



# The Tempest - Classic Version (Annotated, Quotes, Other Features)

*William Shakespeare*

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## The Tempest

**The Tempest** is a play by **William Shakespeare**, believed to have been written in 1610–11, and thought by many critics to be the last play that **Shakespeare** wrote alone. It is set on a remote island, where Prospero, the exiled Duke of Milan, plots to restore his daughter Miranda to her rightful place, using illusion and skillful manipulation. He conjures up a storm, the eponymous tempest, to lure to the island his usurping brother Antonio and the complicit Alonso, King of Naples. There, his machinations bring about the revelation of Antonio's low nature, the redemption of Alonso, and the marriage of Miranda to Alonso's son, Ferdinand.

There is no obvious single source for the plot of **The Tempest**, but researchers have seen parallels in Erasmus's *Naufragium*, Peter Martyr's *De orbo novo*, and an eyewitness report by William Strachey of the real-life shipwreck of the *Sea Venture* on the islands of Bermuda. In addition, one of Gonzalo's speeches is derived from Montaigne's essay *Of the Canibales*; and much of Prospero's renunciative speech is taken word for word from a speech by Medea in Ovid's poem *Metamorphoses*. The masque in Act 4 may have been a later addition, possibly in honour of the wedding of Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia and Frederick V, Elector Palatine, in 1613. The play was first published in the First Folio of 1623.

The story draws heavily on the tradition of the romance genre, and it was influenced by tragicomedy and the courtly masque and perhaps by the *commedia dell'arte*. It differs from Shakespeare's other plays in its observation of a stricter, more organised neoclassical style. Critics see **The Tempest** as explicitly concerned with its own nature as a play, frequently drawing links between Prospero's "art" and theatrical illusion; and early critics saw Prospero as a representation of Shakespeare, and his renunciation of magic, as signalling Shakespeare's farewell to the stage. The play portrays Prospero as a rational, not an occultist, magician by providing a contrast to him in Sycorax: her magic is frequently described as destructive and terrible, where Prospero's is said to be wondrous and beautiful. Beginning in about 1950, with the publication of *Psychology of Colonization* by Octave Mannoni, **The Tempest** was viewed more and more through the lens of postcolonial theory—exemplified in adaptations like Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête* set in Haiti—and there is even a scholarly journal on post-colonial criticism named after Caliban. Miranda is typically viewed as having completely internalised the patriarchal order of things, thinking of herself as subordinate to her father. **The Tempest** did not attract a significant amount of attention before the closing of the theatres in 1642, and only attained popularity after the Restoration, and then only in adapted versions. In the mid-19th century, theatre productions began to reinstate the original Shakespearean text, and in the 20th century, critics and scholars undertook a significant re-appraisal of the play's value, to the extent that it is now considered to be one of Shakespeare's greatest works. It has been adapted numerous times in a variety of styles and formats: in music, at least 46 operas by composers such as Fromental Halévy, Zdeněk Fibich, Lee Hoiby, and Thomas Adès; orchestral works by Tchaikovsky, Arthur Sullivan and Arthur Honegger; and songs by such diverse artists as Ralph Vaughan Williams, Michael Nyman and Pete Seeger; in literature, Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem *With a Guitar*, *To Jane* and W. H. Auden's *The Sea and the Mirror*; novels by Aimé Césaire and *The Diviners* by Margaret Laurence; in paintings by William Hogarth, Henry Fuseli, and John Everett Millais;

and on screen, ranging through a hand-tinted version of Herbert Beerbohm Tree's 1905 stage performance, the science fiction film Forbidden Planet in 1956, to Peter Greenaway's 1991 Prospero's Books featuring John Gielgud as Prospero

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