



ST. LAWRENCE HIGH SCHOOL

A JESUIT CHRISTIAN MINORITY INSTITUTION

CLASS - VIII

STUDY MATERIAL – ENGLISH LITERATURE

TOPIC: The Tempest (William Shakeshpere)

DATE:

About the writer :-

William Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon in England. He died on April 23, 1610. William was married to Mary Arden. They had three children named Susannah, Hamnet, and Judith. Although they didn't follow in his footsteps, they admired and supported his work. William Shakespeare's wonderful plays have been performed all over the world. William wrote over 30 plays and 150 sonnets with very unique words in them. His works have been translated into every major language today. Shakespeare's last two plays were written after he retired to Stratford. Many of Shakespeare's plays have been known to be among the greatest in Western literature. He wrote tragedies, histories, comedies, and romances. Some of his plays are: A Midsummer Night's Dream, Troilus and Cressida, As You Like It, and one of his most famous tragedies, Romeo and Juliet. These plays do not just fill hearts with joy, but they are plays that you can relate to no matter what your age is. Some represented real life problems. Shakespeare's reputation has grown considerably since his own time.

Character List :-

Prospero - The play's protagonist, and father of Miranda. Twelve years before the events of the play, Prospero was the duke of Milan. His brother, Antonio, in concert with Alonso, king of Naples, usurped him, forcing him to flee in a boat with his daughter. The honest lord Gonzalo aided Prospero in his escape. Prospero has spent his twelve years on the island refining the magic that gives him the power he needs to punish and forgive his enemies

Miranda - The daughter of Prospero, Miranda was brought to the island at an early age and has never seen any men other than her father and Caliban, though she dimly remembers being cared for by female servants as an infant. Because she has been sealed off from the world for so long, Miranda's perceptions of other people tend to be naïve and non-judgmental. She is compassionate, generous, and loyal to her father

Ariel - Prospero's spirit helper. Ariel is referred to throughout this SparkNote and in most criticism as "he," but his gender and physical form are ambiguous. Rescued by Prospero from a long imprisonment at the hands of the witch Sycorax, Ariel is Prospero's servant until Prospero decides to release him. He is mischievous and ubiquitous, able to traverse the length of the island in an instant and to change shapes at will. He carries out virtually every task that Prospero needs accomplished in the play.

Caliban - Another of Prospero's servants. Caliban, the son of the now-deceased witch Sycorax, acquainted Prospero with the island when Prospero arrived. Caliban believes that the island rightfully belongs to him and has been stolen by Prospero. His speech and behavior is sometimes coarse and brutal, as in his drunken scenes with Stephano and Trinculo and sometimes eloquent and sensitive, as in his rebukes of Prospero, and in his description of the eerie beauty of the island.

Ferdinand - Son and heir of Alonso. Ferdinand seems in some ways to be as pure and naïve as Miranda. He falls in love with her upon first sight and happily submits to servitude in order to win her father's approval.

Alonso - King of Naples and father of Ferdinand. Alonso aided Antonio in unseating Prospero as Duke of Milan twelve years before. As he appears in the play, however, he is acutely aware of the consequences of all his actions. He blames his decision to marry his daughter to the Prince of Tunis on the apparent death of his son. In addition, after the magical banquet, he regrets his role in the usurping of Prospero.

Antonio - Prospero's brother. Antonio quickly demonstrates that he is power-hungry and foolish. He persuades Sebastian to kill the sleeping Alonso. He then goes along with Sebastian's absurd story about fending off lions when Gonzalo wakes up and catches Antonio and Sebastian with their swords drawn.

Sebastian - Alonso's brother. Like Antonio, he is both aggressive and cowardly. He is easily persuaded to kill his brother, and he initiates the ridiculous story about lions when Gonzalo catches him with his sword drawn.

Gonzalo - An old, honest lord, Gonzalo helped Prospero and Miranda to escape after Antonio usurped Prospero's title. Gonzalo's speeches provide an important commentary on the events of the play, as he remarks on the beauty of the island when the stranded party first lands, then on the desperation of Alonso after the magic banquet, and on the miracle of the reconciliation.

Trinculo & Stephano - Trinculo, a jester, and Stephano, a drunken butler, are two minor members of the shipwrecked party. They provide a comic foil to the other, more powerful pairs of Prospero and Alonso and Antonio and Sebastian. Their drunken boasting and petty greed reflect and deflate the quarrels and power struggles of Prospero and the other noblemen.

Boatswain - Appearing only in the first and last scenes, the Boatswain is vigorously good-natured. He seems competent and almost cheerful in the shipwreck scene, demanding practical help rather than weeping and praying. And he seems surprised but not stunned when he awakens from a long sleep at the end of the play

Question and Answers :-

1) Why was Prospero banished?

Years before the action of *The Tempest* begins, two men conspired to assassinate Prospero, who was then the Duke of Milan. These two men were Prospero's brother, Antonio, and the King of Naples, Alonso. The purpose of these men's conspiracy was to remove Prospero from power and install Antonio in his place. Antonio succeeded in taking over the dukedom but the assassination plot failed because Gonzalo alerted Prospero to the plot and helped him escape from Milan on a rotting boat. As Prospero explains to Miranda in Act I, scene ii, they arrived on the island "By providence divine." Although Prospero is clearly the victim of a foul plot against his life, he was not entirely blameless in the events that occurred. By his own admission, Prospero's increasing obsession with the study of magic had begun to take more and more of his time. This obsession forced him to neglect his duties as duke and eventually hand the government over to Antonio. Though Prospero's delinquency does not justify Antonio's betrayal, it certainly enabled it.

2) Who is Ariel and why does he work for Prospero?

Ariel is a spirit who uses magic to help Prospero carry out his plans. Given Ariel's evident power, it may seem odd that he would be willing to serve Prospero at all. So why does he do the magician's bidding? The main reason is that Ariel owes what freedom he has to Prospero. Prior to Prospero's arrival on the island, Ariel served Caliban's mother, Sycorax. As Prospero reminds him in Act I, scene ii, Ariel fell out of favor with Sycorax, and she imprisoned him in a "cloven pine." Ariel remained stuck in the tree for twelve years, during which time Sycorax died, abandoning Ariel to an eternity of pain. When Prospero arrived on the island, he found Ariel in torment: "Thy groans," he explains, "Did make wolves howl and penetrate the breasts / Of ever angry bears" (I.ii.). Prospero freed Ariel from this prison, and he struck a deal in which Ariel would serve him faithfully for one year, after which he would be released from all service and return to freedom.

3) Why does Caliban hate Prospero and Miranda?

Caliban sees Prospero and Miranda as imperialists who took control of an island that he felt belonged to him. In a way, Caliban ironically mirrors Prospero, who was also violently unseated from power. However, whereas Prospero ended up free but in exile, Caliban ended up enslaved in his own home. Caliban resents the sudden and radical shift in his social position, going from the free ruler of the island to the servant of a tyrannical master. In addition to despising Prospero for enslaving him and divesting him of all power, Caliban also resents Miranda for the education she has given him. Miranda describes her efforts as selfless and guided by pity. However, Miranda's educational program also intends to civilize Caliban, a "savage" who "wouldst gabble like / A thing most brutish" (I.ii.). Caliban sees Miranda's apparently selfless act as an extension of her father's imperialism. He also insists that the only good thing about being forced to learn her language is that he can now fully express his hatred: "You taught me language, and my profit on 't / Is I know how to curse".

4) How does Prospero manipulate Alonso and his company?

Throughout the play Prospero commands his servant Ariel to present Alonso and his company with visions of splendor and horror. These visions have a dual purpose. On the one hand, they are meant to keep the men disoriented. At one point Ariel even puts the men to sleep in order to disorient them further. As long as Alonso and his company remain bewildered, Prospero can control their movements and lead them through space as he pleases. On the other hand, the visions of splendor and horror are meant to break the men down emotionally and psychologically. This emotional breakdown is a crucial aspect of Prospero's plan. Alonso must feel broken and defeated, so that when Prospero reveals that his son Ferdinand survived, the revelation will enable an authentic emotional resolution to their longstanding conflict. In other words, Prospero uses magic both to get revenge and to secure his own salvation.

5) Why does Prospero give up magic?

Near the beginning of Act V, Prospero stands alone onstage and delivers a speech where he lists his many accomplishments in magic. At the end of this speech, he tells himself that he will abandon "this rough magic" once he's managed to resolve his conflict with Alonso and Antonio: "I'll break my staff, / Bury it certain fathoms in the earth, / And, deeper than did ever plummet sound, / I'll drown my book" (V.i.). In *The Tempest*, Prospero uses magic as a means to an end. Although his accomplishments in the magic arts have been great, magic itself remains "rough," meaning either "crude" or "violent." In short, magic is capable of great harm. And as Prospero describes in the first act, his obsessive study of magic is what cost him his dukedom in the first place. Prospero therefore uses magic to right a wrong and restore himself to power. However, once he accomplishes his goal, he resolves to abandon magic and rid himself of its corrupting influence for good.

Some Important questions :-

1. Did the storm described in the first scene suggest the title of the play?
2. Is Shakespeare's description of this storm technically accurate?
3. Why does Shakespeare begin this play with the description of a storm?
4. What further dramatic function does the storm now have?

5. What does Prospero's mantle symbolize?
6. Why does he lay his mantle aside when he begins to relate to Miranda the circumstances of their previous lives?
7. What does Prospero say regarding his love of study and of books?
8. What is the dramatic purpose of the quarrel between Prospero and Ariel?
9. Who is Sycorax?
10. What has Shakespeare accomplished in Act I of The Tempest?
11. Who is Claribel? What dramatic purpose is attained by the references to Claribel?
12. In what way does Caliban manifest his mental and moral degradation?
13. Why was Caliban so much shrewder than Stephano and Trinculo?
14. Why does Shakespeare introduce here the game of chess?
15. Of what is Prospero the personification?
16. What is the nature and function of Ariel? Why is he invisible to every one in the play except Prospero?
17. In The Tempest and A Midsummer Night's Dream Shakespeare portrays man in connection with the supernatural. What is the principal difference between the plays so far as they relate to this subject?
18. What does Prospero say about the conspiracy against his life? What effect does the recollection of the conspiracy have upon Prospero?

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