**THE TEMPEST**

The Tempest is one of the last plays written by Shakespeare, it was published at the beginning of the 17th century and it is characterized by serenity and optimism. It’s a kind of fairytale. Shakespeare wants to prove that good may come from evil and that forgiveness is always the best choice.

**MAIN CHARACTERS:**

**THE CHARACTERS WHO LIVE ON THE ISLAND**

* **Prospero** was the Duke of Milan, but his brother Antonio stole his reign and put him and his daughter, Miranda, on a boat to kill them. However, Gonzalo, a servant, put some food and Prospero’s books on the boat, so Prospero could survive and reach the island. Prospero is also a powerful magician and he has used his magic to become the master of the island where he lives. At the beginning he has lived on the island for many years and he wants to take **revenge**, that’s why he causes the shipwreck of his enemies, but at the end he decides to **forgive** everyone, even his brother. Prospero is very powerful and he decides everything in the play, he creates the events and makes the characters do exactly what he wants. For this reason, he has been considered also as a representation of the **author** (Shakespeare) and of the **artist** in general, who can create a world using his creativity and art.
* **Miranda**: she is young, beautiful and sweet. She is an idealized character who represents womanly perfection and innocence. She falls in love at first sight with **Ferdinand**, Alonso’s son, another idealized character. Prospero tests Ferdinand to check if he is the right man for Miranda and he proves he is a good person, so he accepts their marriage.
* **Caliban**: he is the only native of the island, the son of the evil witch Sycorax who died. He is a savage, he is violent and he has a bad character. He is considered a “monster” by everyone. Actually, he was the only original inhabitant of the island which was conquered by Prospero and he was transformed into a servant by him. The situation is similar to the relationship between Robinson and Friday, but Caliban isn’t happy, he hates Prospero and, even if he is afraid of him, he always tries to betray him. He offers Stephano, another servant, to become his servant and to kill Prospero together.
* **Ariel**: he is a spirit who can change his appearance; he is another servant of Prospero because Prospero saved him from Sycorax. However, he is a better character, he is loyal and Prospero frees him at the end of the story after he has helped him

**THE MEN WHO ARE SHIPWRECKED ON THE ISLAND**

At first, they are divided into groups and each group thinks that the others are dead. They meet again at the end of the story.

* **Gonzalo**: he is a good servant who saved Prospero and his daughter. He is the only one who dreams a world where there are no masters and servants and where everyone is equal and free and can live peacefully and happily without laws. So, he is the only one who believes in the equality of people.
* **Alonso**: King of Naples. He helped Antonio against Prospero
* **Antonio**: he is the main villain of the play, he betrayed Prospero, his brother, and he tried to kill him to become the Lord of Milan and during the story he tries to betray his companions, but at the end he repents and he is forgiven by Prospero.

**SETTING:** A remote and magical island where spirits and strange creatures live. It is a strange and exotic setting and the people of that time liked it because this was a period of important geographical discoveries and explorations; common people couldn’t travel because it was dangerous and difficult and so they liked reading or seeing about adventures in distant and exotic lands.

**THEMES:**

-**Forgiveness**: everything ends well (this is a comedy), the good characters are rewarded and live happily and the bad characters are forgiven and become good

-**Magic**: there are 2 types of magic in the play: the bad magic of Sycorax and the good magic of Prospero. This magic comes from books and study and it’s used for good reasons. For example, during the shipwreck nobody dies, because Prospero doesn’t want to kill anybody, he only wants to force his enemies to come to the island and to repent. The symbols of these magic are Prospero’s books, cloak and wand. That’s why Prospero throws these things into the sea at the end of the play when he decides to renounce his magic and to come back to Milan to live as a normal person

- **Music**: it was very important in Elizabethan times. Here it is a supernatural element because nobody plays it, but it is heard by the characters. It’s used to reflect the feelings of the characters and to help the audience understand the emotions of the characters better.

- **Colonialism**: see page 67