over man and nature is derived from his scholarship, or “secret studies.” In the Middle Ages, there were two kinds of scholars: religious and secular. Religious scholars studied theology and philosophy. They discussed God and God’s relationship to the world. Their subject matter was considered the highest goal of human reason. Prospero could be interpreted as a religious scholar in the play. His books might be biblical texts, and he may derive his power from a deity. Some productions of *The Tempest* have emphasized Prospero’s God-like nature by costuming him in religious robes (see photographs below.)
Secular scholars studied the earth and its elements. Shakespeare lived during a time when medieval beliefs in the supernatural were still strong, though on the decline due to scientific advancements. The belief that the heavens were the unknowable realm of an omnipotent creator was being replaced by the idea that humans could unlock the secrets of universal motion through experimentation and observable data. For example, the public in Shakespeare’s time no longer believed that the sun revolved around the earth, but still retained many of the customs of celestial prophecy, believing that eclipses portended great disruptions in nature and that medicinal herbs must be gathered in accordance with the movement of the planets. These early scientists, who could tap into the mysteries of the universe, had access to knowledge that was until that time considered mystical. Many scientific practices were considered sacrilegious because they contradicted the teachings of the church. Certain scholars, including some alchemists, cultivated the belief that they consorted with spirits and practiced magic. Alchemy was a chemical science that aimed to transmute base metals (such as lead) into gold, discover a universal cure for disease and prolong life indefinitely. Many practitioners of alchemy referred to their work as an “art,” but the history of alchemy and what we know now as the modern “science” of chemistry are surprisingly intertwined. Prospero, with the power to control elements of nature, could be seen as an early scientist or chemist, studying the mysteries of the earth. He also refers to his magical ability as his “art” throughout the play. Certainly with Prospero’s reliance on his “secret studies,” Shakespeare’s audience could have seen Prospero’s books as early scientific texts or even the magical tomes of the alchemists.

Prospero’s “art” also has been seen in a different light. Prospero creates the tempest in the first scene and is the motivating force of all other action in the play—manipulating the other characters around him and crafting their fates. For this reason, some describe Prospero as a playwright himself, using his “art” to fashion his own story. Shakespeare may have seen his reflection in Prospero, likening his own art as a playwright to a powerful kind of magic, creating and destroying worlds on a whim. The books in The Tempest, then, could have been the plays and stories Prospero created.
That Old Black Magic

Witches and witchcraft were also daily concerns of Shakespeare’s audience. James I was a self-proclaimed expert on witchcraft and published a book on the subject in 1597 called *Daemonologie*. The book described the black-magic practices of witches and called for their swift destruction. Witch hunts, which eventually spread to the American continent, became more and more popular in England during James’ reign. Those convicted of witchcraft were most often innocent people who lived on the fringes of society. These outcasts became scapegoats for accidents, illnesses or deaths in their villages. Witches were believed to have sold their souls to the devil and would do his work on earth. They were believed to keep beer from fermenting or butter from hardening, to force men and women to commit adultery, and to prevent women from getting pregnant as well as to cause miscarriages or stillbirths. Midwives, women who helped to deliver babies, were often accused of witchcraft. Their understanding of natural remedies and the female body, which would be considered medical knowledge today, was still misunderstood and fraught with superstition in Shakespeare’s time.

While Prospero’s magical abilities may be interpreted as close to witchcraft, Prospero only uses his power for good. Another character on the island, Caliban, is the offspring of a witch and the devil. The deformed half-man, half-monster is a native of the island and the son of “the foul witch Sycorax” (I.ii.258). Shakespeare made up her name, possibly from a combination of the Greek words for “pig” and “crow,” which is not surprising, as witches were believed to have animal companions called *familiars* who would do their bidding.

Shakespeare’s audience would have had strong images and associations with witches. Caliban is introduced as the son of a witch before he even comes out on stage. Shakespeare undercuts the audience’s expectations after we meet Caliban, though; while he is a deformed and ugly monster, Shakespeare gives him some of the most beautiful language in the play. Also, despite the fact that Caliban’s mother was a powerful witch, he is one of the most powerless characters on the island.
An Airy Spirit

Ariel, introduced in the list of characters as “an airy spirit,” is the servant of Prospero and another agent of magic on the island. The name means “lion of God” and is reminiscent of names of Biblical angels like Gabriel, Uriel, Rafael and Azrael. What kind of creature Ariel is remains unclear. Throughout the centuries, Ariel has been represented as many different kinds of creatures, and while generally considered male, Ariel also has been represented as female and genderless.

In Shakespeare’s time, Ariel may have been represented similar to the fiery spirit at right, from a masque designed by Inigo Jones. Because of the angelic name, Ariel often has been represented as a winged creature. In the 19th century, Julia St. George played the role as an innocent-looking, winged, little girl at Sadler’s Wells, a London theatre famous for its great revivals of Shakespeare. In 1982, the Royal Shakespeare Company cast Ariel as a male actor in a multi-colored body suit with bleached white hair. In 1998, the same company had Ariel in a harness with giant outstretched wings that overtook the entire stage. While the source of Ariel’s magic is never revealed in the play, we know that “he” can fly, create fiery apparitions in the sky, become invisible and create storms on the sea. The way a production chooses to represent Ariel reflects on Prospero and the nature of magic in the play.

Giving It All Away

Whatever the source of Prospero’s magic, The Tempest is often seen as Prospero’s journey toward relinquishing his “art” and accepting his position in society. At the end of the play, when Prospero has finally righted the wrong done against him by his brother, he begins the next chapter of his story, not as a magician, but as a man:

But this rough magic
I here abjure; and, when I have requir’d
Some heavenly music – which even now I do, –
To work mine end upon their senses, that
This airy charm is for, I’ll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I’ll drown my book.  (V.i.50-57)

Prospero has destroyed his book, the source of all his power. Ariel and Caliban, the magical characters in the play, are freed from their servitude. They remain on the island as the humans return to their lives in Milan.

However a production chooses to interpret the nature of magic and the supernatural in The Tempest, by the end of the play, Prospero must recant that power and return to his home. The play can be seen as Prospero’s journey from a solitary and omnipotent magician to a man reunited with his family, ready to govern his people.
Tell me about your mother...

“I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father’s protection.”

Sigmund Freud
Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis
1856-1939

By the time Shakespeare finished penning The Tempest, he had 22 years of extraordinary success as a playwright. While Shakespeare was acquiring fame in London, his wife and family remained behind in Stratford. Little is known of how often he visited his home or how involved he was in family life. Was Shakespeare merely an aspiring playwright unconcerned with the needs of his family? Or was the bard a doting father, making trips home whenever possible to spend time with his wife and children?

Whatever the facts may be, and there is little hope that we will ever know the truth, Shakespeare exhibits a preoccupation with daughters at the end of his career in the four plays characterized as romances—Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter’s Tale and The Tempest. In each of these plays the relationship between father and daughter is central to the story; these daughters are strong women that are indisputably kind, fair and virtuous. There is also a common theme of reconciliation and forgiveness through the separation and then reuniting of the family—specifically between father and daughter. Either entirely absent or missing for prolonged periods of time in all four plays are the mothers. Scholars, too, have a preoccupation with the father-daughter relationships in Shakespeare’s final plays and the possible link to events in Shakespeare’s life.

Shakespeare’s final work, The Tempest, not only completely eliminates the mother figure but also examines the father-daughter relationship free of all societal influences. Miranda, having grown up on a deserted island, is entirely unaffected by the outside world. Until the arrival of the strangers on the ship, the only other human she has ever known is her own father, Prospero. Her scope of existence rests solely in him and his teachings.

Unlike the other romances, there is no reunion scene between father and daughter, for there never is a parting. Not only is Prospero Miranda’s whole world, Prospero himself finds his reason for living in Miranda. He tells her:

O, a cherubin
Thou wast that did preserve me. Thou didst smile,
Infused with a fortitude from heaven,
When I have deck’d the sea with drops full salt,
Under my burthen groan’d; which rais’d in me
An undergoing stomach, to bear up
Against what should ensue.

(I.ii.152-158)

The ideal father-daughter relationship remains intact throughout the play. The only conflict in their relationship is manufactured by Prospero when he forbids Miranda to speak to Ferdinand. There is no need for forgiveness at the end of the play—by all indications, their relationship has known no discord.
As he approached the end of his career, Shakespeare's two daughters, Susanna and Judith, had come of marrying age. Records show that he spent more time traveling between London and Stratford at this time, perhaps to oversee their marriages. Possibly Shakespeare had begun to have feelings of guilt over the amount of time that he had spent absent from his family. The repetition of reconciliation scenes in the latter plays could reflect the writer's desire to reclaim lost time. Or perhaps Prospero's duty to Miranda as sole tutor and caregiver might demonstrate the solace Shakespeare found in the relationship that had finally grown with his children.

Information about Shakespeare's relationships with his wife and daughters is based largely on his final will. Scholars suggest that Shakespeare revised his will based on the mate each daughter chose. Susanna evidently chose well; her husband, John Hall, was a respected doctor in Stratford. Judith was wed at the age of 31 to a tavern keeper of ill repute just 10 weeks before her father's death. Shortly after the marriage, Shakespeare rewrote his will, radically reducing Judith's share in the inheritance. All of Shakespeare's personal property was willed to Susanna. He left his wife their second best bed.

The events that unfolded in the last days of Shakespeare's life seem to indicate that whatever relationship he had with Susanna and Judith, feelings were certainly very intense and much was at stake. Whether it was due to parental concern, guilt over lost time, a father's love, or a mixture of the three, it is certain that the tone in Shakespeare's later plays reflects what may have been foremost on his mind at the end of his life.
Classroom Connections

Before the performance...

Stormy Weather

It’s no surprise that a play named *The Tempest* opens in the middle of a huge storm at sea. But how can a director and a team of designers create that storm onstage? Ask students to brainstorm different ways to present the storm and shipwreck onstage. Then break the class into three groups and assign each a budget—one group has a high school drama club budget, one has a regional theatre budget, and one has a Broadway theatre budget. Each group should develop a concept or proposal for the storm scene, complete with lights, set, sound, props and costumes, considering their respective budgets. Have each group present their ideas to the class. How does budget affect the staging of the storm? How realistically should the storm be staged?

Love at First Sight

In *The Tempest* Miranda and Ferdinand are instantly captivated by one another. It is the first time that Miranda has seen another man. Is it love at first sight? Divide the class into two groups and have them sit across the room from each other. Pair each student with someone on the opposite side and remind them to keep it a secret! It is okay if more than one person is paired with another. Instruct the students to imagine themselves asleep in their beds. Begin playing a syrupy love song (*We've Only Just Begun* by the Carpenters works very well). In slow motion, have the students wake up and begin their morning routines. On your cue, they should make eye contact with their object of love and physicalize (in slow motion) their response to love at first sight. How do we show love? What actions do we perform to get someone to notice us?

Be a Sound Designer

*The Tempest* is one of Shakespeare’s most sound-heavy plays. Have students reread Caliban’s speech at III.i.132, “Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises.” Then go back and ask students to pick out as many references to sound as they can find, both in the text and in the stage directions. Creating a sound design for a play or movie is an important part of telling the story. What kinds of sounds exist on the island in *The Tempest*? Ask students to create one sound cue for a moment in the play, using music, voices or found items (recorded or live) to create the sound. How does sound help to tell the story?

Ariel & Caliban in Visual Art

Ariel and Caliban, two of Shakespeare’s non-human characters, have left much room for interpretation in how they can be portrayed. The 19th century produced a number of artists inspired by Shakespeare who put scenes of his play on canvas. Visit this site (http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/TempestPaintings.html) and find a painting depicting Ariel or Caliban from *The Tempest*. Compare how you expected these characters to look with the artist’s rendering. Keep these images in mind when you see the play and compare all three interpretations!

What Really Happened in Jamestown

As described in the article *A Whole New World*, Shakespeare drew inspiration for *The Tempest* from real accounts of a crew headed to Jamestown, Virginia, that crashed on the island of Bermuda and then reappeared almost a year later. Have students research the Jamestown colony and the shipwreck of the *Sea Adventure* and then discuss how the real life events may have inspired Shakespeare. How did Shakespeare alter the story to create *The Tempest*?

Seeing Things That Aren’t There

Stranded on a mysterious island and thoroughly drunk, Stephano the butler believes he sees a great beast that in reality is nothing more than Caliban and Trinculo hiding together. This is an island that Prospero claims to be inhabited by spirits. His most trusted servant is a spirit that no other character ever sees. The only time spirits are witnessed by characters other than Prospero is in the wedding masque for Ferdinand and Miranda. This scene is not always included in productions of the play. If you were the director, would you choose to stage the masque? Is the island really magic or are we seeing a distorted image of a stranded soul?
**Classroom Connections**

...After the performance

**Slaves and Servants**

In *The Tempest*, Ariel and Caliban both serve Prospero and Miranda. In the Folio version of the play, Caliban is described as a “savage and deformed slave.” Given that Ariel and Caliban are “natives” of the island, what class issues does their relationship to Prospero bring up? What responsibilities does a director have in staging *The Tempest* for a contemporary audience? Are Ariel and Caliban positive or negative characters? How would you portray them today? How did the director at The Shakespeare Theatre portray Caliban and Ariel?

**Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

One of the reasons *The Tempest* is sometimes considered a comedy is that all the characters are forgiven for their misdeeds. Prospero forgives everyone in the very last scene of the play. Discuss when you think he makes the decision to forgive the characters who have betrayed him. Did those forgiven really repent? Do you think there is a possibility of Prospero being wronged again? Are there any characters who deserve an apology from Prospero?

**Fathers and Daughters**

Some Shakespearean scholars believe that in his latter works, the Bard examined more closely the bonds between fathers and daughters because of his relationship with his eldest daughter, Susanna. Reflect on views of father-daughter relationships: What are contemporary views of the roles of fathers and daughters in each others’ lives? What images or stories from television shows, news, movies, books or magazines support these views? How do students see them playing out in their personal experiences? Ask students to compare contemporary views to the relationship of Prospero and Miranda in *The Tempest*.

**Water, Water Everywhere**

Water imagery abounds in *The Tempest* and plays a vital role in the events that unfold. Ask students to share all of the ways that water is used in the play. Then ask students to pick one example of water imagery to recreate. They can make a collage, write a poem, use their bodies, voices, instruments, or any other form of expression to demonstrate the feeling that the water evokes.

**Adaptation**

Shakespeare’s plays are continually adapted into other stories and media. For example, Robert Browning’s 1864 poem *Caliban Upon Setebos*, Franz Marc’s 1914 painting *Caliban* and the 1956 sci-fi film *Forbidden Planet* are all based on Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Screen the film, or another film adaptation of the play, look at the painting (see page 19) or read a selection of Browning’s poem [available online at: eir.library.utoronto.ca/rpo/display/poem267.html]. How do artists take ideas from literature and incorporate them into their own work? Ask students to create their own work of art based on their response to *The Tempest*. Possibilities include a drawing, a poem, a short story, a treatment for a screen play or a short video essay. Work can be shared and displayed as students discuss their different responses to the play. Share your students’ work with us by mailing it to The Shakespeare Theatre Education Department.

**Are You My Mother?**

Many female characters in Shakespeare’s later plays grow up never knowing their mothers. Ask students to consider why Shakespeare would make this choice? How would these plays be different if a mother was present? Ask students to rewrite Act I scene ii of *The Tempest*, adding a third character—Miranda’s mother. How does the scene change? How might this change affect the rest of the play?

**Look Up at the Sky!**

Did you know that many of the moons of Uranus are named after Shakespearean characters, many of them from *The Tempest*? (Those that aren’t Shakespearean are taken from Alexander Pope’s poem, *The Rape of the Lock*.) For extra credit, ask students to look up the names of the moons of Uranus and find their namesakes in Shakespeare.
Books or Essays on \textit{The Tempest}


Books on Shakespeare and Teaching Shakespeare


Websites

- daphne.palomar.edu/shakespeare—Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet.


- www.sgc.umd.edu—Shakespeare’s Globe Center USA.

- hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/engramja/Svtour.html—Shakespeare: A Virtual Field Trip.


- www.shakespeare.org.uk/main/7/304—Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, “What Kind of Play is \textit{The Tempest}?"