

# The Tempest

William Shakespeare

# Companion

a complete resource for teachers



Ratna Sagar

© Ratna Sagar

© Ratna Sagar

# SAMPLE PAPER

## SECTION A

*The Tempest – Shakespeare*

### QUESTION 1

- a. *Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,  
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices  
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,  
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,  
The clouds methought would open and show riches  
Ready to drop upon me that, when I waked,  
I cried to dream again.*
- Who is the speaker? Who are the individuals listening to her/him?* [2]
  - What had the characters present on stage heard? Who was responsible for making that sound?* [2]
  - Who is the ruler of this isle? What are her/his special powers?* [2]
  - Briefly comment on any other instance when individuals had been enamoured by the music they might have heard.* [2]
  - Why does the speaker wish she/he could dream again after having woken up? What is the speaker's relationship with the ruler of this isle?* [2]

### Answer

- In the above lines, Caliban is the one who is speaking to Stephano, the drunken butler, and Trinculo, the jester. However, Ariel, too, is present on stage but the three humans are oblivious to his presence since he is invisible.
- The three human characters present on stage had heard Ariel, invisible to their eyes, play a tune on his tabor (a drum-like instrument) and pipe.
- Prospero, once he had learnt enough about the natural resources of the island from Caliban, had declared himself the ruler of the isle. Prospero had learnt the art of magic from his books and he used his powers to maintain order on the island, while waiting to avenge his banishment.
- There are at least two other instances where individuals had been drawn to the music played

by Ariel or the other supernatural entities on the island. Ferdinand, mourning the loss of his father, had heard Ariel play a tune. Alonso and his entourage had also heard solemn music that had captivated them, only to be stunned by Ariel in the form of a harpy.

- v. Caliban wishes he could have slept again because the dreams he'd had were a lot more pleasant than his immediate reality. Prospero had initially been very kind to Caliban but when the latter had tried to take advantage of his child, Miranda, he began treating Caliban like a sub-human, almost a slave. Their relationship was a thorny one, especially since Prospero had negated Caliban's claim to the island and overpowered him using his magic.

b. ALONSO. *Now all the blessings*

*Of a glad father compass thee about!*

*Arise, and say how thou camest here.*

MIRANDA. *O, wonder!*

*How many goodly creatures are there here!*

*How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,*

*That has such people in't!*

PROSPERO. *'Tis new to thee.*

*Alonso. What is this maid with whom thou wast at play?*

*Your eld'st acquaintance cannot be three hours:*

*Is she the goddess that hath sever'd us,*

*And brought us thus together?*

- i. *Who is being addressed when Alonso says, "Arise, and say how thou camest here"? Why does Alonso ask this question?* [2]
- ii. *Why does Prospero comment on Miranda's wonder and say, "'Tis new to thee."? Why is it new to Miranda?* [2]
- iii. *Who are the people present in the scene? What had transpired right before this conversation?* [2]
- iv. *Who is the first human being Miranda encounters (apart from her father and Caliban)? What was her reaction when she first laid eyes on her/him?* [2]
- v. *Where were these 'goodly creatures' coming from? Name the place they were sailing to.* [2]

### Answer

- i. Ferdinand, who had knelt in front of his father, Alonso, is asked the aforementioned question since the latter had assumed that Ferdinand had drowned because of the tempest.
- ii. Ferdinand was the first handsome man Miranda had ever seen and she had fallen head over heels in love with him. The sight of Alonso and his entourage excites her all the more since

she had never seen so many people but Prospero tries to remind her to rein her enthusiasm, especially since some of them were the very ones that had ousted Prospero.

- iii. Alonso, Gonzalo, Antonio, Sebastian, Ferdinand, Miranda and Prospero are present in this scene. In the segment preceding the abovementioned exchange, Antonio and Sebastian's plan to murder Alonso and Gonzalo had been exposed; Alonso, reminded of the part he'd played in deposing Prospero, had asked for his forgiveness; and, Alonso's lamentation of the loss of his son, who could have been married to Prospero's daughter, had led to the revelation of Ferdinand's survival and his fondness for Miranda.
- iv. The first human being Miranda had laid eyes on, apart from Prospero and Caliban, was Alonso's son, Ferdinand. She had initially thought that he was a spirit, later, a divine being, since she was convinced that no mortal could possibly look that wonderful.
- v. These 'goodly creatures' were coming from Tunis, where Claribel, Alonso's daughter, had been wedded to the king of that land. Alonso, his son, and their entourage were headed home to Naples, Italy.

c. **PROSPERO.** *You do look, my son, in a moved sort,*

*As if you were dismay'd: be cheerful, sir.*

*Our revels now are ended. These our actors,*

*As I foretold you, were all spirits and*

*Are melted into air, into thin air:*

*And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,*

*The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,*

*The solemn temples, the great globe itself,*

*Ye all which it inherit, 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. Sir, I am vex'd;*

*Bear with my weakness; my, brain is troubled:*

*Be not disturb'd with my infirmity:*

*If you be pleased, retire into my cell*

*And there repose: a turn or two I'll walk,*

*To still my beating mind.*

i. *Who is the person whom Prospero addresses as 'son'? What is his relationship with Prospero's daughter?* [2]

ii. *What are the 'revels' that Prospero speaks of? What had they just witnessed?* [2]

- iii. *Why is Prospero troubled? What information does he have that the individuals around him do not?* [2]
- iv. *Explain: "We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep."* [2]
- v. *What is the connection between this speech by Prospero and the epilogue of *The Tempest*?* [2]

### Answer

- i. In the aforementioned lines, Prospero addresses Ferdinand as 'son'. Ferdinand and Miranda had professed their love for each other and received Prospero's blessing.
- ii. The young couple had just received Prospero's approval and the latter, with the help of spirits, had conjured a masque for them. The goddesses, Juno, Ceres, and Iris had blessed Miranda and Ferdinand and continued with the theme of abstinence that Prospero had earlier encouraged.
- iii. Prospero had abruptly stopped the masque he had conjured since he had realised that Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo were trying to execute their plot of overthrowing Prospero and laying claims on the island.
- iv. Indicating towards the performers of the masque that had vanished at the blink of an eye at his bidding, Prospero reminds the young couple of their mortality and the transient nature of life. He appears to suggest that perhaps, after death (sleep), one wakes up to a reality, or a different kind of dream.
- v. The lines mentioned above remind the listeners of the impermanent nature of life and underscores the mortality of humankind. The epilogue, once again, highlights the same. Prospero draws attention to his own mortal self and concurrently, the actor playing Prospero, asks the audience to pardon him of any shortcomings since it is indeed very human to err.

## SECTION B

*The Tempest – Shakespeare*

### QUESTION 1

*The Tempest* is a play about revenge, forgiveness and reconciliation. Write a critical comment on the play in the light of this statement.

### Answer

It has been argued that most of Shakespeare's last plays dwell on the theme of atonement,

reconciliation and forgiveness. This is conditionally true for *The Tempest* since Prospero appears to be deeply motivated by the idea of revenge. It is the idea of revenge that he has nurtured during the twelve years he spends on the island with Miranda, expelled from Milan and deprived of his position as the duke. Gonzalo is the only for whom Prospero appears to have some regard. Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio are the ones he perceives as the main culprits and seeks revenge. Divining that the ship bearing those who had done him wrong was near, Prospero does not spare them and takes advantage of the opportunity to punish those who had wronged him.

Quite significantly, had Prospero wanted his enemies to perish, he would not have asked Ariel to report to him about their condition at all. Ariel assures him that they are alive and well and completely unharmed. This shows that Prospero wanted his enemies to be alive so that they are able to experience loss and grief. He wants them to repent and atone for what they have made him go through. They do suffer intensely at the thought of having lost Ferdinand, to the extent that Gonzalo fears that Alonso might do something rash and undesirable, on imagining the death of his son. Alonso does mention that he wishes he had drowned and had been at the bottom of the ocean in place of his son. Prospero's behaviour at this point might not be quite justified, especially since he is making innocent people like Gonzalo suffer as well as the people who are guilty.

It is important to note that Ariel, in the form of a harpy, reminds the king and the others of their guilt –“you three/ From Milan did supplant good Prospero/ Exposed unto the sea?” – and it is only then that they recognize their wrongdoings. Gonzalo notes the repentance on their faces and comments on it. However, when Prospero reveals that he lives on the island and is indeed the Duke of Milan, more than repentance what Alonso feels is relief that someone else exists on the island. They all do repent the fact that they had done Prospero wrong but their repentance seems insincere, especially given that they are almost in a hostage-like situation with a potent magician as their keeper.

Prospero would have carried on with his plan to avenge what had been done to him had it not been for Ariel who encourages him to pierce through the cloud of rage and forgive them. Perhaps a bit staggered by the thought of a non-human entity commenting on his behaviour, Prospero notes that “rarer action is/ In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,/ The sole drift of my purpose doth extend/ Not a frown further.” It is after Ariel's intervention that Prospero deviates from his path of vengeance, towards the path of forgiveness. It is noteworthy that without reconciliation and forgiveness, he could not have possibly secured Miranda's future and regained his dukedom.

Prospero's forgiveness seems conditional and insincere. It is only after his dukedom is restored that he decides to relieve Alonso and the others of the pain of being marooned

on an island and having lost Ferdinand to the sea. They exchange more or less formal pleasantries and the guilty ones ask for his forgiveness. However, it is only when the king mentions that he wishes that Prospero's daughter and his son had been joined in marriage, that Prospero reveals that Ferdinand is alive, well, and in love.

It is through Ferdinand and Miranda's betrothal that an obvious and tangible reconciliation is achieved in this play. They are the ones who bring the fathers together and their union is seen as something that furthers the reconciliation between Milan and Naples. Ostensibly the most innocent and naive characters in *The Tempest*, the union of young couple makes Gonzalo declare that, "rejoice/ Beyond a common joy, and set it down/ With gold on lasting pillars." These enduring pillars would be a sign that the two royal houses had been brought together by the marriage and would become an announcement of dynastic continuity.

What we find in *The Tempest* is not unconditional forgiveness but a thoroughly conditional one. Caliban, Stephano and Antonio are forgiven for their attempted usurpation of the island. They are ordered to spruce up Prospero's cell and that is all that the audience learns about it. Caliban, till the very end, is not a character who is ready to forgive Prospero for mistreating and exploiting him. He remains bitter about his condition and blames himself for having bad faith in Stephano and Trinculo.

## QUESTION 2

Comment on Caliban's character and his frustrations. Does he transform or have a change of heart over the course of the play?

### Answer

Caliban, elementally aligned with the earth, is almost never respected as a human by the people from Milan and Naples. He is called several names – 'whelp', 'demi-devil', 'monster', 'strange fish' – amongst others. Perhaps a play of the word 'cannibal', Caliban's name has been at the centre of several critical debates. Given the travelogues that were circulating at that time when Shakespeare was developing this character, Caliban seems to embody the characteristics and play the part of the 'savage' of the New World as the Europeans might have imagined. He is always seen as a being that is less than human, exotic and meant for servitude because of his recognizable racial difference.

In the first two Acts of the play, we find Caliban articulating his position and thoughts quite eloquently. Angry at the humiliation that is meted out to him daily, Caliban declares that he is the rightful owner of the island since his mother, Sycorax, had reigned over it before Prospero had turned up. Both Prospero and Miranda take pride in the fact that they had tried to educate and civilize Caliban and to this, he famously retorts, "You taught me



language, and my profit on't/ Is I know how to curse.”

He regrets having introduced Prospero to all the marvellous, natural aspects of the island, and yet, he repeats his past mistake by promising Stephano and Trinculo the same. It is surprising how readily he accepts Stephano and Trinculo as his new masters since he had demanded his rights over the island in the very first act (perhaps the effect of intoxication). While he recognizes Prospero's magical supremacy, he overestimates the power of the jester and the butler while whipping up the doomed rebellion. It is worthwhile to note that quite like Miranda, he too has not seen any other humans apart from the ones present on the island.

## LONG-ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. **Comment on the relationships between masters/mistresses and their slaves/servants in this play. What does it reveal about human nature? Why do the slaves or servants in *The Tempest* remain submissive or rebel?**

**Ans.** *The Tempest* is a play where one recognizes various kinds of oppressions, some that stem from social structure that was prevalent in the Elizabethan age, and others that can be assigned to the darker elements of human nature that revels in exploiting the weaker and the less privileged. The Elizabethan society was a thoroughly stratified one where the nobility were accustomed to having a host of servants tending to their needs at all times. If one looks at the second scene of this play, Prospero tries to remind Miranda of the luxuries of their life in Milan where she, as an infant, had four or five women waiting on her. This fact provides a sharp contrast to their life on the enchanted isle where they have only one, albeit useful, mortal servant waiting on them. While Caliban might not be a willing servant, he realises that he is almost impotent before Prospero's magic. It is under the threat of torture that he slaves for them, appearing at their beck and call. In the very first scene of his appearance, one gets to know of his unwillingness to serve Prospero. We hear him reminding Prospero about the sufficient amount of wood even before he appears on stage. This subtly indicates that Prospero probably never calls for him unless there was work to be done.

Caliban's presence doesn't seem too pleasant to Miranda and she feels repelled by the thought of him. However, quite importantly, Prospero notes, "We cannot miss him: he does make our fire,/ Fetch in our wood and serves in offices/ That profit us." This suggests that Prospero was quite aware that Caliban, as a servant/slave, was an asset they couldn't do without. Caliban appears to be an integral part of Prospero's isle-kingdom. Caliban's resentment towards his master comes from the fact that Prospero had usurped the isle which the former had imagined was rightfully his. Miranda doesn't mediate but denounces Caliban vehemently.

Sycorax had been the ruler of the enchanted island after she had been banished from Algiers. She, too, had supernatural powers which she deployed against erring servants like Ariel. Quite like Prospero, she had usurped the island from its original inhabitants and turned them into servants who were forced to do her bidding. The first servant we come across in this play is none other than the spirit, Ariel. Ariel, as opposed to Caliban, appears to be more willing to perform the tasks assigned by Prospero. He does exactly what he is instructed to execute and, at times, he does things that he sincerely believes would assist his master.

However, if we study the first act of the play and focus on the exchange between Prospero and Ariel, we'll realise that Ariel isn't too content with his master. Prospero appears to have made a promise that he'd set Ariel free from the contract of service, provided he'd help Prospero execute his plans of regaining his dukedom. When Prospero is reminded of it, he unleashes an angry tirade against Ariel. He makes Ariel recollect a time when he was bound to serve Sycorax. Ariel had been forced to perform repulsive acts and because he had protested, he had been imprisoned in a tree for several years. Prospero reminds him that he had been released from the torturous conditions when Prospero had set him free. He then goes on to threaten Ariel with the same consequences. It appears that Ariel had been released from Sycorax's service and torture, only to be bound in Prospero's.

Ariel, nevertheless, appears to be a more willing servant since Prospero does promise him freedom. Caliban isn't offered a similar deal. Caliban rebels and tries to overthrow Prospero, aligning with the butler and the jester, since he doesn't see a way out. Ariel even assists Prospero in curbing the rebellion, as he recognizes the futility of positioning himself against Prospero and his powers. Under the influence of alcohol, the Stephano and Trinculo had risen against Prospero since the promise of becoming rulers of a land had seemed too good an opportunity to pass. The aspirations of people in service of the nobility do become visible here, although it is deployed to create a comic effect.

It does seem rather surprising and unfortunate that the spirits of the island and Caliban do not build an alliance against their master. Ariel retains a subservient outlook because freedom, though repeatedly deferred, was his ultimate goal and he had pinned his hopes on the contract he'd made with Prospero. If Prospero were to be seen as a colonizer, Ariel position could be analysed as that of a native who accepts and assimilates and Caliban, the one who rebels against injustice, and is miserably beaten in the end.

## 2. Write a short essay on the first scene of *The Tempest*.

**Ans.** *The Tempest* was written in an age when Europe was exploring and trying to colonize distant lands. England, in particular, had been trying to set up colonies in America. The English crown had sanctioned the birth of companies that would take charge of sailing across the seas and establishing colonies that would be under the direct control of the British. Virginia, in America, was one of the first colonies that were instituted, but the process had been a long and challenging one.

A significant amount of investment had been made in those companies but it was only after a series of initial failures that they succeeded in their project. Many of the ships sailing to America met with storms and inclement weather. Shipwrecks were very common as well and many lives, as well as cargo, were lost on the journey. Even experienced mariners couldn't do much because of natural forces that sunk ships or flung them at rocky shores, effectively destroying the vessels and its contents.

Given this context, it doesn't seem surprising that Shakespeare includes shipwrecks in three of his plays. The audience would have been aware of the condition of seafarers. The Comedy of Errors and two of his later plays – Twelfth Night and *The Tempest* – are set against the backdrop of shipwrecks. These shipwrecks added to the plot of the play and Shakespeare used them to explore themes like separation and loss, survival and love, and reunion and redemption. *The Tempest* in the first scene of this play sets the mood since storms usually boded either evil or destruction. It serves the purpose of effectively piquing the audience's attention.

The boatswain, or the mariner in-charge of look after the deck of the ship, appears to be trying to fight the natural forces despite the fear of losing his life. Some of more esteemed travellers on the ship were the King of Naples, his son, and his retinue. During the tempest, the boatswain seemed to be displeased by their presence on the deck since it was interfering with the labour the mariners were engaged in.

The boatswain points out that the words of the nobility would not have helped their situation and the mariners' efforts were impeded by their questions and comments. He asks them to return to their cabins below the deck. Gonzalo tries to remind him that they had their king onboard and requests him to be patient. The boatswain retorts, "What cares these roarers for the name of king?" underscoring that the king's presence could not alleviate their condition and imminent doom.

It is important to note that in the Elizabethan times the monarch was a person who was perceived to have been endowed with the divine right to rule. This meant that the ruler had been ordained by God himself and that her/his position could not be challenged or negated by anybody. In the scheme of things, the monarch was just below God and his angels in the stratified hierarchy of beings. Given this, the impunity of the boatswain is highlighted when he notes that even the monarch couldn't control nature.

To add to the insult, the boatswain even states that he cared more for his life than the life of the king and his retinue. Under normal conditions, this could have been adjudged a punishable, treasonous statement. Apart from Gonzalo, Antonio, too, takes note of the mariner's attitude and suggests that he seemed destined for the gallows. This exchange is a significant one since we realise that in the face of death and one's mortality, people who are from the lower rungs of society, don't necessarily respect social stratification as much. In peril, people don't bow-tow to the wishes of the nobility in ways they would have in stable times. The expression 'time and tide wait for none' comes to mind with respect to this situation.

It's also interesting to note that boatswain even threatens the nobility when they remain on the deck. Their unhelpful presence irritates him enough to remind them that he retained the

power to let them drown by stopping his efforts at fighting the elements. When Sebastian swears at him, the annoyed mariner even offers to hand the reins over to them! The king and his son take to prayers long while the mariners do, perhaps indicative of their state of mind. The sailors battle it out to the very end.

Gonzalo wishes that he had been on land and not the high seas when he succumbs to death and would readily give up miles of seas for barren, unfertile land. His wish seems to come true in the following scenes. This storm, conjured with the help of Ariel, is the first, most potent expression of Prospero's magic.

Or

**Write a short essay on the epilogue of *The Tempest*.**

**Ans.** William Shakespeare had written about 38 plays in his lifetime, some independently while others were co-written. It is generally assumed that *The Tempest* was the last play he had authored independently. It was first performed at Blackfriars Theatre on All Saints' Day, 1611, in front of the monarch, King James. The All Saints' Day, celebrating all known as well as obscure saints, is followed by All Souls Day which is a day for remembering the dead and the dearly departed.

*The Tempest* is a play which ends with departures. Ariel is given his promised freedom and he returns to the elements. The fate of Stephano, Trinculo and most importantly, Caliban's is unknown. With the ship restored the King of Naples, his retinue and the newlyweds, Ferdinand and Miranda, as well as Prospero. The epilogue or the concluding speech of this play is assigned to Prospero. In the first scene of the last act, Prospero, after giving instructions to Ariel to perform his last task, had said, "But this rough magic/ I here abjure..., I'll break my staff,/ Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,/ And deeper than did ever plummet sound/ I'll drown my book," quite determined to have nothing to do with the magic he had exercised in order to regain his dukedom.

It can be suggested that the magical quality of the isle is what had allowed both Prospero and Sycorax to exercise their knowledge and get people and spirit to do their bidding. Prospero, despite his knowledge had not been able to use his knowledge in Milan. Both Prospero and Sycorax had not been able to leave the island and this was possibly because their powers, active on the island, did not extend beyond it. The physical departure from the enchanted isle also marks Prospero's departure from the world of the supernatural and his renunciation of magic. He had decided to get rid of his 'rough magic' by getting rid of his staff, robes, and his books of spells.

The fourth wall in a convention where there is an imagined, invisible wall between the audience and the performers/actors onstage. The audience can watch the performance without the sensation of being watched by the actors, and the rule is that the actors have to act as if they cannot see the audience. Maintaining the illusion (since there isn't a physical

wall), the actors ignore the audience and the audience doesn't physically or verbally engage with the performance. The five acts of *The Tempest* follow the convention of the fourth wall while the epilogue breaks the fourth wall.

The actor playing Prospero addresses the audience directly, effectively breaking the illusion of the fourth wall. It reminds the audience that they were watching a play, a work of fiction. This break from the fourth wall draws one's attention to the theatrical nature of the rest of the play. It also serves to remind one of the masque in Act IV which had ended abruptly. Prospero had then noted, "These our actors,/ As I foretold you, were all spirits and/ Are melted into air... 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," drawing attention to the insubstantial nature of performances. The appearance of the actor playing Prospero, seemingly talking like the character had all through the play but addressing the audience by breaking the fourth wall, does have a similar effect. It reminds the audience that it had all been an extended illusion and asks them to play along, actively suspending any disbelief.

In the epilogue, Prospero's age seems to have caught up with him which leads to his admission of physical weakness. The line, "what strength I have's mine own,/ Which is most faint," subtly suggests that magic had assisted and sustained Prospero bodily as well. The absence of powers makes him weaker, as well as a milder man. The lines that follow seem to endow the audience with the power to keep Prospero imprisoned on the island while the rest sail away to Naples, or give him the permission to go back with them.

The epilogue takes stock of Prospero's progress throughout the play. He appears to have achieved what he truly desired – his dukedom – and he had, prodded into generosity by Ariel, forgiven the people who had banished him and usurped his right to rule. The actor/character requests the audience to set him free from his bonds, "With the help of your good hand," i.e. by clapping. The act of clapping would have not only marked the end of the performance but have been a sign that the audience had been entertained by the performance. The speech then takes a turn towards the realm of imagination where the audience's breath was to be the wind in the sails of the ship to Naples.

While actor/character seeks approval from the audience in the form of claps as well as imaginary winds, there is also a darker side to it. Prospero bemoans that he doesn't have any spirits to enslave or supernatural powers to cast spells and can only take recourse to praying or imploring to higher powers to forgive him, have mercy on him, and provide him with absolution. Here, one may imagine the actor begging forgiveness for any flaws or shortcomings in the performance. However, if it is truly the character, Prospero, expressing this remorse, one wonders why indeed might he be compelled to do so.

The audience seems to have the conditional power to judge him and condemn him. This makes the play rather open-ended in certain ways. Reminding the audience of their own sins, and how they, too, seek redemption, the Prospero-figure seeks their forgiveness and mercy and wants to be set free. Critics have also noted that given that *The Tempest* was Shakespeare's last play, this last speech can also be interpreted as yet another instance, apart from the 'rough magic' speech in Act IV, where the playwright bids adieu to the world of theatre.

**3. Write a short essay on the significant inclusion of comic figures like Stephano and Trinculo.**

Or

**4. Comment on the comic subplot of *The Tempest*.**

**Ans.** Many Shakespeare's plays have jesters or fools accompanying the kings. Especially in his tragedies, the fools are often the most incisive commentators since their position outside the sphere of serious, intellectual matters, offers them the opportunity to say wise things that might displease figures of authority. They are able to get away with it since they are marked as fools who don't need to be taken seriously or at face value since they are, indeed, professionally, fools.

Fools and jesters were a part of the domestic life of the nobility during the mediaeval times and their task was to provide entertainment by singing, dancing, playing instruments, telling jokes, juggling, etc. Shakespeare's fools serve another function apart from entertainment, i.e. social commentary on issues that could not have been brazenly debated on stage or the dramatic purpose of comic relief. These jesters on stage provided the characters, as well as the audience, alternate perspectives that were enlightening.

Trinculo is the professional jester who had been accompanying Alonso's retinue across the seas. He, true to his calling, appears to be a foolish, clowning figure who stumbles onto a part of the island, far from the rest of the shipwrecked party. Stephano, on the other hand, is the butler who drinks quite a bit. He, too, is quite the fool himself. The two of them together provide several comic scenes in this play.

The Elizabethan audience was a heterogeneous body of people from all walks of life – those who dressed in silks as well as those who dressed in rags. The ones who could not afford to buy seats to sit on would have to buy tickets in order to crowd around the stage. They would have to stand throughout the performance on the ground around the stage and were known as the groundlings. The poorer, less educated audience would not have been as familiar with high art and theatrical practices and content as the elite members of the crowd. The presence of the jesters and fools, as well as their antic and bawdy humour, was something



that entertained the groundlings and kept them hooked. The physical humour in these comic scenes was often a source of laughter.

Keeping in mind this convention, it is unsurprising that Trinculo and Stephano burst into bawdy humour, especially under the influence of alcohol. The comic scenes with the fools are full of situational comedy and slapstick, whether it is the scene where Ariel gets a rise out of Stephano by saying awful things about the latter, mimicking Trinculo's voice, or when Stephano imagines he'd found a four-legged monster when he sees a mass (Caliban and Trinculo under a rag).

Most significantly, the two of them provide a foil for another duo in the play – Antonio and Sebastian. Antonio, the brother who'd usurped Prospero's throne, has successfully persuaded Sebastian, King Alonso's brother, to get rid of the king and become the ruler of Naples. They'd even planned of getting rid of Alonso's trusted advisor, Gonzalo. The theme of usurpation runs throughout this play where even Caliban believes that Prospero had wrongly usurped the enchanted isle, which in fact had been taken over by Sycorax.

Caliban mistakenly imagines that Trinculo and Stephano were gods which in turn makes them realize his gullibility. In sheer desperation and under influence, Caliban effectively persuades the jester-duo to overthrow Prospero. The alcohol makes a blubbery fool out of Caliban and boisterous braggarts out of the fools who, spurred by Caliban, decide to take over the island. The other thing to note is that the fools treat Caliban the same way as he had been treated by Prospero – a servant at their beck and call.

The satirical parallel between aspirations of the royalty, Antonio and Sebastian, and the jester-duo out to conquer an island is revelatory. It appears the people from all walks of life do not like passing up an opportunity to move up the social and economic ladders. Power corrupts but the promise of power and glory corrupts as well. Both, the royals as well as the fools, are intoxicated by the thought of power to the extent that they become keen on committing murders. The comic subplot underscores this evil streak in humanity which cuts across classes and social groups.

##### 5. Why is betrothal of Miranda and Ferdinand a critical element in the plot of *The Tempest*?

**Ans.** At the beginning of this play, King Alonso and his retinue were seen caught in the storm raised by Prospero. They were on their way back from the wedding of Alonso's daughter, Claribel, to the King of Tunis, in Africa. At various moments in this play, there are suggestions that this marriage had been arranged against the better judgement and wishes of the king and his advisors. This indicates towards the fact that it might have been a marriage that was a part of a political contract or a strategic move on Alonso's part.

The references to the union of Claribel and the King of Tunis(ia), modern Tunisia,



highlights the nature of several marriages that took place in the Elizabethan age. They were often sanctioned by the parents because of the political and socioeconomic leverage. The argument in this essay is that the Miranda-Ferdinand betrothal is no different from the other contractual marriages that took place in that age. Women were, and still are, seen as objects that can be traded between men. A fertile young woman is often used as currency between men, i.e. her father and the person she is to be wedded to. The contract between the son-in-law (and his family) and the father of the bride reduces the woman to a mere object, a possession, that changes hands. Miranda, unlike some of Shakespeare's powerful and wilful women, is hardly a self-assured person or a rebel. She is mostly an obedient daughter whose only pronounced assertion in this play is her desire for Ferdinand.

However, she is sharp enough to suggest the idea of marriage when the two lovers had declared their love for each other, and Ferdinand wily enough to ask if she was indeed a virgin he could have as his queen. If one looks at Prospero's initial plan, he had hoped to bring Alonso and Antonio to their knees, and also hoped that his daughter would take to Ferdinand. When Miranda does express her desire for Ferdinand, Prospero tries to complicate as well as delay matters by creating a few hurdles for the two lovers to overcome. He notes how goals that are easily achieved are not valued as much, thus justifying the challenges he poses for the two of them.

These hurdles also help Prospero gain some time to execute his plans for the king and his retinue. An easy declaration of love and an early union would have contracted the time frame for the play as well and not helped propel the plot. Prospero's endgame had always been to regain his dukedom and the union of Miranda and Ferdinand helps his in the process. He presents his daughter as a "gift and thine own acquisition/Worthily purchased" to Ferdinand for all his pains – a compensation for the toil he had endured.

Possibly quite aware of the threat of being banished again, once they had all returned to Naples/Milan, the betrothal and marriage of the young couple provided assurance against being ousted and banished all over again. It wouldn't have been prudent for the King of Naples to get rid of his own father-in-law!

The betrothal is done under repeated warnings against any unwanted pre-marital behaviours. The purity and the chastity of the woman before marriage is underscored here since the heir to the throne couldn't possibly wed a woman who wasn't a virgin. Prospero is also conniving enough to avoid revealing the fact of Alonso's son's survival before Alonso himself voices his wish that his son might have wedded Prospero's daughter. Prospero waits for this verbal assurance before informing Alonso of the possibility of his wish coming true. Alonso, though seemingly quite ecstatic about the union, is subtly cornered into agreeing to the union that would certainly help Prospero achieve his goal of getting his dukedom back.

Miranda appears to be a mere pawn in this exchange. It is also important to note that this play has been classified as a comedy, and traditionally, a Renaissance comedy would end in a marriage, a sign of restoration of order and proclamation of love. The Ferdinand-Miranda betrothal thus supports this categorization and is more than a plot device that reveals the machinations of rulers.

**6. *The Tempest* is known for its operatic features. Write a short essay on the musicality of this play.**

**Ans.** Sound plays a major role in this play, whether it is the sound of natural forces, instruments or songs. The stage direction in *The Tempest* begins with the sound of thunder which could have been reproduced on stage using a sheet of metal. These effects most definitely added to the performance of the play. However, what begs one's attention is the sheer number of songs that are a part of this play.

Each and every scene in *The Tempest* takes place on the enchanted island which has inherent magical properties. The musical element in this play harks to those properties. Every time there are instances of supernatural activities or events, music accompanies the act. It almost signals towards the occurrence of something magical. If Prospero is to be considered the prime individual exercising magic, Ariel, his 'tricksy spirit' can be claimed as the primary source for music.

Ariel's aerial temperament is wonderfully complimented by his musical nature. The lyrical language that is assigned to him underscores this aspect. Apart from this, he is also assigned a number of songs. The only musical sequence he is not an active part of is the masque where other spirits play a dominant role.

Ariel's first song, 'Come unto these yellow sands', invites Ferdinand to move towards the interior of the island where he meets his future wife, Miranda. Ferdinand finds himself feeling more emotionally elevated despite his trial in the choppy waters. The song does significantly lift his mood, only to be brought down by the next song sung by Ariel, 'Full fathom five'. The first song almost gives directions for stepping carefully after his war with the waves. His unsteady gait is noted and 'sweet sprites' are invited to bear his burden.

'Full fathom five', though beautiful in its sobriety and sombre resonances, immediately reminds Ferdinand of his losses. It reminds him of his father who he imagines lying death with the creatures of the sea. Mortality and decay are echoed in the song which heightens Ferdinand's sorrow with respect to the loss of his father. The initial comfort and welcoming assurance of the first song is undercut by the second. The purpose of it seems to make him suffer and then rejoice in the discovery of other mortal beings like Miranda.

The nature of the music is always claimed as supernatural and ethereal. Ferdinand notes this

quality of the music, as do the king and his retinue. Before the illusionary feast is laid before their eyes and they are invited to it, they are drawn to it by music which sounds celestial, of course generated by the spirits of the isle. Music, tantalizing and tempting, always deflates the promise of something wonderful in this play. The feast disappears before their very eyes and they are forced to reckon with the evil they had performed in the past.

Sounds, apart from preventing potential murders like that of Gonzalo and Alonso, also torment Caliban. In one of his most eloquent speeches, Caliban describes the music of the isle which soothes him in his dreams, only to let him wake to the reality of his miserable life as Prospero's vassal. He reassures Trinculo and Stephano suggesting that, "the isle is full of noises,/ Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not./ Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments/ Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices."

The isle and the spirits of the place are responsible for these noises, both comforting and disturbing. Whether it is the songs sung by the spirits in the shape of the goddesses during the masque or otherwise, the music has an enchanting effect. However, More often than not, the music charms individuals and leads them into situations that are rather unpleasant; for example, Ariel's instruments lead the potential usurpers into the bog.

The sheer number of songs and the use of musical instruments make this Shakespeare's most sonically charged play. Music is one of the most entertaining aspects of this play and it is not surprising that it was performed the second time during the nuptials of William of Orange and Mary Stuart.

**7. Write a short essay on how the knowledge of magic plays a critical role in the successful execution of Prospero's project.**

**Ans.** In the first act of *The Tempest* the audience is introduced to Caliban who lays claim on the enchanted isle by virtue of the fact that his mother, Sycorax, had been ruling the land before her death, and subsequent arrival of Prospero. In the very same act, we are also informed that Sycorax, 'foul witch Sycorax', as Prospero calls her, had been banished from Algiers for "mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible/ To enter human hearing."

One cannot help but notice the similarities between Prospero's situation and his predecessor's but the former tries his best to distance himself from her and claim his magic as beneficial and good. Prospero's books were what gave him the power to control the various spirits of the island, who in turn performed feats that helped the sorcerer display his powers as well as regain his dukedom.

It is important to note that Prospero himself admits to the fact that he was always involved in his study while his brother, Antonio, had been left in charge of the dukedom. It is not surprising that the younger brother desired the throne since he was the one looking after

the land while the person actually responsible was ignoring his duties. Prospero's quest for knowledge had led to his downfall as he wasn't able to deploy his magic against the usurper in Milan. The magical qualities of the enchanted isle in way activate his powers which seem to be quite potent there.

The primary question that arises is why Prospero doesn't, with the help of magic, create a fleet of ships and raise an army. The probable answer to this lies in the inherent magical nature of the island. Prospero's power doesn't extend beyond the scope of the island which is why he, having figured that Alonso and the rest were near, had ordered Ariel to whip up a tempest to get them off their course and wash up on the island where Prospero reigned supreme.

The other important thing to note is that Prospero doesn't perform or execute magical acts himself. He gets the spirits of the isle to perform tasks for him. Ariel, seemingly his personal favourite, is the one who does most of the work. In the first act, he even catalogues all that he had done for Prospero, and even hints that some of the tasks were not only difficult, but unnecessary as well. Caliban, too, notes that spirits, not necessarily malevolent, were also compelled to torture him, given Prospero's express commands.

Prospero, by separating Alonso from his son, forces the king to experience loss and repentance. He also draws to the king's attention the latent intentions of his own brother, Sebastian, who wanted to overthrow and murder him and Gonzalo. Ferdinand is strategically given some time to enjoy Miranda's coming and eventually woo her. When the two young heirs fall in love, thankfully without the express help of magic, a part of Prospero's plan comes to completion.

The remaining part of his plan, to make Alonso eat the humble pie, comes to fruition as well. Alonso had been instrumental in Prospero's banishment and he plays just as significant a role in the sorcerer's reinstatement. Prospero commands his spirits to create a marvellous feast for the king and his retinue. The moment the hungry, marooned travellers try to get at it, the feast disappears and they are forced to reckon with the wrongs they had committed.

Prospero uses magic to make them regret the decisions they had made in the past and repent. It is repentance that he seeks and their vulnerability. Any news of Ferdinand's wellbeing would have of course reassured Alonso but Prospero keeps that hidden up till the moment the king expresses his desires. He wishes, aloud, that the two heirs had been well and alive, so that they could have been married. Prospero, quite like a dramatic illusionist, reveals that the two were already in love and betrothed, and all the chips fall into place.

Apart from using magic to torture and abuse Caliban, he also deploys it against Trinculo and Stephano in order to thwart their attempts at gaining control over the island. Prospero

also uses his skills to free Ariel from the pine tree where he had been imprisoned by Sycorax for not obeying her commands. In exchange for this act, Ariel is forced to be in the magician's service, almost like an indentured servant. Any sign of protest or rebellion is curbed by the reminder of Prospero's powers.

However, Prospero's powers are not concentrated on his physical self. This becomes apparent when he renounces his magic by getting rid of his books, his robe and breaking his staff. Without magic, he becomes physically weaker as well. Had Prospero not had such skills and lived on this enchanted island, he could not have possibly achieved his goal of being restored as the duke of Milan.

**8. What is the significance of the masque in Act 4 Scene 1? Write a detailed note on the content of the masque and its performance.**

**Ans.** Miranda is one the most precious keys to the success of Prospero's plan of regaining his dukedom. Alonso and the rest might have agreed to reinstate Prospero as the duke in order to get off the island, and then got rid of him when they all reached familiar lands. Miranda and Ferdinand's betrothal is reassurance against any such move on Alonso's part.

However, Miranda's chastity and purity is also something that is desirable. Ferdinand, during the courtship, subtly clarifies whether or not Miranda was indeed a young maid. Her position as a prospective bride for the heir to the throne of Naples is dependent on her physical purity, apart from her beauty. Ferdinand, on the other hand, even admits to the fact that he had liked several women, been attracted to their beauty and enjoyed their company. He, however, confesses that he had found none like Miranda. Had Miranda and Ferdinand engaged in any physical intimacy before their marriage, Miranda might have been deemed an unsuitable candidate.

In order to remind the young love birds about the dangers of any such activity, Prospero conjures the masque, instructing them to abstain. Masque were a popular form of entertainment in the Elizabethan era where lavish sets were constructed for this very purpose and actors dressed in elaborate and rich costumes would come and perform in the staging area. Very often members of the court would participate in these masques which drew on both religious themes and allegorical tales. These masques, whenever they appeared as a part of a play, provided a bit of entertainment for the audience, especially since they, too, were sometimes asked to join the merriment.

The masque of the goddesses that is a part of *The Tempest* also provides a bit of relief and entertainment where three Greek goddesses, in all their glorious finery, come on stage to bless the happy couple and wish them luck. It is important to note here that these mythological figures are all spirits that have taken the form of goddesses. The trio – Juno

(the queen of goddesses), Iris (Juno's messenger) and Ceres (the goddess of agriculture) – bless them with bounty and joy. *The Tempest* was performed during the nuptial celebrations of Princess Elizabeth and Palatine Elector, and this sequence of the goddesses blessing Ferdinand and Miranda, blesses them by extension. This masque provides a momentary break away from the world of the enchanted island, Naples and Milan, and gestures towards the world of the court.

This masque also serves as an opportunity to show Prospero's prospective son-in-law his powers of magic. This is the very first instance in this play where Miranda experiences her father's power in an intimate setup. Iris, the goddess of rainbows that connect the earth and the heavens, welcomes Ceres to the spot where she had initially landed. This welcome emphasises on the importance of chastity, an example being nymphs who enamour bachelors who follow then them around. Ceres, in turn, hails Juno who is also the goddess of marriage, to come join them, riding down from the heavens in her chariots drawn by peacocks.

Iris invites Ceres to celebrate the "contract of true love" but Ceres is reminded of Venus and her son, Cupid, who often play havoc before a union is sanctified. Iris insists on protecting the happily betrothed couple from the influence of Venus and Cupid, and prevent them from laying on a bed together before Hymen, the god of marriage, solemnizes their marriage. Juno appears and blesses them bounty, honour and joy. Iris exits, only in order to bring some reapers and nymphs who dance and entertain the lovers.

This pageantry marks the strength of Prospero's powers and also provides the audience with the opportunity to engage in a bit of dance to the music that accompanied the scene. The couple is blessed with the joys of eternal spring; all the seasons apart from winter are alluded to in this masque. It ends abruptly since Prospero is reminded of Caliban's plot. He then claims that the vision they'd just seen was a 'baseless' one since it had been conjured by him. However, some of the ideas, especially the ones that echo his insistence on abstinence, have some roots in reality.

**9. Give a detailed account of the relationship shared by the original inhabitants of the enchanted island and the humans who claim the island as their own, private possession.**

**Ans.** *The Tempest* has been interpreted as a play that alludes to various degrees of colonialism that continues down till the 20th century but had roots in the explorations that took place in the 16th century. With the improvement of naval technologies in the Elizabethan age, several western nations tried to conquer and gain economic and political control over the inhabitants of other lands.

Caliban is often seen as a sympathetic native who tries to resist the colonial power – Prospero and his daughter, Miranda. He had initially been treated with kindness and care



and he, an orphan, had shown Prospero all the necessary and life-sustaining qualities of the isle – the sources of consumable water, food and all things need for sustenance. He regrets having done so since Prospero had taken over the island which he believes was rightfully his.

However, what one often ignores is that Sycorax, banished from Algiers, had gained control over the inhabitants of the island on arrival. Prospero notes that before Sycorax ended up there, “this island... not honour’d with/ A human shape.” She was the one who had imprisoned Ariel, a spirit who exudes an aerial, ethereal nature. The island was never truly hers, and neither was it Prospero’s. The battle over the possession of the island continues with even fresh batch of humans that land there, mostly by compulsion. For example, Stephano and Trinculo feel the need to wrest it away from Prospero. What remains unaccounted for is what the original inhabitants, the spirits desired.

However, with the advent of the humans, the spirits don’t appear to be free any longer. They are compelled to join the service of the master/mistress who wields magical powers. What is remarkable is that neither Sycorax, nor Prospero, are able to exercise their powers to the fullest potential in their original homes. It is only when they comes to this enchanted island that they begin wielding extensive powers which successfully subdues the supernatural being on the island. This makes one wonder about the relationship between the original inhabitants of the island and the island itself.

Sycorax is not remembered fondly by Ariel because she had maltreated him and locked him in a pine tree where he had to spend several winters, in excruciating pain. He had had to remain there for several years before Prospero arrived and set him free. This makes one wonder what the general environment of the island had been during the years between Sycorax’s death and Prospero’s arrival. Where the original inhabitants pleased? Or were they in the lookout for another governor? It is just as likely that the political ecology of the place was much healthier in the absence of the two wielders of magical powers.

These spirits, not malevolent by nature, do not treat Caliban maliciously unless commanded to do so by Prospero. This makes one wonder if Caliban had indeed lived in harmony with the spirits of the isle. While Ariel appears to take a bit of pleasure in tormenting the people on the ship, it is to be noted that he, since in the service of a mage who desired to torment his abusers, had a master to please. And indeed, Ariel does try everything to please Prospero.

Any attempt on Ariel’s part to remind Prospero of his promise to set him free is met with hostility. Prospero reminds him of the time when he had to serve Sycorax and warns Ariel that he still had the power to imprison the spirit in a tree. Prospero repeatedly threatens his servants into submission, though Ariel assists him willingly at times since he realizes that only Prospero could set him free. Ariel is also the one who tutors Prospero in kindness.

When he realizes that Prospero had been tormenting Alonso and his retinue unnecessarily, he reminds the aged magician that had he, Ariel, been human, he would have been moved by their plight. However, Ariel's generous sentiments do not extend to Caliban or the other sprites on the island. More significantly, the spirits of the enchanted isle do not unite and rebel against Prospero. One does wonder why and how they remain so impotent against Prospero, or indeed, Sycorax.

Ariel appears to be in charge of the lesser spirits on the isle and Prospero's instructions are carried out by them, monitored by Ariel. These spirits seem to have the power to change their physical shapes and Ariel possesses the power to make himself invisible to human beings. Ordered by Prospero, the spirits even turn themselves into goddesses, reapers and nymphs, and even animals!

All said and done, what one wonders is what the lives of these spirits might have been like after the humans would have left for Naples. The audience is made aware of the fact that Ariel is set free to the elements. However, the condition of the other spirits is not mentioned at all and their plight is left to the imagination of the audience. One simply hopes that the condition of the isle springs back to the way it was before humans landed there. However, given histories of colonization, one might deem this hope wishful thinking.

**10. What are the ways in which Caliban has been described by others? Write a note on whether these observations are justified and true.**

**Ans.** The first allusion to Caliban appears in the very first act when Miranda informs her father that she did not enjoy looking at him. Caliban is almost set up as a foil to Ferdinand, the good-looking prince from Naples. Caliban is positioned as the monster who threatens the princess-figure, Miranda.

Caliban is called by a variety of names – *tortoise, earth, hag-seed, slave* – all indicating towards his inferior, animalistic status vis-a-vis the humans. Although Prospero does not confer upon the rights that other humans have, and often refuses to identify him as a human, the magician does, on one instance, note that he was the only subject that Prospero had. On most occasions, Prospero tries to dismiss Caliban and not recognize him as a human being, which in a way would justify his behaviour towards Caliban.

If one thinks about Caliban's name, one can't help but wonder how much that resonates with the word *cannibal*. Given the age of explorations where the west was encountering several inhabitants of non-European lands who were unlike them in manners and behaviours, it is not surprising that Caliban is named thus. He is seen as the outsider who had tried to take advantage of the 'benevolent' colonizers.

There are varying accounts of what Caliban looks like and several actors throughout the



ages, inspired by the words of the play, have portrayed him as ape-like, atavistic, animalistic and repugnant-looking. They often forget how some of the most eloquent lines in the play had been assigned to this cambion, the offspring of a witch and the devil. While Prospero does admit that Caliban has a 'human shape' he does not allow him the same rights as others.

There are certainly several characters who speak of Caliban condescendingly, however, Caliban does not describe himself even once. He is always the one who is looked at but he never looks as himself. Given the degree of disdain with which others treat him, one cannot assume that their comments are unbiased. What one is certain of is that Caliban does not fit the European standard of beauty, though he seems to have imbibed such standards from Prospero and his daughter.

Interestingly, we don't get to hear either the spirits or Ariel describe Caliban. One wonders if they have any kind of affinity between them. The Trinculo-Stephano exchange buttresses the image of Caliban that had already been partially established. Trinculo, quite confused about how to classify Caliban says, "What have we/ here? a man or a fish? dead or alive? A fish:/ he smells like a fish; a very ancient and fish-/ like smell; a kind of not of the newest Poor-/John. A strange fish!" Caliban is certainly a being who evades easy classification.

His position as this threshold-being also gives Stephano the idea that Caliban could be displayed at fairs and people would pay him quite a decent lot to see Caliban. He even thinks of selling Caliban off to a king or make a present of him. The potential of turning Caliban into a curiosity for commercial benefits just reveals the attitudes of discoverers towards non-western races. He is called a *fish*, *monster*, *moon-calf*, etc. by the jester-duo. What this underscores is how hard it is for these early explorers to categorize him as a human. Their money-making tendencies kick in and they immediately lay claims on him because of his profit-making potential. This is not too different from the way Prospero identifies Caliban's value as a servant/slave.

While there appears to be contract between Ariel and Prospero, Caliban is treasured for the compensation free labour he is forced to provide. Prospero doesn't offer words of consolation or praise, but calls Caliban his 'thing of darkness'. One can only imagine that Caliban's skin adds to this description though there is no way one can ascertain it.

Prospero, without recognizing or attempting to learn Caliban's language, had taught him his. Caliban's retort to this seemingly generously circulation of knowledge states that having learnt his master's language, he could curse him in the same. While Prospero demands acknowledgement for his efforts in having done so, Caliban notes that it had been an unequal exchange since he had taught Prospero the ways in which people could survive on the island.

Both Prospero and Miranda condemn him and repeatedly assert that Caliban's nature was such that it could not be improved, and all their attempts to tend to his intellect had failed. However, Caliban's eloquence and arguments prove otherwise. He is indeed intelligent being who is also able to strategize in order to get rid of Prospero, though he fails since Prospero has an army of spirits on his side.

Caliban, nevertheless, cuts a sorry figure who is unable to fight better equipped powers that crush him but not necessarily his spirit. The only weak decision he makes is that he trusts Trinculo and Stephano and accepts them as his masters under the influence of alcohol that the latter provides.

**11. How does Antonio and Sebastian's plot to overthrow and murder Alonso (and Gonzalo) play out? How does the Trinculo-Stephano plot act as a foil to former's endeavours?**

**Ans.** *The Tempest*, although classified as a comedy, reveals several dark aspects of powers and sovereignty. In the 16th century, the law of primogeniture was in place. This meant that the eldest child would have the right over most of the father's property while the rest of children would receive much smaller portions. When it came to titles, the eldest son would have the right to bear it.

Needless to say, the primogeniture created a lot of hostility amongst siblings. Several of Shakespeare's plays, mostly his comedies, address this issue. Primogeniture is seen as a complication that is usually resolved by the end of the play. Similar problems seem to spur the plot of *The Tempest* where Prospero's younger brother ousts him in order to take control of the dukedom. Prospero, as a duke, had dedicated most of his time to books instead of governing the land, and his younger brother had had to execute the responsibilities reserved for the duke. Given that Prospero had only a daughter as an heir, it would have further fuelled Antonio's ambition of overthrowing him.

Antonio had been assisted by Naples in his efforts to banish Prospero, in exchange for tributes as compensation. With Ferdinand presumed dead, Antonio realizes that if Alonso were out of the way, Sebastian would become the King of Naples and wave off the tribute. He then plants the seed of fratricide in Sebastian. Antonio, recognising and empathising with Sebastian, is able to corrupt king's younger brother who would have been in line with Ferdinand gone. They also note that since Claribel had been married off in Tunis, she was too far away from Naples to assert her claim to the throne.

Sebastian, hesitant to kill his own brother, agrees to murder Gonzalo while Antonio consents to kill Alonso for him. Ariel lets two of them plan it out while the rest of the people are lulled into sleep. Like cowards, Sebastian and Antonio decide to kill the king and his trusted advisor in their sleep and just before they plunge their swords into them, Ariel wakes them up. They find the two younger brothers are caught in the act but the potential

murders get away with it since Antonio comes up with the excuse that they had heard roaring lions. Sebastian adds to it but his account doesn't match Antonio's completely since he states that he'd heard the roaring of bulls. Ariel successfully prevents these murders but he helps identify an unethical streak in Sebastian.

Trinculo and Stephano, drunk on alcohol and dreams of grandeur, decide to overthrow Prospero and kill him. They agree to spare Miranda as she is seen as a possible partner for Stephano. They were informed about the wonders of the island by an intoxicated Caliban who was desperately trying to get rid of the sorcerer. Their foolish attempt is noted, yet again, by Ariel who appears to be the main agent trying to stop potential usurpers. They are led into a smelly bog by the music played by Ariel and they remain stuck there till Prospero makes them reckon with their wrongdoings.

The Trinculo-Stephano comic subplot acts a foil to the darker Antonio-Sebastian plot. It throws light on how individual across classes in society have this latent tendency to try and better their circumstances, sometimes through unethical means like murdering people. Given ideal situations, they attempt acts that they would not have otherwise dared. Both the plots are foiled but the reason behind the stimulation of these remains the same. Any opportunity to become the ruler of a land, even if it meant a partially barren land like that of the island, attracts certain elements who desire the highest position a human being can achieve, i.e. sovereignty. Prospero, too, had claimed sovereignty over the island, albeit unethically if one goes by Caliban's logic. However, he is the very person who reveals the Antonio-Sebastian plot to Alonso and chastises them. The play concludes with the restoration of social order where the eldest born, Alonso and Prospero, retain their right to rule, and Antonio is removed from his position as the Duke of Milan.

**12. What had been Prospero's motivation behind ordering Ariel to conjure the tempest? Were his reasons justifiable and warranted?**

**Ans.** Prospero, the onetime Duke of Milan, bore grudges against his brother, Antonio, for usurping the throne and the title. He had been banished from his own dukedom, perhaps not executed since he was the father of an infant. Gonzalo had taken pity on him and helped him onto a boat with Miranda, a few provisions and his most precious books. His skills as a magician did not help him quell the situation in Milan.

Powerless in the face of his brother's rebellion, banished and defenceless, Prospero had braved rough waters and reached the island. On the island, he had taken Caliban in, initially as a ward, but eventually made a slave/servant of him. He had freed Ariel from the pine tree where he had been imprisoned by the previous ruler of the island, Sycorax. Ariel's freedom came at the cost of him being bound in servitude to Prospero till the time the sorcerer felt it agreeable to release him from his service.

Prospero's most ardent desire had been to regain his dukedom. In the first act of the play he admits to Miranda that his "library/ Was dukedom large enough," but his motivations reveal otherwise. When he was the duke, he spent several long hours in the library, poring over his books. The actual reins of the dukedom had been handed over to his son. One even wonders whether Prospero cared enough about his daughter when he was in Milan. His books of spells that contained knowledge about supernatural elements had distracted him from being an ideal ruler. However, it seems that Prospero's main project had been the acquisition of more power. Not only did he want to be the ruler of Milan, he had aspirations of becoming more potent.

While Prospero does mention that he had been a welcome ruler, the audience does not have any accounts that might corroborate it. Nevertheless, after having been banished, Prospero's main drive had been to regain the power he had lost. He wanted his dukedom back but his magical strength seemed to be restricted to the island. The range of his powers did not reach Milan or Naples. As a result of it, he had to wait for several long years before he found an opportunity to bring his opponents to their knees.

Once Prospero found out that the King of Naples as well as his brother, Antonio were on the ship returning from Tunis, he had commanded Ariel to conjure a tempest that would appear to destroy the ship and bring king and his followers to the island and separate the heir, Ferdinand, from the rest. The description of the tempest creates a haunting image with the sailors unnerved by the fires caused by Ariel and raging waves. The mariners experienced what they imagined to be hell. Ferdinand had been seen braving the waves but the audience is not informed about how the king and his retinue arrive on the island.

Miranda had been quite moved by the plight of the marines and the travellers onboard the ship and begged her father to leave them uninjured. It is only then that we realize that Prospero had had a hand in it and that Miranda was aware of her father's powers. Prospero, most definitely, did not seem too moved. He promises her that he would not let any harm come to the people onboard and he keeps this promise with respect to the physical health of the individuals. He does go on to torture the people who had landed on island psychologically. He makes Alonso experience the loss of his son, and Ferdinand, the loss of everyone he was familiar with.

Not only does Prospero torment the king and his son, he even makes the rest of his retinue, most significantly Gonzalo – the one man who had been very kind to him – suffer from what they assume with delusions of their weakened minds. Though one might be able to empathise with Prospero for punishing the individuals who had wronged him, it appears rather unjustifiable when he tortures the ones who did not have as much to do with his banishment. Even his daughter suffers because he makes Ferdinand perform menial,

strenuous tasks. Prospero could perhaps have forgiven the king and his brother right after making them live through the tempest but given his love for dramatic effects, he toys with them like a puppeteer would. It is Ariel, a spirit, who reminds him what it means to be human being and forgive others for their wrongdoings.

Prospero's powers seem to complement his equally potent vindictiveness and need for justice. He does not employ his powers to make the island a better place for its inhabitants; he deploys it against his enemies and every being who dares to oppose or displease him. Getting Ariel to conjure the tempest was simply to the opening sonata to his symphony of wresting repentance from his opponents.

**13. Write a detailed comment on Gonzalo's 'commonwealth speech' and tease out the internal contradictions. Does it provide a contrast to the way Prospero had initially ruled in Milan or on the island?**

**Ans.** Gonzalo is relatively one of the minor characters in *The Tempest* but interestingly, one of most significant speeches of the nature of governance, commonwealth and sovereignty had been assigned to him. He was person who had helped Prospero through troubled times when Antonio, the duke's younger brother, had overthrown him and usurped the throne. He is established as a kind and generous man early in the play.

Gonzalo, one of the advisors to the King of Naples, is also one of the oldest characters in the play, almost as old as Prospero, if not his senior. When Alonso assumes that this son had perished, battling the waves, he is the one who offers the most heartfelt condolences while reminding him to look at the brighter side of things: the fact that they all had made it alive and were on an island. This initiates a long drawn conversation where Gonzalo imagines what he would do if he were given the reins of that land.

In an age where society was quite rigidly stratified, Gonzalo declares that if he were the colonizer and the ruler of the island, there would be no poverty, famine, class divisions would be non-existent, and there wouldn't be any schools for education, nor any administrators or officials. He would not allow any contracts to be drawn, nor any inheritance for heirs since properties would be distributed equally and in an egalitarian manner. He would disallow people from working and the women on the island would be pure and chaste. He ends the last part of this section of his speech by stating that there wouldn't be a king either. In the latter section of Gonzalo's ramblings imagines a land which is bountiful enough to produce harvest without any human labour. The old advisor adds that his land would be free from crimes and weapons as well.

These thoughts, of course, were meant as a distraction for the king who was upset about his losses. However, Antonio and Sebastian, always mocking any kind gestures, were quick to

point out that the last part of Gonzalo's speech, contradicted the first. Gonzalo had begun with an expression of his desire to govern, and yet his utopian vision ends with a land which is not governed or ruled by anyone.

Gonzalo's speech is important because it provides an interesting contrast to the kinds of governance we find in this play. Prospero's island-kingdom is highly dependent in the services of Caliban and the spirits of the isle. Their service is extracted, mostly unwillingly. The magician, when he was the Duke of Milan, used to spend most of his time in his library as opposed to his brother who had to take charge of the daily affairs of the court.

Shakespeare was quite influenced by the works of Michel de Montaigne, an important French Renaissance philosopher, whose essays on cannibals was in circulation in the 16th century. In one very striking passage, he describes the so-called uncivilized natives of Brazil as beings who nurtured a symbiotic relationship with nature. The European colonizers might see them as savages, but the natives seemed kinder, gentler and more civilized than their colonizers. These very natives did not need rigid social structures that kept their world in order since they, according to Montaigne, did not have crime or experience impoverishment, and neither did they have monarchs, nor the need to cultivate lands.

This description of the Brazilian natives seems to have been drawn rather directly from Montaigne's essay. Through his essay, Montaigne had proposed the idea that colonizers were not as cultured or civilized since the native were the ones who sat in the lap of nature, without the need for the artifices of civilizations that had monarchs and governments. This makes one wonder if Shakespeare was offering a critique here as well, ventriloquised through the seemingly senile old advisor. Gonzalo's utopia about a colony does end with the absence of a monarchical head.

If Shakespeare does endorse the idea of non-European societies being much better managed than European ones, does it also mean that Caliban is representative of the idealized native? Caliban does plan to get rid of Prospero and had tried to take advantage of Miranda. One is forced to wonder if it is the introduction of Prospero, his language, and the ways of his world that had corrupted Caliban who had, perhaps, initially been an innocent as claimed by Montaigne when he writes about the Brazilians.

However, Caliban is always perceived as a savage by the other characters in this play. Stephano and Trinculo, quite like Prospero, take advantage of Caliban's racial otherness and make a servant out of him. In Gonzalo's utopic commonwealth, Caliban would have been an equal participant in the affairs of the land and not a servant, and Prospero would not have been a potent magician/duke. In the utopic world, the absence of positions of powers would not encouraged greed in people and Antonio would not have usurped Prospero's throne, nor encouraged Sebastian to attempt fratricide. The bottom-line, however, remains



the same. Gonzalo's utopic vision is not something that could have been realized and a commonwealth remains an improbable dream.

**14. Write a short essay on how *The Tempest* is informed by travel narratives, explorations, and colonialist projects and practices of the Shakespearean age.**

**Ans.** The action in several of Shakespeare's plays, both tragedies and comedies, take place in lands that are far away from Britain. If one thinks about the Elizabethan age, one recognizes that it was an age where European powers were exploring other parts of the world and conquering and consolidating them as colonies. In *The Tempest*, we come across several places being mentioned – Milan, Naples, Algiers (Algeria), Bermoothes (Bermudas) and Tunis.

The world in the imagination of people was steadily expanding in the 16th century because of travel narratives that came out of exploratory journeys and maritime efforts. With the discovery of the New World, i.e. the Americas, Britain's expansionist dreams became quite material. However, there is a considerable amount of critical debate around this play that is often known as a New World play. Was Shakespeare really writing about the Americas?

England, in the late 16th century and the early years of the 17th century had made several attempts to establish a colony in America. Most of their attempts had been devastatingly unsuccessful since they were not prepared to wrest with the rough waters, storms, and tropical diseases. Unaccountable numbers succumbed to these journeys and the tempest as the beginning of Shakespeare's play only serves to remind the audience of tragic tales they were already familiar with.

The only particular document that is of interest is William Strachey's note of the shipwreck that had taken place in 1609 in the Bermudas. He writes that the ship *Sea Venture* was headed to the Americas, Virginia in particular, and had been caught in a storm that ruined the ship. As a result, the crew and the passengers landed in the Bermudas. Virginia, one must note, was one of the first colonies that had been set up in America. This, of course, would have been etched in the national imagination and the audience would not have missed an allusion to this event that changed world history.

Strachey's account of the stranded crew that had to build two ships out of almost nothing, and finally ending up in Virginia, has been noted as a source for *The Tempest* where a similar storm is confronted in the opening scene. Montaigne's essays on the nature of the inhabitants of Brazil can be seen as a source for Gonzalo's speech on the commonwealth where he, quite contradictorily, would be the ruler. In his speech Gonzalo had claimed that the people in his commonwealth would live simple lives uncomplicated by social institutions and commercial ventures, quite like the natives in Montaigne's essays.

*The Tempest* then can be seen as a critique of colonialist projects as well. Though the audience might not be able to feel sympathy for Caliban throughout the play, one may argue that it is the introduction of foreign ruler from Europe that had changed Caliban's world. Caliban, whose name seems to be an anagram from the word 'cannibal', had been taught a different language as well as a way of life by Prospero and Miranda. The education he receives changes him forever but he revels in the fact that he could curse his master in the language he had been taught.

The moment Caliban tries to come close to Miranda, physically, he is excommunicated and condemn for his effort. The native, the colonized, cannot lay claims to the same privileges as the rest. Caliban, the slave, had initially been well treated and cared for since he was a source of important knowledge that had helped Prospero sustain himself and his daughter. Caliban regrets having shared this precious knowledge later, only to promise to make the same knowledge available to the succeeding batch of potential colonizers – Stephano and Trinculo.

One of the reasons justifying colonization had always been assumed inferiority of non-white or non-European races. Caliban is always positioned as the racial other in the play. Both Prospero and Miranda chide him because they feel that their mission – 'the white man's burden' to educate and uplift the other races – had failed with respect to Caliban since he seemed resistant to moral improvement. They felt that their civilising mission had failed. However, if one looks at the eloquence with which Caliban uses another language, one realizes that he was indeed an intelligent being.

*The Tempest* reveals how individuals across classes were desirous of retaining or gathering power and accumulating wealth. Whether it is the brothers trying to get rid of legitimate heirs and declaring themselves the rulers of the land, or a potent magician enslaving others in order to get his dukedom back, the need for power seems quite pronounced. Also, if one looks at the comic subplot, the jester and the butler try to do the same thing, i.e. depose the ruler and snatch territory away. And quite like several of the explorers of the age who brought curiosities back home from their travels, the first thought that crosses Stephano's mind to use Caliban as a curiosity that would generate a lot of wealth at fairs and shows.

There have been several debates around the idea of conquest and colonialism in this play vis-a-vis Caliban and Prospero. Caliban is seen as the rebellious native trying to wrest the controls of the land from the colonizer since he recognizes it as a birthright. However, what needs special attention is the role of Ariel and the other spirits. The latter were the ones who had legitimate claims to the land before Sycorax, Caliban's mother, had taken over the island.

Ariel can be seen as the willing slave who commits to a contract with the colonizer in



order to earn his freedom. He can be conversely seen as a sell-out but one can see how he chooses the lesser of the two evils. While Caliban suffers because of his rebellious streak, Ariel is eventually given his promised freedom when he helps Prospero regain his dukedom. However, one may note, that the audience is left without a clue regarding Caliban's status at the end of the play.

Unlike most examples seen in the last century or so, the colonizer's retreat in *The Tempest* is a bloodless affair. The audience is also left uncertain about the status of this island at the end of the play. Is it claimed as an overseas territory under Milan or Naples? Or is it left to the natives of the land? *The Tempest* is certainly influenced by travel narratives and the politics of the age but it nevertheless provides a critical look at the beginnings of colonization.

**15. Comment on the comic subplot of *The Tempest*.**

**Ans.** Many Shakespeare's plays have jesters or fools accompanying the kings. Especially in his tragedies, the fools are often the most incisive commentators since their position outside the sphere of serious, intellectual matters, offers them the opportunity to say wise things that might displease figures of authority. They are able to get away with it since they are marked as fools who don't need to be taken seriously or at face value since they are, indeed, professionally, fools.

Fools and jesters were a part of the domestic life of the nobility during the mediaeval times and their task was to provide entertainment by singing, dancing, playing instruments, telling jokes, juggling, etc. Shakespeare's fools serve another function apart from entertainment, i.e. social commentary on issues that could not have been brazenly debated on stage or the dramatic purpose of comic relief. These jesters on stage provided the characters, as well as the audience, alternate perspectives that were enlightening.

Trinculo is the professional jester who had been accompanying Alonso's retinue across the seas. He, true to his calling, appears to be a foolish, clowning figure who stumbles onto a part of the island, far from the rest of the shipwrecked party. Stephano, on the other the hand, is the butler who drinks quite a bit. He, too, is quite the fool himself. The two of them together provide several comic scenes in this play.

The Elizabethan audience was a heterogeneous body of people from all walks of life – those who dressed in silks as well as those who dressed in rags. The ones who could not afford to buy seats to sit on would have to buy tickets in order to crowd around the stage. They would have to stand throughout the performance on the ground around the stage and were known as the groundlings. The poorer, less educated audience would not have been as familiar with high art and theatrical practices and content as the elite members of the crowd. The presence of the jesters and fools, as well as their antic and bawdy humour, was something

that entertained the groundlings and kept them hooked. The physical humour in these comic scenes was often a source of laughter.

Keeping in mind this convention, it is unsurprising that Trinculo and Stephano burst into bawdy humour, especially under the influence of alcohol. The comic scenes with the fools are full of situational comedy and slapstick, whether it is the scene where Ariel gets a rise out of Stephano by saying awful things about the latter, mimicking Trinculo's voice, or when Stephano imagines he'd found a four-legged monster when he sees a mass (Caliban and Trinculo under a rag).

Most significantly, the two of them provide a foil for another duo in the play – Antonio and Sebastian. Antonio, the brother who'd usurped Prospero's throne, has successfully persuaded Sebastian, King Alonso's brother, to get rid of the king and become the ruler of Naples. They'd even planned of getting rid of Alonso's trusted advisor, Gonzalo. The theme of usurpation runs throughout this play where even Caliban believes that Prospero had wrongly usurped the enchanted isle, which in fact had been taken over by Sycorax.

Caliban mistakenly imagines that Trinculo and Stephano were gods which in turn makes them realize his gullibility. In sheer desperation and under influence, Caliban effectively persuades the jester-duo to overthrow Prospero. The alcohol makes a blubbery fool out of Caliban and boisterous braggarts out of the fools who, spurred by Caliban, decide to take over the island. The other thing to note is that the fools treat Caliban the same way as he had been treated by Prospero – a servant at their beck and call.

The satirical parallel between aspirations of the royalty, Antonio and Sebastian, and the jester-duo out to conquer an island is revelatory. It appears the people from all walks of life do not like passing up an opportunity to move up the social and economic ladders. Power corrupts but the promise of power and glory corrupts as well. Both, the royals as well as the fools, are intoxicated by the thought of power to the extent that they become keen on committing murders. The comic subplot underscores this evil streak in humanity which cuts across classes and social groups.

**16. Write a short essay on the significance of the supernatural in *The Tempest*? How intensely is Prospero's project dependent on it?**

**Ans.** Miranda is one of the most precious keys to the success of Prospero's plan of regaining his dukedom. Alonso and the rest might have agreed to reinstate Prospero as the duke in order to get off the island, and then got rid of him when they all reached familiar lands. Miranda and Ferdinand's betrothal is reassurance against any such move on Alonso's part.

However, Miranda's chastity and purity is also something that is desirable. Ferdinand, during the courtship, subtly clarifies whether or not Miranda was indeed a young maid.

Her position as a prospective bride for the heir to the throne of Naples is dependent on her physical purity, apart from her beauty. Ferdinand, on the other hand, even admits to the fact that he had liked several women, been attracted to their beauty and enjoyed their company. He, however, confesses that he had found none like Miranda. Had Miranda and Ferdinand engaged in any physical intimacy before their marriage, Miranda might have been deemed an unsuitable candidate.

In order to remind the young love birds about the dangers of any such activity, Prospero conjures the masque, instructing them to abstain. Masque were a popular form of entertainment in the Elizabethan era where lavish sets were constructed for this very purpose and actors dressed in elaborate and rich costumes would come and perform in the staging area. Very often members of the court would participate in these masques which drew on both religious themes and allegorical tales. These masques, whenever they appeared as a part of a play, provided a bit of entertainment for the audience, especially since they, too, were sometimes asked to join the merriment.

The masque of the goddesses that is a part of *The Tempest* also provides a bit of relief and entertainment where three Greek goddesses, in all their glorious finery, come on stage to bless the happy couple and wish them luck. It is important to note here that these mythological figures are all spirits that have taken the form of goddesses. The trio – Juno (the queen of goddesses), Iris (Juno’s messenger) and Ceres (the goddess of agriculture) – bless them with bounty and joy. *The Tempest* was performed during the nuptial celebrations of Princess Elizabeth and Palatine Elector, and this sequence of the goddesses blessing Ferdinand and Miranda, blesses them by extension. This masque provides a momentary break away from the world of the enchanted island, Naples and Milan, and gestures towards the world of the court.

This masque also serves as an opportunity to show Prospero’s prospective son-in-law his powers of magic. This is the very first instance in this play where Miranda experiences her father’s power in an intimate setup. Iris, the goddess of rainbows that connect the earth and the heavens, welcomes Ceres to the spot where she had initially landed. This welcome emphasises on the important of chastity, an example being nymphs who enamour bachelors who follow then them around. Ceres, in turn, hails Juno who is also the goddess of marriage, to come join them, riding down from the heavens in her chariots drawn by peacocks.

Iris invites Ceres to celebrate the “contract of true love” but Ceres is reminded of Venus and her son, Cupid, who often play havoc before a union is sanctified. Iris insists on protecting the happily betrothed couple from the influence of Venus and Cupid, and prevent them from laying on a bed together before Hymen, the god of marriage, solemnizes their

marriage. Juno appears and blesses them bounty, honour and joy. Iris exits, only in order to bring some reapers and nymphs who dance and entertain the lovers.

This pageantry marks the strength of Prospero's powers and also provides the audience with the opportunity to engage in a bit of dance to the music that accompanied the scene. The couple is blessed with the joys of eternal spring; all the seasons apart from winter are alluded to in this masque. It ends abruptly since Prospero is reminded of Caliban's plot. He then claims that the vision they'd just seen was a 'baseless' one since it had been conjured by him. However, some of the ideas, especially the ones that echo his insistence on abstinence, have some roots in reality.

**17. *The Tempest*, one of Shakespeare's last plays, was initially classified as a comedy when it was first published in 1623. What are the elements on this play that justify this classification?**

**Ans.** In the First Folio (1623), one finds *The Tempest* listed under the genre comedies. Comedies in Shakespeare's age were unlike those that we find in theatres today. What we understand as comedy in our contemporary times is truly very different from the range that was available for audiences in the 16th-17th century.

One of the key characteristics of a comedy was that the play would end on a happy note, most commonly – a marriage (Miranda and Ferdinand). These plays usually also have love and romance as a part of their thematic content and usually feature a young couple facing obstacles or adverse conditions. However, they are eventually able to overcome all the hurdles and are married.

Witty wordplay and puns intersperse the language used in these comedies and that adds to the humour of the play. Time and again, unexpected twists appear in the plot (Caliban gets intoxicated and fuels a rebellion) and the plays often have a clever servant-trickster figure (Ariel).

Such plays also have elements of the fantastic and the supernatural, and frequently, the plot is completely dependent on improbable coincidences (the ship carrying Antonio sailing by the enchanted island). These comedies also make one wonder about philosophical ideas stemming from what the characters struggle against and survive.

**18. What is the difference between Prospero's "art" and Sycorax's magic?**

**Ans.** *The Tempest*, quite like a few other Shakespearean comedies and romances, is full of magic and supernatural elements. Prospero, the protagonist, as well as Sycorax the witch, exercise their might over the spirits of the enchanted island using their magic. Prospero's position as a duke had probably been usurped because he was more interested in dabbling in the arts than governing his dukedom. Sycorax, on the other hand, had been banished from Algiers.

This demonstrates that magic and the knowledge of supernatural powers had not been beneficial in the world known to either.

However, while the 'evil' Sycorax is aligned to black magic or the dark arts, Prospero's magic is often thought of as 'white art' or magic that is not malignant. This understanding is mostly conditional since we find the boundaries between Prospero's and Sycorax's powers blurring throughout the play. What appears more interesting is that Prospero and Sycorax's powers amplify on the island. Had they been as effective on their native lands, they would have probably not been banished or excommunicated in the first place. While the source of Sycorax's magic remains unknown, Caliban informs the audience that the source of Prospero's magic is the knowledge of magic that his books contain (and his robe and staff), without which "He's but a sot, as [Caliban], nor hath not/ One spirit to command."

### 19. Discuss the character of Prospero.

**Ans.** Prospero, the sorcerer/magician, has long been interpreted as a literary extension of Shakespeare – both are aged, apprehensive about their daughter(s)' futures, and bidding farewell to their 'arts' or professions. Quite like a playwright, Prospero is able to conjure spirits at will and get them to perform at his bidding though critics have warned readers against any simplistic conflation of Prospero's character and Shakespeare's. Towards the end of the play Prospero physically draws a curtain and reveals a scene where Ferdinand and Miranda are found enjoying each other's company – the intended end of all his efforts.

Prospero does not attend to any task that requires him to exert himself physically. Ariel does everything Prospero commands even though the former recognizes how irrational Prospero's demands occasionally are. Prospero, recognizing how valuable an asset Ariel is, does not grant him freedom till all his purposes are served.

As opposed to the 'evil' witch Sycorax, Prospero does not dabble in the dark arts or black magic. He is perceived as a relatively 'ethical' magician since he uses magic to undo the offences practised against him in the past. Prospero steadily and categorically tries to denounce Sycorax and distances himself from her kind of magic and what she stood for. However, as the play progresses, we find startling similarities between the two. Both were banished from their respective kingdoms, their lives were spared because of their young children, and both sought refuge on the island which they came to govern. Both were powerful enough to govern the spirits of the island and use them to their own advantage. Prospero ill-treats Caliban the very same way Sycorax had abused Ariel. Prospero and Sycorax had never met and one is left to wonder about the powers of each one of them. Caliban mentions that Prospero is more powerful than his mother's god, Setebos. However, it is important to remember that much of what the audience gathers about Sycorax is from unreliable sources since Caliban was very young when she died and Prospero had

learnt about her mostly from Ariel, her slave and captive. As the present ruler of the island Prospero is free to manipulate her history to his advantage. The thrust of Prospero's action appears to be towards reconciliation and restoration of order that seems to be to his liking.

**20. Explain how the character of Caliban is different from that of Ariel.**

**Ans.** One of the most powerful spirits of the island, Ariel had once been in the service of the sorceress, Sycorax (Caliban's mother), though he does not appear to bear any particular hatred towards Caliban on account of that. Ariel acts as a foil to Caliban who unabashedly despises and openly challenges Prospero's authority. Ariel appears to be the more faithful servant who seeks to serve his master well. He also reminds Prospero of the qualities that separate humans from other beings. A diminutive and tiny spirit, Ariel is able to assume any form or shape and his music works as a charm on those who are allowed to hear it. He is able to move through water, fire and earth though he is elementally closer to air, and can remain invisible or intangible. Ariel appears to be the commander-in-chief of the spirits who receive and execute the instructions that filter down from the magician (Prospero) through Ariel.

Caliban, elementally aligned with the earth, is almost never respected as a human by the people from Milan and Naples. He is called several names – 'whelp', 'demi-devil', 'monster', 'strange fish' – amongst others. Perhaps a play of the word 'cannibal', Caliban's name has been at the centre of several critical debates. Given the travelogues that were circulating at that time when Shakespeare was developing this character, Caliban seems to embody the characteristics and play the part of the 'savage' of the New World as the Europeans might have imagined. He is always seen as a being that is less than human, exotic and meant for servitude because of his recognizable racial difference.

Caliban is described in several ways as 'deformed slave', 'moon-calf', 'hag-seed', and 'demi-devil' – all descriptions indicating his alleged physical deformity, dim-wittedness, racial difference, and illegitimate birth. Through Caliban, the playwright makes one wonder about the qualities that distinguish humans from animals and inhuman beings. Caliban has also been perceived and read as a victim of colonial injustice.