

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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# TEMPEST

## Shakespeare

### Story

*The Tempest*, composed in 1610-11, is the last play composed by Shakespeare alone, and moves into new waters—a kind of metaphysical comedy—which take the author into visionary imagination.

It is a magician, Prospero, who becomes the central figure, isolated and exiled as he is, due to the machinations of his jealous brother. He is accompanied with his at the time 3-year old daughter, Miranda, some fine linens, and books. On the island he finds only two beings, the sprite Ariel, whom Prospero releases from a tree—his evil witch mom, Sycorax, had imprisoned him there—and a brutish monster, Caliban, the son of the witch Sycorax. Caliban was given an elementary education by Prospero and Miranda, while he in return taught Prospero how to survive on the island. Gradually a dynamic builds on the island: Caliban grows to resent Prospero, as a usurper. Something has to happen, to break the tension.

It happens. Prospero, with his magical insight, divines that a ship, carrying his treacherous brother, is passing along the coast, and he creates the illusion of a tempest, so powerful that the passengers on board ship feel they have been shipwrecked and abandoned. Alonso, friend to Prospero's brother, and Ferdinand, Alonso's son, are separated, neither knowing where the other is.

From this point on, the play splits into three parts, all of which will, of course, be poetically bound together at the end, when Antonio and his fellow plotters are pardoned for have plotted to take the island from Prospero, when love has brought Ferdinand and Miranda together, and when Caliban has been pardoned for drunken friendships and plots of various kinds. In other words, we are working toward a complex resolution, in which Prospero, who dominates the play, decides to abandon his magic and to tell the story of his life. He has in bringing about this resolution made what is still quite a magical, wrap-up of complexities.

Scrutinizing those three 'complexities' shines a light on the intelligence Shakespeare's imagination brings to working out his plays. Shakespeare knows what to do with the problems he invents. Caliban, the brute, has to do his thing, try to overthrow Prospero, be chastened and then led partway to civilization. Antonio, Prospero's evil brother, and two other 'shipwrecked' malfeasants, attempt to overthrow Prospero, but are thwarted and tamed by Ariel, acting at Prospero's command. And, the richest element in the wrap-up, Ferdinand and Miranda are brought fascinatingly together, weaving between them the most meaningful theme of the play, which is of course partly involved with the split between magic and reality.

Love at first sight is part of the miracle of the meeting of these two youngsters. Miranda, who has been raised since infancy by a mysterious old magician, her dad Prospero, has never before seen anything like a living guy, and Shakespeare devotes his highest brilliance to portraying the immediate feelings of Miranda for this masculine radiance. (The feelings are mutual; Miranda exceeds, for Ferdinand, anything he has ever seen in feminine innocence.) Ariel, himself magical, mysterious, and mischievous, is deputed by Prospero to tame the ocean weathers, so that the once shipwrecked vessel can make it safely back to Naples, where Ferdinand and Miranda will be married. With this wrap up the gauzy tale, spun from the imagination, vanishes in and of itself, in thin air and the audience's applause.

### Themes

**Reality** The play's chief theme is the split between imagination and magic, on the one hand, and reality, the reality of Caliban, Antonio, or even Ferdinand, on the other. Prospero is the showman of the play, and

determines its direction, by his magical actions. Inside the magic, and Shakespeare speaks to us here, is the reality, often rough, which calls on magic to elevate it.

**Humanity.** A central issue in *The Tempest* is the clash between pre-human forces—Sycorax and Caliban—and the apparition of the human, Ferdinand, who for Miranda is the first appearance of the human, and godly. The author urges us to consider the human as a rare beautiful presence.

## Characters

**Prospero** is a quixotic old magician, with great fidelity to his beloved daughter, lasting scorn for his treacherous brother, and a great sense of showmanship. It is he, we have to think, who has imagined the whole tale about his own magical imagination.

**Miranda** is Prospero's daughter, who has been with him on the island since she was three years old. She sees her first real human when her father creates the tempest-shipwreck; she is overwhelmed by the beauty of Ferdinand. Of course all she has seen, to that date, is her Father, Ariel, and the beastly Caliban.

**Caliban** is the half human half monster, suppressed by Prospero—once the beast had tried to rape Miranda—who knows not only brutishness, but the magical sounds of silence and bird cries on the island.

## MAJOR CHARACTERS

PROSPERO (Open)

**Overview** Prospero is 'the right duke of Milan' in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, which is to say that he has been seditiously replaced by his brother Sebastian. Sebastian, profiting from the bookish and withdrawn nature of his brother, has arranged to undermine his brother's rule, and to banish him into exile. As we enter the drama, Prospero and his daughter Miranda, who have been stranded for over ten years on an exile island, gather that a ship is passing, on which ride, among others, Prospero's evil brother and the King of Naples, compliant with the plot to eliminate Prospero. The tempest is the total chaos brought down upon the travellers, as Prospero—an angry and effective sorcerer--calls all hell down onto the passers by.

**Character** Prospero is bookish and a sorcerer—a blend of traits common enough in mediaeval European (and other) mythologies of high personal effectiveness. (One thinks of the whole Faust theme, of Merlin, or of Euripides' *Medea*.) The books that are his life are, we presume, those which enact a drama of magic chaos on a largely unwitting boatload of travellers. The culmination of Prospero's fantasy is to protect and marry off his lovely daughter, Miranda, who luckily finds her first sight of man in the handsome Fernando, son of the King of Naples. Reclaiming his own usurped power, Prospero nonetheless exercises mercy and reconciliation, in the end, toward the fellow performers in Shakespeare's fantasy.

**Parallels** From *Medea* to Merlin,--a Welsh sorcerer and mage in the 12th century Welsh hinterland, and at the Court of Arthur--the figure who tinkers with black arts has been of consistent interest to high literature. The imagination required of the artistic creator resembles—in certain surface ways, at least--the prestidigitation required of the sorcerer. Prospero, sorcerer par excellence, is at the same time the supreme artist; 'we are such stuff as dreams are made on' is an unsurpassed formulation of the world seen by a great dramatist, who has conjured up a palette of 'characters' out of nothing, and revels in their momentary presence.

## Illustrative moments

**Paternal** Prospero's daughter, Miranda, is at the play's opening just entering the life stage, early teens, when she wants to know who she is and where she came from. Prospero explains carefully: 'I have done nothing but in care of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter, who art ignorant of what thou art, naught

knowing of whence I am...' Whereupon, Prospero proceeds to explain his background and banishment, his life in his island cave, the motives behind the tempest, and finally to confirm that her birth was noble. But dad pushes farther, asking Miranda: 'what seest thou else in the dark backward and abysm of time?'

**Resentful** Prospero explains to Miranda the dirty conspiracy launched against him by his brother, Antonio, 'the usurping Duke of Milan.' He points out that the King of Naples, 'being an enemy to me inveterate,' has worked in collusion with Antonio, Prospero's brother, 'to extirpate me and mine out of the dukedom...' The account culminates in a description of 'a treacherous army' levied, which in the dead of night snatched away Prospero 'and thy crying self,' Miranda, in a basic coup d'état kidnapping. Fortunately Prospero was beloved of his people, so that an assassination attempt was out of the question, and the most Antonio could do was to put his victims out to sea in a rickety boat.

**Ceremonial** Though deeply fond of his daughter, Miranda, Prospero agrees to let her wed the first man she has seen, the very Fernando, son of the King of Naples, who has been washed ashore by the tempest, and who has never seen such pure beauty as Miranda herself. The couple are thrilled to have this blessing, but note with care the extreme importance Prospero puts on chastity in marriage: he warns Fernando not to 'break her virgin knot before such sanctimonious ceremonies may with full and holy rite be ministered...' To which Fernando replies that his 'honor will never melt into lust...' 'to take away the edge of that day's celebration.'

**Philosophical** As the play nears its end, Prospero grows more explicit about the kind of world the 'world of the tempest' is and has been. 'Our revels now are ended,' he explains to Fernando and Miranda, and 'these our actors were all spirits, and are melted into air...and shall dissolve and, like this insubstantial pageant faded, leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.' The principal magician folds up his creative carpet of magic, and compares it to art itself, which is both the place where we invest our deepest reality, and a field of insubstantial dreams.

### Discussion questions

Does Prospero eventually overcome his bitterness toward his usurping brother? What kind of harmony does he attempt to use, as a replacement for conflict?

Prospero is very demanding in the pre-marital moral code he requires of Fernando and Miranda. Does this severity fit with other aspects of Prospero's character?

Is Prospero abusive in his attitude toward Caliban? Is Prospero insensitive to the brutish pathos of Caliban's condition?

ARIEL (Agreeable)

**Overview** Ariel serves as a cheerful, earthy, volatile factotum for Prospero, the banished Duke in charge of the island on which Shakespeare's *The Tempest* takes place. The backstory is that Ariel was initially imprisoned in a tree, on the island of *The Tempest*, by the foul mom of Caliban, Sycorax. (Thus, an elegant and volatile sprite, boxed in by a clumsy and brutal dam). Ariel is released from this imprisonment by Prospero, who is shipwrecked on the island, and exercises his magic powers on all the elements of this new domain. Ariel becomes the principal aide and spiritual stimulant to Prospero, as he copes with his domain.

**Character** Ariel is a sprightly earth figure volatile as the air, and forever there to intercede—in Shakespeare's play—on behalf of his less dexterous master, Prospero. Having been entombed in a tree, prior to being freed by Prospero, Ariel shimmers with energy on his release, and is forever popping up where he can assist his master. Interestingly enough, though, that assistance is capricious, as is Ariel; and keeps Prospero himself on his toes. Ariel brings his fanciful surprising presence in the forms of music and fluttering proximity, somewhere, one might say, between a butterfly and a humming bird.

**Parallels** Ariel serves as a symbol sprite for Milton and perhaps, far earlier, for the Biblical writers of the book of Enoch, and for Gnostic spiritual writers. (One sees the volatile spirituality of this half-human creature, at various points in the early mythology of Judeo Christian thought). In contemporary thought,

Ariel has functioned vigorously in Latin American dramas by Jose Rodo (*Ariel*, 1900) and Fernando Retamar (*Caliban*, 1971). Both writers consider, though from complex and varying angles, the meaning of Ariel as a prisoner of Colonialism—Ariel was imprisoned in a tree, then, on different conditions, promised freedom by Prospero. The argument of anti-colonialism, and its Latin American twist, is eloquently spun by reflections on the nature and fate of Ariel.

### Illustrative moments

**Hurrah!** In Act I, scene ii, Ariel greets his master for the first time in the play. ‘All hail, great master. Grave sir, hail! I come to answer thy best pleasure, be’t to fly, to swim, to dive into the fire, to ride on the curled clouds, to thy strong bidding task Ariel and all his quality.’ One sees what a polymorphous form Ariel is, and how much more a sprite than a human she is. The inherent gift for magic, in Prospero himself, makes him a god-born kin to the carrier out of magic impulses, which Ariel is.

**Chaos** Immediately after the introductory passage, above (I, ii) Prospero asks Ariel whether he has carried out his commission, to create the tempest with which the play opens. Ariel then proceeds to a very graphic description of the chaos he brought down on the ship he turned topsy turvy: ‘I flamed amazement; sometimes I’d divide and burn in many places, to the topmast, the yards and bowsprit, ‘ and make the seas swell with turmoil. Neptune’s ‘dread trident’ shook in the uproar of the chaos. Which elicits Prospero’s praise, for a confusion which would ‘infect’ anyone’s reason.

**Wordsmith** In Act 2, expostulating with Prospero, Ariel deploys his wonderful word and music power, to lead and trick Fernando, the son of the Duke of Naples, who has been separated from his shipmates in the course of the great shipwreck. ‘Weeping again the king my father’s death, this music crept by me upon the waters,’ murmurs Fernando, responding to the musical magic of the hovering and flitting Ariel. Of Fernando’s father, drowned for all the young man knows, Ariel plays ‘full fathom five thy father lies, of his bones are coral made, those are pearls that were his eyes...’ and onward into volleys of enchanted song that bewilder the hearer.

**Policeman** Three varlets, a drunken butler, a jester, flotsam from the shipwrecked boat; all these lowlife, deposited on Prospero’s once enchanted isle, but the de facto Ruler of the Isle turns to Ariel to discombobulate these nobodies. Ariel carries out the police assignment with gusto. ‘So I charmed their ears, that, calflike they my lowing followed through toothed briers, sharp furzes, pricking goss, and thorns which entered their frail shins.’ In the end, Ariel deposited the team of varlet in a filthy pool, wretched scum lodged not far from Prospero’s cell. Dainty, frilly, musical, Ariel is at the same time a strongman who can enforce the toughest needs his boss can invent.

### Discussion questions

Does Ariel represent some kind of joyful and effective release from constraint—the constraint he will have been trapped in as the prisoner of a tree?

Does Prospero deal as a conqueror or a friend with Ariel? How does Prospero dangle the promise of ‘freedom’ over Ariel?

Is Ariel above all a musician? How does Ariel describe the effects of music, in discussing the varlets he beguiled in Act. 4, sc. i; ll.175-180)?

CALIBAN (Unconscientuous)

**Overview** *The Tempest* (1610) is one of Shakespeare’s great fancy and fantasy plays—cf. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1590)—in which elements of human ambitious and conflict are worked out in terms of philosophically complex imaginations. Caliban himself is the product of rumination on the nature of slavery, and of the untutored minimally human, and he requites his master, Prospero, with every kind of obloquy, reserving special loathing for the gift of language,

**Character** ‘A savage and deformed slave,’ the grotesque hired hand of Prospero, the ‘right Duke of Milan,’ who has been abandoned on an island—to get him out of the way of inheriting the dukeship of Milan, which his brother is cheating him out of. When we first see Caliban he is busy cursing the usurper of the island, Prospero, for having taken away the island which by rights belongs to Sycorax, the

deformed mother of Caliban. The backstory, of this long tale of grotesque colonization, which pervades the play, is that Caliban, upon being subdued, quickly attempted to rape Miranda, the lovely young daughter of Prospero.

**Parallels** Circe, in Homer's *Odyssey*, transforms Odysseus' men into swine, and threatens even Odysseus with this fate. (Odysseus is finally too clever for her.) Caliban could have been one of the Circean breed. Two modern works of fiction deal masterfully with the theme of 'bestialization of the human,' or if not that with the place of primitive developmental instinct in humanity. One thinks of Golding's *The Inheritors* (1955) which tracks the interior path from the Neanderthal to the pre-human condition. Ernest Gaines' wonderful *A Lesson before Dying* (1993) probes the legal process of transforming a 'hog' into a human, thus into an appropriate candidate for capital punishment.

### Illustrative moments

**Grumbling** Trinculo and Stephano—jester and butler—tread across Prospero's island, part of the imaginative décor. Caliban, immensely grumbling, addresses them, complaining about his master, Prospero. At first the new arrivals scorn the monster—'a most scurvy monster'—but then Caliban cozies up to them: 'I'll show thee the best springs, I'll pluck thee berries, I'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough. A plague upon the tyrant that I serve!' Caliban goes on to promise the rare edible lore of the island which he alone is familiar with—pignuts, the nimble marmoset, clustering filberts, young scamels from the rock. (What those are nobody knows!)

**Rebellious** There is much talk in this play, especially on the part of 'the wise Gonzalo,' about the beauties of the 'state of nature.' Caliban hearkens to that talk, proclaiming whenever he can that his natural island has been taken over by a sorcerer—which in a way Prospero is. 'As I told thee before,' he proclaims to the drunken butler, Stephano, 'I am subject to a tyrant, a sorcerer, that by his cunning has cheated me of the island.' Caliban goes on to conspire with Stephano to kill Prospero, and to provide instructions for killing the tyrant in his sleep. Caliban's thinking is ruthless, and yet his new allies are buffoons, so the danger resulting from this plot is limited.

**Plot** Caliban instructs his allies in the best way to kill Prospero, and to take over the island. He goes right to the point: 'tis a custom with him I' the afternoon to sleep. There thou mayst brain him, having first seized his books, for without them he's but a sot.' He goes on to praise the noble plans Prospero has, to build himself a fine house, where he can house his showpiece, his daughter. In the course of recommending this assassination, Caliban shows his envy of the noble colonizer, and his admiration of the beautiful Miranda, who 'surpasseth Scyrorax (Caliban's mother) as great'st does least.'

**Sentient** Caliban is more aware than he seems. We see this as his relation to his rebellious allies matures, and they plan to work as a (grotesque) team. He confesses to hearing 'sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not, sometimes a thousand twangling instruments will hum about my ears, and sometimes voices that will make me sleep again.' The magic is ferried in by an 'aery spirit,' Ariel, who is the hench person of Prospero, and carries out much of the magic on the island. In dreams, says Caliban, he will imagine riches so splendid that upon waking 'I cried to dream again.' As he speaks, the whole band of conspirators remains enchanted by the music of Ariel.

### Discussion questions

What is Shakespeare's attitude toward Caliban? Does he scorn him, or view him as a promising source of earthly energy?

How do the figures of Caliban and Scycorx help to define the uniquely fantasy-filled world Ariel (and Prospero) inhabit?

In Act II, sc. 1, Gonzalo expatiates on the virtues of the state of nature. Does Caliban represent part of the world that Gonzalo fantasizes about?

FERDINAND (Open)

**Overview** Ferdinand is son to the King of Naples in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, and is thus by implication on the side which is plotting against Prospero, to remove him from his rightful Dukedom. Significantly,

however, Ferdinand himself becomes simple collateral damage to the tempest and shipwreck which Prospero works on the passing crew and sailing party. When the surviving boating party assembles, ragged and beat up on the shore of Prospero's island, Ferdinand staggers away from the wreck, and sets off the benign events by which he discovers and finally marries the lovely Miranda, Prospero's daughter. Ferdinand is open to the new, in all its glory.

**Character** Ferdinand comes on shipwrecked and dazed, from the start, for he has been lost from the other victims of Prospero's storm, is presumed dead, and has no idea (of course) of what kind of act of prestidigitation has just hit him. It is in this dazed condition that he comes on Miranda—to whom his initial words are 'O you wonder! If you be maid nor no?' Miranda shyly helps Fernando to self-orient, and the tale of love is opened which will lead by play's end to a beautiful marriage of the two young people, a marriage which includes within it the rejoining of the fractured conflicts of the Kingdom of Naples. Ferdinand himself is all about youth and the discovery of the beauty woman brings into the world.

**Parallels** The beautiful and beguiled male lover is nowhere more fatally described than in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. While it is true that Hippolytus is drawn to guys, he seems destined to be drawn into the fatal orbits of female passion, and to have been led, as fatefully as Ferdinand by Ariel's tunes, toward an inescapable entanglement with the female. Dante, in the *Vita Nuova* describing the passion which drew him to the pre-pubertal Beatrice, portrays the male psyche helplessly enraptured by the carnal spirituality of the female—a bewildering infatuation, in this instance, which interweaves female beauty with the sublimely seductive vision of the (pre-pubertal) Virgin Mary, who irradiates the entire *Commedia* from her post at the summit of *Paradiso*.

### Illustrative moments

**Bewildered** Survivor of a dreadful shipwreck—or so the tempest seemed to its victims—Ferdinand wanders over Prospero's island in search of clues and humanity. On this search he comes first on Prospero's daughter, Miranda. He addresses her with amazement. Do you live on this island, he asks her, and then, 'if you be maid or no.' He is in an Adamic state, as if rediscovering the world he has so nearly lost. This is a dominant mode for Ferdinand, throughout the play—a discoverer, open to the world.

**Enchanted** Following his confusion across the island, Ferdinand is enchanted by the music of Ariel, the sprite employed by Prospero to manipulate the living puppets of his sorcery. 'Where should this music be? In the air or the earth?' expostulates Ferdinand, as the sprite leads the potentially lovestruck young man toward Prospero's cave. So bespelled is Ferdinand that he knows not whether he is being led or is following. In another part of the island, of course, the remainder of the shipwrecked victims are already bemoaning what they take to be the premature drowning of the heir to Naples' throne.

**Lovestruck** All his confusion, his panic and uncertainty, seem to Ferdinand light burdens, 'might I but through my prison once a day behold this maid.' In other words, he is struck by a super case of love at first sight! He is imprisoned in the view of such loveliness. 'All corners else o the earth let liberty make use of, space enough have I in such a prison.' In the background we hear Prospero chuckling with pleasure, at the successful development of the love-matching plan he is unfolding with his sorcery. As for Ferdinand, he is in the bliss of first love, and couldn't care less.

**Confessional** At the opening of Act 3, Miranda has made clear to Ferdinand that she is totally lovestruck by him. The hyperbole of his reaction is unsurpassed. 'The very instant that I saw you did my heart fly to your service, there resides, to make me slave to it...' 'I beyond all limit of what else i the world, do love, prize, honor you...' We read this as the ultimate in love at first sight, but also as the geopolitical trick Prospero is playing on his own personal history, weaving together through sorcery a plan to bring himself once again into his rightful place as Duke of Naples.

### Discussion questions

Has Ferdinand a distinctive character of his own, or is he simply an archetype of the love struck stripling?

What is Prospero's attitude toward the Ferdinand he is ordering Ariel to lead across the island, to the headquarters cave? Is Prospero himself fascinated? Vengeful?

What draws Ferdinand to Miranda? While she is seeing her first man, and is understandably astonished, he admits to having been fascinated by other women. What is so special about Miranda?

MIRANDA (Agreeable)

**Overview** Prior to the tempest itself, which Prospero creates in order to exercise his sorcery, and to begin reclaiming his 'rightful dukedom,' Prospero and his young daughter Miranda have been the only living mortals on 'the island.' While Prospero is a bookish man, he is fully acquainted with the world and its politics, but Miranda has never had contact with that world, and, as we soon see, still has only a foggy sense of her own identity. She is well aware of her human condition, however, and upon introduction to the first man (male) of her own age, she is blinded by the young man's handsome appearance. Hence the inception of what will be a marriage fruitful for the characters of the entire play.

**Character** Miranda, a young teen ager at the play's outset, is all about curiosity—of who she is and who her father is, and of their present situation. When asked by her father whether she would like to hear her whole story, she replies: 'your tale, sir, would cure deafness.' She is astounded by what she learns, of her noble lineage—in Naples—of her father's banishment. Just as she is to inquire into the tempest which has shaken the island, Prospero turns his attention to the shipwreck itself, and sends her off to a benign sleep. The next amazement to awaken Miranda will be the first sight she has of a guy—a supremely handsome guy in her unpracticed eyes—her age mate Ferdinand, the son of the King of Naples, who has been complicit in the plot to banish Prospero.

**Parallels** In classical literature, especially in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, love at first sight—the love of Miranda for Ferdinand—is common, and easily packaged into the metaphor of cupid's darts, which strike a passionate wound into the lover. This kind of love at first sight can also strike the isolated individual—as with Narcissus, who in Ovid's account falls directly in love with his own mirror image in the water. In the Renaissance, these ancient conceits were regularly reworked, as by Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare both of whom formulated the notion 'whoever loved that loved not at first sight?'

### Illustrative moments

**Compassionate** When first we meet Prospero and Miranda, we are in the initial shock of the tempest itself. Miranda has no idea that the tempest itself has been an action of sorcery on her father's part, and that in fact no one has been hurt in this fantasy. 'O I have suffered with those that I saw suffer,' she blurts out to her father, who then replies that 'I have done nothing but in care of thee.' What he means, we suppose Miranda cannot imagine. We know that the rescuing of Ferdinand from seeming drowning will be one of the achievements of Prospero, an achievement which will redound to Miranda's benefit.

**Apologetic** As Prospero unfolds, to Miranda, the story of her birth and childhood, and the account of his own widowhood, Miranda is taken with pity for the labors she has laid on her father. When he recounts the way in which he was thrown out of his dukedom, and escaped with his crying baby, Miranda, she cries 'Alack, for pity! I, not remembering how I cried out then, will cry it over again.' So compassionate is the young lady that she begs forgiveness for the childhood faults she committed—as she sees it—against her father. 'Alack, what trouble was I then to you!'

**Defensive** When Ferdinand first approaches Prospero, following the magic sounds of Ariel, Prospero mock-threatens Ferdinand with imprisonment as a traitor, and duly notes the sharp defensive tone Miranda takes, in support of this young man she has seen for the first time. 'O dear father, make not too rash a trial of him, for he's gentle and not fearful.' 'Beseech you, father.' Clinging to her father's garments, Miranda begs for clement treatment for this Ferdinand, of whom all she knows is that 'there's nothing ill that dwells in such a temple.' Ferdinand, meanwhile, is firmly bespelled by the magic of Ariel, and cannot protest for himself

**Modest** Prospero teases the beseeching Miranda, saying that the only two male beings she has seen are Caliban and Ferdinand. He adds, teasingly, that most mortal men are as superior to Ferdinand as Ferdinand is to Caliban. Her response is spot on: 'my affections then most humble. I have no ambition to see a godlier man.' Miranda then addresses Ferdinand himself, assuring him that her father is of a generally genial temper, and surely cannot mean what he is saying at the moment. At that Prospero

reassures his daughter, and we feel certain that the love at first sight, which has enfolded the couple, will prevail to the general good.

### **Discussion questions**

Miranda falls for Ferdinand while she is still in a 'state of nature.' Why does Prospero, when it comes to the marriage of the two youngsters, insist so firmly on chastity and church discipline?

What triggers Miranda's immediate fascination with Ferdinand? Is she simply following human instinct? Or is he of unusual merit and beauty?

Is Prospero a tease, as well as a loving father? Why does he pretend to Miranda that he is taking Ferdinand prisoner?