BOATSWAIN: "HENCE! WHAT CARE THESE ROARERS FOR THE NAME OF KING?"
The Tempest

Historical and Literary Context

The term ‘Renaissance’ comes from a French word for ‘rebirth’ and refers to a revival of Classical Greek and Roman values and appreciation for the arts. It began in Italy and spread across Europe from the end of the so-called ‘Dark Ages’ up until the sixteenth century. Humanism was an associated movement that promoted the ideals of self-determination, personal expression and human individuality. It was a period of conflicting pressures and allegiances as the expansion of trade, growth and prosperity fuelled the rise of secularism which challenged religious authority. Travel and greater wealth weakened the reliance on faith, dogma and God but during the Elizabethan period, there remained a strong belief that any violation of an orderly universe of ‘Chain of Being’ would bring social instability. The foiled Gunpowder Plot of 1605 reaffirmed concerns about the dangers of civil unrest. Literacy and education were fostered in England at this time and language, moral philosophy and rhetoric were highly valued. A Renaissance man bridged the two worlds of faith and reason.

Era of Exploration and Colonisation

During the Elizabethan era, England became a naval power, in part, due to the economic benefits of exploring and exploiting the colonisation of the New World. Huge profits had been made by risky ventures into the unknown territory or ‘terra incognita’ marked on uncharted seas. Discoveries of treasures and new lands generated trade opportunities and fuelled public interest and excitement about what might still be found on the margins of the known world. French, Spanish and Elizabethan adventurers were courageously testing uncharted waters for personal acclaim as well as riches and many facets of the imperialism of this era are echoed in Shakespeare’s pastoral romance, ‘The Tempest’. Scholars cite links in the play with details mentioned in a lengthy testimonial account of William Strachey. This related to a 1609 shipwreck of the ‘Sea Venture’ on an island in the Bermudas as it was heading to the new Jamestown settlement in Virginia.

Strachey’s letter vividly describes how for three days and four nights, everyone on board, including crew, passengers, noblemen and commoners alike, needed to work together in a desperate effort to keep the ship afloat. Landfall was sighted and the captain managed to get the ship close enough to get everyone safely onshore. Strachey writes of the ‘greater violence’ of the storm, ‘we could not apprehend in our imaginations’. He recounts their fears the place would be inhabited by ‘devils and wicked spirits’; relieved to find the island was actually ‘habitable’. Collaboration had saved their lives, the next year spent in repairs until they successfully completed their voyage to Jamestown. Utopian speculation about ‘new’ lands being governed in more enlightened ways is sharp contrast to the plunder that typically accompanied exploratory missions. Indigenous culture and populations were often decimated by disease, missionary zeal and enslavement.

Renaissance fascination with the social possibilities posed by the discovery of ‘new’ lands are reflected in some of the speculative ideas put forward early in the play by Gonzalo’s monologue, (lines 158-164). He fancifully envisages an idealic civilisation that has similarities to that outlined in a sixteenth century essay called ‘Of the Cannibals’. This was written by French philosopher Michel de Montaigne who described the primitive people of his imaginary nation as being so inherently good that there would be no need for the norms of civilisation such as business, written language,
mathematics, political systems, justice, money or jobs. For them, the very words for ‘lying, falsehood, treason, dissimulation, covetousness, envy, detraction, and pardon’ did not even exist, suggesting that people are in fact tainted by the very evils of society. Gonzalo imagines that in his alternative world, there would be ‘no occupation, all men idle, all women too, but innocent and pure’. By contrast, Stephano imagines himself as a tyrant king of the island and along with Trinculo considers the profits that could be made by capturing Caliban and making him a curiosity for public display back home. Such things were done with Native Americans, either as individuals or whole family groups, enslaved and exhibited in England. Prospero’s enslavement of Caliban has also been interpreted as an allegorical depiction of the callous and greed driven subjugation of the peoples in the Americas during the ‘Age of Exploration’.

Elizabethan ‘Pastoral Romance’

Typical Genre Conventions

‘Romance’ was not a generic classification for Elizabethan drama, yet the term is often used to describe ‘The Tempest’. It is better described as ‘Pastoral Romance’ and includes many of the genre’s conventions and motifs. These include the use of stereotypical characters, plots, setting and themes but what helped make ‘Pastoral Romance’ popular was the inclusion of songs, dance and music as well as slapstick and crude humour. Shakespeare added psychological depth to his major characters and metaphorical issues are examined. Shakespeare draws on contextual events in ways that prompt the audience to reconsider ideas about governance, imperialism and colonialist exploitation. Caliban for example, is represented as far more than a one dimensional ‘monster’ figure, for the dramatist gives this debased, embittered and lowly brute some of the most lyrical language in the play; his language conveying the reality of the dispossession and enslavement he has suffered under Prospero’s oppression. While his attempted rape of Miranda and murderous plotting is not condoned, some empathy for his plight is triggered by audience recognition of what he has lost with Prospero’s arrival and magical power.

Setting

Action in a Pastoral Romance is set in remote and isolated places that serve as locations of refuge or escape. Inexplicable events tend to happen which add a strange, enchanted aura to the location which impacts on characters in different ways. For some it prompts reflection, self-awareness or growth while others remain immune to its transformative power. Shakespeare chooses an unnamed island, described by Caliban as being ‘ten leagues beyond man’s life’ as well as ‘Uninhabitable, and almost inaccessible’. Gonzalo refers to the discomforting unfamiliarity of ‘contraries’ of this barren place which also has an ‘eerie’ haunting sort of music. As aptly observed by Prospero, this confined, microcosmic setting of sprites and spirits, ‘Tis new to thee’. Physical dislocation and emotional disorientation help provide the transformative catalyst for reassessment and self-exploration for some of those who find themselves metaphorically cast adrift.

Fragmentary comments build a composite picture in the audience’s mind of a ‘bare island with a rugged coastline, indented with caves, rocky cliffs and outcrops. Pockets of heavily wooded forest are found, such as the ‘linden-grove’ that protects Prospero’s cave from the worst weather and which provide the logs that Caliban and Ferdinand must carry. What enables Prospero and Miranda to survive such an inhospitable environment is the fact that Caliban had revealed sources of fresh water and ‘every fertile inch’ of land. His welcoming generosity had however, been exploited and left him enslaved and tormented by magic. He has been stripped of home and autonomy, ‘in dreaming/the clouds me thought would open, and show riches/ready to drop upon me, so when I waked/I cried to dream again.’
The audience is taken to a magical world, described by Ariel in Act III as a ‘desolate isle’. It has antithetical qualities; physically bleak and yet capable of ‘giving delight, hurting not’. The motley group that find themselves thrust together on this foreign shore, similarly exhibit differing behaviour and outlook. This differentiates the virtuous who show repentence for their wrongdoing from the villainous like Antonio who remain unmoved and beyond redemption. Their differing reactions to the spectacles and illusory experiences conjured by Prospero’s magic indicate their character and moral worth. Physical dislocation is commonly used in Pastoral Romance to disorient characters so that they are prompted to reassessment of their actions and their relationships.

**Characters**

Rulers are normally accompanied into exile or isolation by loyal companions but Prospero only has his infant daughter as a human companion until he orchestrates his enemies being cast ashore. Shakespeare replaces stock Pastoral character with more complex personalities like Ariel and Caliban. Parental, sibling, master and servant, ruler and courtiers are reflective of the social and historical context of the play. The antithetical villainous or virtuous characters are drawn from mixed social backgrounds but Shakespeare retains the typical pastoral hero and heroine as representative figures but without developing them to any great depth. The ‘admirable Miranda’ personifies goodness, and unsullied by the evils of civilisation, an equally virtuous suitor, finds her ‘So perfect and so peerless’. While the pastoral resolution phase typically sees wrongs forgiven and estranged kinsmen reconciled, the positive natures of some on Prospero’s island are offset by the duplicitous Sebastian and Trinculo and the unrepentant Antonio.

**Plotlines and Themes**

The typical five Act Elizabethan structure is used but it opens in the midst of crisis or dissension before a series of complications and reversals finally achieve resolution and restored stability. Reconciliation, repentance and forgiveness are recurring themes and these are reinforced by variations of the binary oppositions of innocence or goodness versus evil or wickedness, youth versus age, and superstition versus reality. Two parallel plots are often found that involve relationships between parents and their children or relatives and can involve the forces of fate, fortune and providence. The evils committed by the parents or elders of one generation being ameliorated or overcome by the promise of marriage and future offspring in the next. The love plot between the hero and heroine is usually beset by problems that threaten to keep them apart for a time before they can wed. Shakespeare uses genre device in developing the instant affection between Ferdinand and Miranda.

Disorientation serves as the greatest trigger for character change in Pastoral Romance for changed context prompts personal reflection and altered outlook as happens with Prospero and most of his captives. Shakespeare interweaves such typical conventions into his nine scenes but adds greater character and conceptual depth. The forces of fate, fortune and providence more often found in tragedy, blend with Prospero’s quest to confine and control his enemies and orchestrate conditions that encourage insight and repentance. The triumph of virtue over villainy in varied inter-relationships affirms the benefits of social harmony and stability. Forgiveness of even the worst acts of callous greed and malice encourages positive transformation in some but not all, showing the benefits of social harmony and moral behaviour.
Characterisation

Prospero

The protagonist's comments, actions and magical power, help develop awareness of broader issues at play than those commonly dealt with in Pastoral Romance. Parallel experience is typically used in the sub-genre to differentiate virtuous and villainous characters but the play's strong political subtext affirms the extent to which filial betrayal and political overthrow has disrupted the 'natural order'. The microcosmic island scenario echoes a much larger macrocosmic representation of how ambition, greed and a colonialistic quest for power can instigate not only the discovery of other worlds and cultures but also their overthrow and exploitation. Shakespeare's represenation of his flawed master illusionist begins with the play's opening tempest which terrifies crew and passengers. His 'enemies' are brought under his power and cast ashore on this strange and 'barren' isle where he has been forced to live for the past twelve years. Their feelings of displacement and vulnerability echo what he had experienced years before, and similarly encourage in many but not all, moral reassessment of human relationships on political, societal and personal levels.

Antonio's guilt is foregrounded in the contextual details of what is revealed to Miranda, simultaneously informing daughter and audience alike, of who they really are and how they came to be cut off from human contact. Exile has prompted introspection and recognition of personal flaws and failings; Prospero admitting his selfishly indulgent quest for knowledge, 'my library/Was dukedom large enough'. Personal obsession had undermined his role as leader which enabled Antonio to seize control but what really condemns him is the callous heartlessness of abandoning his brother and niece to the waves. His lack of humanity is countered by the compassionate actions of Gonzales who not only provides provisions but also some of his master's precious books. It is fitting that an embittered deposed Duke, has effectively reversed the roles of powerful and powerless as the castaways struggle ashore, initially unaware of who has survived and who has perished.

Comments and actions demonstrate that Prospero can be quick tempered and petulant at times, even ungrateful to Ariel. Such faults humanise the protagonist and quickly show that tragedy can ironically spark positive self assessment and altered outlook. Haughty arrogance is shown towards Caliban however, despite the life-saving help he gave when father and daughter first arrived. Once Prospero's authority was challenged, Caliban was deposed from power, enslaved and kept submissive by magical spells and demeaning treatment. These differing depictions of dispossession and exploitation have echoes of the colonialist voyages of discovery happening at the time the play was written, showing the benefits of those in authority and the suffering of the oppressed. Prospero's folly has been offset by new-gained insight and heightened understanding in the same way that tempest will serve as a redemptive catalyst for many of the castaways. This is part of his strictly mapped out plan to punish his foes in ways that will make them question their wrongdoing.

Shakespeare uses three key illusions as prompts for penitent reflection; the Harpy's banquet, the betrothal masque and revelation of Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess. He assesses their worth at the beginning of the final act, 'Now does my project gather to a head'. His hold over his foes is also visually reinforced by the spellbound magic circle but as his redemptive plan has largely served its purpose, Ariel is instructed to 'break their charms, restore their senses and they shall be themselves'. Displacement coupled with suffering, is used as a catalyst for self-discovery and a reason for altering outlook and values. Prospero realises that reconciliation would be difficult for his 'unnatural' brother, but despite his good cause for severe retribution, he favours mercy. Convinced that his son is dead, Alonso's grief elicits contemplation of personal flaws including his involvement in political intrigue. Penitence prompts moral re-evaluation which is rewarded when he finds
his son not only alive but happily in love. Both fathers bless their betrothal and the dynastic peace that it offers. Antonio's intransigent and unrepentant stance affirms that not all are capable of salvation while simultaneously affirming Prospero's moral superiority in ensuring that 'noble reason' triumph over 'fury'. The sheer willpower needed when he says, 'For you, most wretched sir, whom to call brother/Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive / Thy rankest fault'. ...I forgive thy rankest fault' is evident in his terse and emotionally loaded diction. Antonio is unresponsive and without any sign of remorse, 'I feel not/in the deity of my bosom.' He is forced to accede however to Prospero's legitimacy as the ruler of Milan when they leave the island and return home.

Honest appraisal of personal flaws is a pivotal part of the redemptive process, for Prospero has come to recognise that 'virtue' and reconciliation must take the place of 'vengeance' and enmity. Caliban had been considered a 'thing of darkness', but Prospero must now acknowledge him 'mine' with the realisation, 'the creatures of this island...they are of monstrous shape at more kind, gentle than our human generation.' Self-discovery also stresses that leadership should exhibit kingly ideals of legitimacy, personal worth and merciful justice. The solemnised union between Miranda and Ferdinand validates their innate nobility but requires personal sacrifices if Prospero is to be worthy to rule, 'I'll drown my book...I'll break my staff'. The restoration of justice also requires the liberation of Caliban and Ariel, 'thou shalt ere long be free' once the mariners have been fetched. Magnanimity has been demonstrated in tangible form and he can 'thence retire me to my Milan' and resume his political responsibilities. Dressed in his Ducal robes, he announces, 'Our revels now are ended' marking the end of the staged masques rather than any specific farewell to the stage but it has often been read this way because he likens himself to a playwright by asking the audience for their applause.

Ariel

Ariel's first appearance shows a desire for 'liberty', which is ascribed with the words 'Be free' that begin the last line of the drama. This desire for freedom is also shown when Prospero is reminded in Act I, 'I have done thee worthy service,/Told thee no lies, made no mistakings, serv'd / Without or grudge or grumblings.' At times, Prospero can address Ariel in threatening tones as being 'moody' lying as a 'malignant thing' but typically, more affectionate terms are used, including 'my bird', 'my industrious servant', 'my chick' or 'my diligence'. Virtuous and willing to please, this 'airy spirit' is described by Prospero as having been 'too delicate' to have followed the 'abhorred commands' of Sycorax and was therefore imprisoned in a tree 'by help of her more potent ministers'. Ariel adopts female forms including the Harpy, Ceres or Juno as well as water-nymph and 'marsh-light'. This 'tricky spirit' is often depicted on stage as male but no specific gender is mentioned in the text.

Ariel's wondrous talents enable Prospero's tasks to be achieved in seconds or done 'with a thought' as mentioned in Act IV. The tempestuous storm is conjured in such a way that Neptune himself; 'Seem to besiege and make his bold waves tremble'. Prospero praises the 'brave spirit...so firm, so constant' who delights in the magical sounds, singing and strange music that frightens Trinculo and Stephano whereas Caliban is calmed by its beauty. Four of the play's songs are sung by Ariel, who also plays his pipe but an admonishing role is also played when he rebukes the 'men of sin' for supplanting Prospero and mocks the useless threat they pose when they draw their swords. Although non-human, Ariel shows empathetic compassion for the suffering experienced by Prospero's castaways, suggesting to his master, 'If you now beheld them, your affections would become tender—mine would, were I human.' Ariel joyously responds to Prospero's granting of liberty.
Caliban

Shakespeare’s representation of Caliban, reflects many Elizabethan perceptions and assumptions about the ‘savage’ natives discovered in the New World. Colonial expansion prompted philosophical debate about notions of nature or nurture, and considerations of whether ‘natural man’ as many critics see Caliban is bestial or unspoiled by the taint of civilisation. Caliban is an anagram for a 17th century spelling of ‘canibal’ suggesting a rejection rather than an embracing of Prospero’s form of education. In punishment, this ‘freaked whelp hag-born’ son of Sycorax, has been usurped and reduced to brutish enslavement. His pregnant mother had been abandoned on the island by sailors and his swarthy appearance is described as ‘misshapen’ and ‘disproportion’d’. Alonso thinks he is ‘a strange thing as e’er I looked on’ but more derogatory terms including ‘demi-devil’, ‘born devil’ or monster allude to his having been sired by an incubus. Prospero prefers to use slave references rather than his name, juxtaposing ‘this most lying slave’ and the deposed Duke in a master-servant relationship often used in Pastoral Romance.

Initially, he had been treated more amicably, ‘Thou strokedst me and madst much of me’ as well as educating and teaching him to speak but he later feels aggrieved by what he sees as ingratitude for the help he gave them when they first arrived, saying they only taught him ‘how to curse’. Their relationship is shattered by his attempted rape of Miranda who now despises him and calls him ‘villain’, while her father’s condemnation is more abusive, calling him a ‘poisonous slave’, ‘filth’ and ‘thing of darkness’. Character contrasts with Ferdinand highlight that Caliban resents having to carry logs whereas the young lover is quite happy to do so in the belief expressed in the middle act that ‘some kinds of baseness / Are nobly undergone; and most poor matters / Point to rich ends’. Whereas Miranda views Caliban as being ‘a thing most brutish’, she feels Ferdinand is ‘a thing divine’. Her criticism seems warranted when Caliban enjoys watching Trinculo get beaten and even wants to join in, ‘Beat him enough; after a little time I’ll beat him too’.

The greatest challenge to stereotypical perspectives however is Caliban’s use of verse and eloquent language, especially when he is referring to the ‘sweet airs’ and ‘sounds’ of his island home. He offers reassurance, ‘Be not afeared, the isle is full of noises’ which help soothe him to sleep, offering refuge from his enslavement, ‘When I waked / I cried to dream again’. His intellectual superiority to his fellow plotters is most apparent in his use of verse whereas Stephano and Trinculo use prose. Whereas the nobles denigrate Caliban’s appearance and behaviour, he can be equally eloquent as shown by his use of religious metaphor in hoping to ‘be wiser hereafter/And seek for grace’. Some critics cast Prospero as the usurper, arguing that Caliban’s situation echoes how the Duke was overthrown.

Miranda and Ferdinand

Prospero, the ‘prince of power’ has brought up a daughter, ‘perfect and so peerless’ who is still only fourteen years old and that coupled with her secluded upbringing far from civilisation makes her naivety credible. Other than Caliban, her father has been her only company and benchmark for attitudes and values and yet, as becomes apparent in the opening scenes, she has not been told anything about how and why they came to live on this island. Her comments suggests that she has been curious but that her father has withheld information until now. Her interjections and exclamations and expression show sensitivity, a lively interest in their past, and innate intelligence. Her compassion is clear when she fears for those who seem in real danger during the storm. She also shows a compassionate nature when fearing for those on the ‘brave vessel’ who seem in genuine danger during the ferocious storm; that makes it likely they will be ‘Dash’d all to pieces!’
MIRANDA: IF YOU'LL SIT DOWN, I'LL BEAR YOUR LOADS THE WHILE, PROMISE ME THAT I'LL CARRY IT TO THE FILE. ACT IV, SCENE 2.
She pities the ‘poor souls she thinks have perished before Prospero dispels her fears saying, ‘There’s no harm done’ because the ‘direful spectacle of the wreck, which touch’d / The very virtue of compassion in thee’ has been illusory. Her questions trigger Prospero’s revelation of past events, but her main dramatic function is her romantic relationship with the young prince who had battled the ‘surge most swoln’ onto the shore. He is spellbound by his first sight of her, thinking she is ‘most sure the goddess of this island’. Mutual attraction is a sub-genre convention and clearly besotted, he sees Miranda as ‘admirable’ which is necessary if they are to fall in love and be betrothed in the space of three hours. They are well-matched, shown by his response to the ‘wonder’ of the island and willing submission to Prospero’s servitude in order to win her affection and her father’s approval. He is even prepared to renounce his kingdom and remain on the island so that he can be with her.

Their unrealistic whirlwind romance is typical of Pastoral Romance. His courteous restraint contrasts markedly with Caliban’s lust and attempted rape. The strength of her affection even prompts her to challenge her father’s authority by trying to limit the tasks Ferdinand must do. Although she feels guilty, she even disobeys her father’s explicit instruction not to tell the Prince her name or that she loves him. In a largely functional dramatic role as a benchmark of feminine virtue and worth, Miranda has few significant lines and no soliloquies although several characters discuss her. Caliban tells Stephano that Prospero ‘Calls her a nonpareil’, reinforced again at the beginning of Act IV, when her father says, ‘thou shalt find she will outstrip all praise’. Her isolated upbringing is reinforced when she stares in wonder at the ‘goodly creatures’ here assembled. Nobility was an important consideration of Renaissance dynastic marriage arrangements as affirmed by the loveless marriage organised by Alonso for his daughter.

Miranda’s virginity is equally paramount, and bluntly discussed at the beginning of Act IV. An unsullied betrothal is necessary if she is to be deemed fit to be the Prince’s wife. Marriage was a political tool, organised for financial, reproductive and security purposes without any consideration to emotional attachments. Sexual restraint is vital if Ferdinand and Miranda are to marry and thereby help heal old enmities and foster future peace via political reconciliation with Alonso. When viewing Caliban’s attempted rape in this light, it is more understandable that it was abhorred for it would have devalued Miranda as a potential royal spouse and thereby ruin Prospero’s plans. When he reveals them playing chess, the game takes on metaphorical weight as both a game of strategy but also of politics and power. Ferdinand is a future ruler and their dynastic union and the issue that will flow from it, will achieve a more secure future for all.

**Alonso and Gonzalo**

Prospero tells his daughter in the opening Act that Alonso, the King of Naples had been his ‘enemy’ and did ‘extirpate me and mine / Out of the dukedom’ by conspiring with Antonio to levy a treacherous army and drive them from the city. Personal animosity had combined with political ambition to couple the duchy of Milan to the crown of Naples. His complicity in putting the deposed Duke and young daughter adrift in a rotten boat is undeniably venal, showing a capacity and willingness to betray honour and moral scruples for corrupt, personal profit. When we learn that overthrow is followed by casting them off in a boat so rotten that ‘the very rats / instinctively have quit’ and without tackle, sail or mast but only a ‘rotten carcass of a butt’ they would surely die, makes Alonso’s criminal involvement reprehensible. All but killing them in cold blood, the actions of Antonio and Alonso meant to kill the exiled Duke and his offspring, countered by Gonzalo’s life-saving provision of food, water and books.
Alonso was motivated by personal animosity towards Prospero as well as political greed and ambition in wanting to add the duchy of Milan to the crown of Naples. The reconciliation orchestrated by the master illusionist shows he has become a political strategist showing great restraint given how his foes had conspired to set them adrift in a boat so rotten that even, ‘the very rats / instinctively have quit’ and without tackle, sail or mast and only a ‘rotten carcass of a butt’ virtually unseaworthy. Personal suffering makes Alonso recognise personal guilt; blaming himself for marrying off his daughter to the Prince of Tunis and so causing the death of his son. At the magical banquet, Ariel stresses the need for punishment for their ‘foul deed’ in supplanting ‘good Prospero’. Disguised as a threatening harpy, Ariel tells them they are foolish to think they could harm the ‘ministers of Fate-the elements’. It is suggested that Ferdinand is dead and Alonso is told he will suffer, ‘Ling’ring perdition, worse than any death.’ Inconsolable, the grieving father reflects on personal guilt and regrets his involvement in overthrowing Prospero, making him less villainous than Antonio.

Old Gonzalo is depicted as an ‘honourable man’, similar in inherent goodness and compassion to young Miranda. He is unstintingly loyal to his grief stricken king and makes futile attempts to console him. His trust in Providence was evident in the opening tempest and despite the constant mockery from Sebastian, remains doggedly optimistic, even talking about his visionary ideas for a Utopian society that would not need for governance by magistrates, wealth or powerful leaders. Prospero fondly acknowledges Gonzalo’s ‘charity’ in providing them with the essentials that kept them alive as well as some treasured books that helped him refine his Art. In the final Act, the trustworthy courtier talks about the impact of divine providence, exaggerating that everybody has attained self-knowledge.

**Antonio and Sebastian**

Prospero tells Miranda about her ‘false uncle’ and is clearly still bitter about the way he had neglected ‘worldly ends’ and foolishly cast government ‘upon my brother’. He is still amazed ‘that a brother should / Be so perfidious’ and with unexpected insight for a girl so young and inexperienced, Miranda says, ‘Good wombs have borne bad sons’. Antonio is clearly not only ‘bad’ but still treacherous shown by his implacable villainy. Rather than any hint of shame, guilt or remorse, he remains egotistically arrogant, prompting the plot to murder Alonso and Gonzalo, so that Sebastian will be King instead of his brother. The language used by Antonio and Sebastian is largely sarcastic and mocking and Prospero’s brother voices no signs of moral conscience; ‘Twenty consciences that stand ‘twixt me and Milan, candied be they and melt, ere they molest!’ Sebastian and Antonio are largely undifferentiated fellow conspirators, except for Sebastian’s ‘hereditary sloth’. The unwarranted nature of their acts of betrayal make their behaviour even more condemnatory.

**Stephano and Trinculo**

These are typical of the fools found in Pastoral Romance and are used as character foils and comic relief. Stephano calls Caliban a ‘brave monster’, who when drunk with ‘celestial liquor’, thinks Stephano is a ‘brave god’ and is ready to ‘kneel to him’. The butler’s coarse language and drunken behaviour shows his lack of any positive qualities. Trinculo is a trembling coward who fears the weather, the island’s music and ‘devils’ but he also earns no sympathy from the audience due to his mocking treatment of Caliban. Recognition of Trinculo’s inferiority shows Caliban’s superior intelligence, ‘What a pied ninny’s this!’ Stephano and Trinculo serve as grotesque, parodic versions of Prospero who twelve years earlier, had abused Caliban’s generosity in showing him how to survive on the island. In Act III, II, these drunken and petty thieves also parody the duplicitous Antonio and Sebastian. Caliban’s short speech about the island’s ‘Sounds and sweet airs’ gives him a voice that adds complexity to his character and some empathy from the audience, unlike his utterly villainous fellow conspirators.
Conceptual Focus

Magic and Verisimilitude

Illusion prompts discovery and transformation by distorting and challenging reality. New experiences test the castaways’ senses, while strange spectacles leave them awestruck and full of wonder. What they see, hear and feel causes them to speculate about different types of places and relationships as well as reconsider what should be valued in life. Strange creatures like Caliban and the figures in the masques are discovered as is a newfound appreciation about what has been lost. Pastoral Romance distorts reality in order to reaffirm moral truths and timeless values about the importance of social harmony. By being literally forced to look with new eyes, cathartic understanding becomes possible. Prospero’s ‘potent art...rough magic’ magic is used to bemuse the senses; and Caliban warns of the threat posed by Miranda’s father because ‘His art is of such power’.

Prospero’s magic, unlike Ariel’s supernatural powers, has been learned from his books as Caliban mentions in his advice to Stefano and Trinculo, ‘Remember First to possess his books,’ Caliban says to Stefano and Trinculo, ‘for without them He’s but a sot’. His books have empowered the exiled Duke on Caliban’s isle. Ironically, however, they were also the cause of his downfall by drawing him away from carrying out his proper duties as ruler. Ariel’s skills and Prospero’s learned magic help create the impression of a surreal world; enhancing feelings of disorientation and vulnerability that the castaways feel. The island’s ‘marvellous sweet music’ is often mentioned, capable of mesmerising or frightening the senses, used by Ariel to charm the mariners to sleep or to awaken them when necessary such as his singing preventing a murderous act. Prospero even charms his daughter into sleep, making her drowsy, ‘Thou art inclined to sleep; ‘tis a good dullness, and give it way’.

The most spectacular example of Prospero’s power are the play’s masque scenes, the betrothal masque described by Ferdinand as ‘a most majestic vision’. Shakespeare incorporates them as examples of an increasingly popular dramatic device at the time of composition. They were incredibly expensive to stage because they featured elaborate sets, costumes, masks and stage effects. They were also often accompanied by dancers and musicians which all served to heighten the perception of verisimilitude or false reality. The visual spectacle was combined however with simple plots that were typically based on themes, characters and Gods and Goddesses from Greek and Roman mythology. Virtues and vices were symbolically represented as Shakespeare does in ‘The Tempest’ to alter personal perspective and promote reflective soul-searching and the need to ‘rectify our knowledge’. The combined impact of supernatural occurrences, strange illusions and imaginative masques become part of of the chastening and transformative process Prospero has planned.

References to fate, fortune and providence have also been partly responsible for bringing former foes to this island and therefore under his control. The role played by such forces is metaphorically interwoven in the play with the motifs of sleep and dreaming. In Act I, Ferdinand describes how, ‘My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up’ while Sebastian in Act II refers to the, ‘sleepy language, and thou speak’st/Out of thy sleep.’ What experience and personal suffering teaches is also embedded in dream imagery, ‘And rather like a dream than an assurance’ but Prospero stresses it best in Act IV, ‘We are such stuff/As dreams are made on, and our little life/Is rounded with a sleep.’ The creation of an imaginary world prompts many discoveries by stressing the discrepancy between what is real and what is illusionary as well as what is morally valued or rejected as false and venal.
Discovery and Emancipation

Delusions, illusions and dreams force characters to ponder what they have seen. Self-discovery has the power to challenge false or flawed assumptions and alter perspective in positive ways. Transformation depends on individuals and their inter-relationships but insight usually results from facing adversity. This highlights that adversity can often be the catalyst for transformative understanding and self-awareness. Shakespeare makes this evident in the way disaster can ironically become the impetus for personal and moral growth as well as affirming the social importance of compassion, justice and redemption. The fusing of past, present and future stresses the benefits of self-awareness in political characters like Prospero and Alonso. Prospero’s twelve years of lonely exile have forced the introspection required for the realisation of personal complicity in his overthrow.

His negation of duty had, ‘in my false brother / Awak’ed an evil nature’. His selfish misuse of knowledge had created the situation where ‘foul deeds’ were committed against him. Painful self-knowledge however, becomes the vehicle for his emancipation, seeing a better alternative future than one embittered by feelings of vengeance. He finds the strength to forgive even his ‘unnatural’ and ‘perfidious’ brother but in Act V, he makes it clear that penitence is required for his other foe, ‘Most cruelly / Didst thou, Alonso, use me and my daughter’, he and others described, as being ‘worse than devils’ and ‘rabble’ and ‘valets’.

Whereas Antonio is beyond salvation, Alonso accepts the rebuke and resigns, entreating pardon for his wrongdoing.

By ‘being penitent’ for his personal shortcomings, Prospero is more willing to acknowledge the contrition and atonement of others. This confirms his moral worth and strength of character, which entitles him to the return of his lost dukedom. His superior worth is stressed by his having ’pardon the deceiver’ and proffered reconciliation rather than punishment. Similarly, Alonso had realised how his part in the conspiratorial overthrow of Prospero had disrupted rightful rule as well as showing a callous disregard for life. His blessing for the marriage of Ferdinand to the woman, who in infancy had nearly died because of his actions, marks him as being worthy to return to civilisation as an enlightened leader. Miranda’s innate personality and education, combined with positive nurturing has made her an admirable and intelligent woman. The marriage between the young lovers that Prospero’s arts have encouraged will hopefully redress the wrongs of their respective fathers and promote social harmony and peace.

The enclosed and enchanted setting has allowed Shakespeare to contrast nature and society in ways that metaphorically stress notions of personal discovery and spiritual rebirth. The play challenges the assumption that civilised society is superior to primitive cultures by showing that the heartlessness of Antonio and Sebastian is more fundamentally monstrous than Caliban’s desire for autonomy and freedom. Discovery and emancipation are fused after Ariel is told to ‘break their charms, restore their senses and they shall be themselves’. The magician’s decision that the castaways ‘Shalt have freedom’ including Caliban who can then acknowledge, ‘How fine my master is’ testifies to how outlook has been changed for several characters. Sea imagery in Act V stresses the purgative cleansing of the ‘shore of their minds’ by the traumatic ‘sea-change’ they have experienced. His future will be marked by awareness that ‘every third thought will be of my grave’ but he asks Ariel in a last service before he is set free, to provide ‘calm seas, auspicious gales’ and the audience’s applause to fill their vessel’s sails for their return voyage home.
Dramatic Structure

I Exposition
(Act I, Scene i and ii) Storm crisis is realistically conveyed in dialogue and sound imagery. Some ideas about characters are revealed via comments made by Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian, and Gonzalo.

Focus shifts from the storm and shipwreck to those on shore. Miranda is told, a prologue summary by her father about how he was overthrown and exiled. Exposition finishes once Ariel and Caliban are introduced and Ferdinand arrives.

II Complication and rising action
(Act I, Scene ii) Ferdinand and Miranda fall instantly in love but a complication arises from Prospero’s inference that he is against the match.

(Act II, Scene i and ii) Gonzalo voices utopian ideals while Alonso and the others are put into a magical sleep. Antonio and Sebastian’s plot to kill the king is foiled by Ariel. Prospero’s serious machinations against his enemies are offset by the comic sub-plot by Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano

(Act III, Scene i and ii) Ferdinand and Miranda plight their troth while Caliban and others plot to kill Prospero.

III Climax, crisis or turning point
(Act III, Scene iii) Antonio, Sebastian and Alonso are brought to a magical banquet prepared by Prospero. The banquet vanishes amidst thunder and lightning and Ariel’s Harpie warning to the ‘three men of sin’ of their punishment.

IV Resolution or falling action
(Act IV, Scene i) The romance between Miranda and Ferdinand is recognised by Prospero; their marriage contract marked by the betrothal Masque. After Prospero utters the farewell to his actors, Ariel enters with news of the collapse of the Caliban plot.

(Act V, Scene i, 1-171)Prospero now has all his enemies in his power, and he reveals his identity when Ariel gives him his hat and rapier that he wore when he had been the Duke of Milan.

V Catastrophe or denouement
(Act V, Scene i, Epilogue) Ferdinand and Miranda are ‘discovered’ playing chess, and Alonso realises that his son is alive and betrothed to Prospero’s daughter. The drama closes with universal forgiveness and the ‘restitution of all things.’
Dramatic Style and Language Use

Shakespeare atypically observes Aristotle's 'three unities of time, place, and action' in this play to clarify the plot and create a sense of urgency. The impression is given that events are following a tightly organised schedule and plan. Events are conveyed on this non-realistic, microcosmic isolated setting in a 'tragi-comedy' style, which combines the dramatic forms of comedy, tragedy, and pastoral romance. This gives greater dramatic scope, allowing the playwright to manipulate serious themes, mixed conventions, and character types with mixed emotional overtones. Metaphorical analogies made between nature's seasonal rhythms and human existence are offset by different types of humour ranging from the sexual banter and crudity of Trinculo and Stephano, to the mocking sarcasm of Antonio and Sebastian and Ariel's mischievous trickery.

The play is mostly written in blank verse, iambic pentameter but the verse-form often mimics the pace, tone and nuance of everyday speech to the extent that at times, it is almost indistinguishable. This is evident in Prospero's speech to his daughter in the opening act when he talks about 'My brother and thy uncle'. This adds realism and breaks up the rhythm. At other times, individual lines preserve the lyrical smoothness and harmony typical of Shakespeare's blank verse set against lines that lack rhythm. Soliloquy and dramatic monologues lack the intensity of those found in tragedy but they are still conceptually significant as seen when Prospero talks in Act V of what has been achieved through his use of magic.

The nobles typically speak in verse but characters of lower social rank such as Stefano and Trinculo use prose, their low-comedy scenes lowering the tone whereas blank verse has greater dignity which heightens the atmosphere. The boatswain's use of prose in the opening scene conveys the excitement of the storm and the insolence that comes with the urgency of what needs to be done if they are to survive the tempest. In the final scene however, the boatswain uses blank verse and his language is more calm and respectful, telling the king that the ship is safe and sound. Caliban uses both language forms, revealing his complexity of character. Prospero's language contains imperatives that help assert his power but it also has some of the play's richest imagery that includes references to sea, storm, sleep and dreaming. Sound imagery is used to suggest the clamorous noises of the terrible storm that opens the play and many of the play's compound words also relate to and reinforce the power of the sea: 'our sea-sorrow', 'a sea-change', 'sea-swallowed', 'still-closing waters' and 'never-surfeted sea'. The play also has seven songs, four of which are sung by Ariel who also creates the 'heavenly music' mentioned in the final act.

Theatrical spectacle such as the masque scene and supernatural occurrences serve as 'some oracle to rectify our knowledge'. Most of the masque sections are expressed in iambic pentameters, using typical Jacobean rhymed couplets. The smoother harmony and use of more end-stopped lines creates a more artificial regularity which suits the sort of play within a play feature of the masque. This is evident in the inflated rhetoric and lengthy exchange between Iris, Ceres and Juno in the Act IV betrothal masque. Shakespeare also manipulates sentence length to control action and pace. Lengthier narrative sections of dialogue, such as Prospero's description of his brother's treachery, making greater use of longer, more detailed sentences while a shorter, terser structure is used in scenes where there is greater action or emotion. Questions and exclamations can add force and focus and repetition of words and phrases can also add emphasis to what is being said. Alliteration is frequently used to either strengthen the rhythm or heighten melody, 'Let me remember thee what thou has promised'.


Key Scene Analysis

Opening Tempest Scene

This short but dramatic storm scene begins amidst the sound of 'a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning' when the ship is about to run 'aground' on the rocks. The Master urges his mariners to 'bestir, bestir' before the Boatswain takes over and rouses his men to action. The passengers have obviously ignored his request to 'keep below' in their cabins and now 'mar' the mariner's efforts by being on deck. Gonzalo foolishly requests patience but the Boatswain exclaims 'the roarers' care not 'for the name of king' and for them to go 'Hence!' In the midst of crisis, social status holds no sway, regardless of 'whom thou hast aboard'. The need to avoid disaster by immediate action legitimises his calls for the courtiers to 'trouble us not' and to just get 'Out of our way'. Gonzalo's use of gallows humour 'make the rope of his destiny our cable' shows he recognises the danger. The nobles are named but the mariners are identified by their special nautical role. Urgency is embedded in the Boatswain's nautical language, 'Down with the topmast! Yare! lower, lower!' He is stunned when the passengers return, 'Have you a mind to sink?' Antonio and Sebastian respond to such criticism with a torrent of abuse, outraged by his lack of deference to their status, and calling him an 'uncharitable dog', 'curs' and 'whoreson'.

With waves pushing the ship ever closer to the rocky shore, the nobles must learn that social protocols have no value here. Gonzalo's aside suggests offense at Antonio's abusive threats to the Boatswain, King and Prince already below deck at their prayers. When the wet mariners return and declare 'All lost', disaster is confirmed and prayers seem the only salvation left. Antonio's continued vitriolic attack sets him apart from the others, despite the crisis that threatens everyone's life. Stage directions indicate terrified cries for 'Mercy' or 'Farewell', and five repetitions of the phrase 'We split', the hopelessness of their situation prompting audience empathy for the victims. Gonzalo uses prose to voice his terror, 'Now I would give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground' which shows that adversity can utterly alter outlook and evaluation of what is important. His wish for a small parcel of dry land also foreshadows where everyone onboard will ironically end up, as providence and Prospero's arts have planned.

Act Three — Scene 3 — Banquet

The banquet masque is an important turning point in the play for it triggers Alonso's reconciliation with Prospero. It begins with 'Thunder and lightning' and the entry of Ariel 'like a harpy' who makes the illusory banquet vanish just as the 'three men of sin' are about to eat. They are addressed as 'Being most unfit to live', and mocked as fools when they draw their swords for these 'ministers of Fate' are 'indefeasible'. The prime 'business' of this scene is that they 'remember' how they 'did supplant good Prospero', before committing the 'foul deed' of casting 'him and his innocent child' into the sea. They are warned that the 'powers' have not forgotten, as shown by the punishing storm and Alonso's loss of his son. Contrition is prompted when Ariel speaks of further suffering in the form of 'Lingering perdition, worse than any death'. Before the Shapes enter to carry off the table, they are warned they will know nothing but 'heart-sorrow' before vanishing 'in thunder'.

Past crimes will be punished, and Prospero is pleased with Ariel's performance and that his spectacular 'high charms' have helped 'knit up' and distract his enemies. Now 'in my power', he leaves to visit Ferdinand and his own 'loved darling.' Alonso and Sebastian react differently to what they have witnessed, Alonso seeming traumatised and grief-stricken, 'O, it is monstrous, monstrous' in the belief that his 'trespass' has caused his son being bedded 'I' the ooze'. He heads off seeking to be 'with him there lie madd.' Antonio seems unmoved however while Sebastian displays arrogant confidence that he can 'fight' them 'one fiend at a time'. Chorus like, Gonzalo now comments on the behaviour of the
others, describing them as ‘desperate: their great guilt, / Like poison given to work a great
time after, / Now ‘gins to bite the spirits’. He begs Adrian to follow them and stop them
‘from what this ecstasy / May now provoke them to.’ The loyal courtier has committed no
crime, but he shows compassion for the guilty. Although he has witnessed the banquet, he
registers no fear; some critics suggesting a link to the banquet scene in ‘Macbeth’ where
only the guilty witness Banquo’s blood smeared ghost. The banquet masque links crime and
punishment, by prompting the guilty to contemplate the dire consequences of their actions.

Act Four – Betrothal masque
Before the masque begins, which takes up most of the act, Prospero gives his blessing to
Ferdinand and Miranda. This is accompanied however by a stern warning to Ferdinand that
he take care not to break Miranda’s “virgin-knot” before the wedding has been solemnized.
The masque itself affirms the harmonious social function of marriage in accordance
with the natural order of life. Stock characters include reapers and nymphs, their role to
celebrate fertility and seasonal change through typical Pastoral Romance motifs. Prospero
is the stage manager, ‘Spirits which by mine art / I have from their confines called to enact
/ My present fancies’ but the masque requires Ariel’s many talents. These include the soft
music used to introduce it; ‘Now come, my Ariel’ Bring a corollary, Rather than want a
spirit: appear and pertly!/ No tongue! All eyes! Be silent...’ it breaks up the main action
with a spectacular display of the power of magic; Prince Ferdinand describing it as ‘a most
majestic vision’ and acknowledges his ‘wondered father’.

Structurally, the masque also marks the completion of the lover's courtship and is clearly
distinguished from the rest of the play by the use of a more formal style than the use of
unrhymed verse. This includes rhyming couplets and the sort of elevated language that is
used by the mythical goddesses Iris, Juno and Ceres, the goddess of harvest. This trio herald
the ‘contract of true love’ which challenges the typical marital arrangements of the time
between noble families which were political, dynastic contracts not requiring any emotional
attachment between the couple. Juxtaposing artifice with and realism, the goddesses give
blessings of honour, prosperity and plenty, suggesting that the wedding will be fruitful.
Marriage represents social harmony and triumph over discord. At the conclusion of the
masque, Prospero addresses Ferdinand and tells him that ‘We are such...’ which reminds
them all, including the audience, that the masque, with all its heavenly creatures, and
magical wonders, is not real.

Epilogue
Only when Prospero is alone on-stage, does he announce that his charms are ‘all
o’erthrown’. Minus his magical power, books and staff, he asks his audience to ‘let your
indulgence set me free’ through their applause. Critical debate has suggested that the
epilogue is the dramatist’s farewell to theatre but some scholars challenge that it is meant
as personal allegory. Frank Kermode argues that ‘The Epistle – one of ten of Shakespeare’s
that survive’ was ‘a conventional appeal for applause’. Similarly, Shakespearean academic
David Crystal states that during Elizabethan times, the epilogue was ‘a conventional
expression of humility at the end of a play, apologizing for any inadequacy in the
performance and asking for applause’. While ‘The Tempest’ was Shakespeare’s final
romance, he co-wrote three more plays before he died. As such, no strong evidence
suggests the Epilogue needs to be viewed as theatrical farewell.
The Tempest

What is being said?
1. In what ways do the unique qualities of the microcosmic island setting assist Prospero's project for redemption and reconciliation?
2. Evaluate Shakespeare's use of typical Pastoral Romance conventions and motifs to explore contextual issues related to exploration and discovery.
3. Discuss the legitimacy of Prospero's treatment of his castaways in the light of the 'high wrongs' he has suffered at the hands of his foes.
4. How does Shakespeare's presentation of the natural world serve as a symbol and agent of reconciliation?
5. What 'discovery' ideas are evident in the play's representation of political overthrow, exile and reconciliation?
6. What are the major differences between Prospero and Ariel and how is this contrast used to develop key ideas within the play?
7. Scholars have argued that Caliban's experience reflects aspects of European Colonialism and the mistreatment of indigenous peoples. By close analysis of the text, evaluate how well this view supports your response to 'The Tempest'.
8. What timeless issues arise from the various master/servant relationships explored within the play?

How is it being said?
1. By close analysis of the opening scene, evaluate what dramatic purpose is served by beginning the play in the midst of crisis. How does it help draw the audience into the world of the text?
2. How important is Shakespeare's use of stage directions and sound imagery in shaping atmosphere and mood within the play? How does this promote self-discovery and penitence?
3. 'The Tempest' has been described as a tragi-comedy. How does Shakespeare use conventions of both genre forms to develop character, situation and audience engagement?
4. Visual spectacle is a key feature of this play. What is achieved by Shakespeare's use of the popular Jacobean Masque?
5. Gonzalo and others speculate about how society should be governed. How do these differing views prompt audience reflection about people, places and relationship?

Extended Response Questions
1. Demonstrate how Ariel plays a major role in promoting self-discovery in several characters and in achieving Prospero's ultimate aim of reconciliation. Reference must be made to TWO key scenes.
2. Evaluate how Trinculo's lengthy speech about Caliban in Act II, scene ii, lines 18–38 relates to broader themes of monstrosity and overthrow.