

## Prospero - Victim or Villain?

### Drama - Act I Scene II

*Prospero is the central and dominant figure of The Tempest. He is both a nobleman and a magician and thus straddles two worlds: the real world of courtly politics and the fantasy world of spirits and magic. It seems Prospero was once more interested in the fantasy world, neglecting his role as ruler of Milan, but the play shows him devising his return to power and discarding his magic, settling for one world only in the end. The plot of the play is driven by Prospero's desire for revenge, but ultimately he does not take his vengeance, prompted by Ariel to forgive the perpetrators. Even though the entire play is controlled by Prospero, he has traditionally been portrayed as benevolent, gently pushing the characters in the right direction. However, modern interpretations often highlight the more troubled side of Prospero: his need to control everything and everyone and his harsh, almost cruel, treatment of Caliban. In the play, Prospero has a number of functions, each reflecting on his personality: magician and student of occult art, worldly ruler, father, revenger, mortal human being, lord and master (to his servants), theatre-manager – and maybe even Shakespeare himself!*

(source, The Tempest, Classical Comics Ltd, 2009)

This session will explore the various sides to Prospero's complex character which we see in Act I Scene II. Taking one of the following characters: Miranda, Ariel and Caliban. The children act out a scene, preparing the class for an essay in which they will later unpick the question: is Prospero a victim or a villain?

#### Structure of session:

- Put children into groups of three
- Two children will be the actors. One as Prospero, and one as the other character
- The third child will be the 'thought tracker', speaking for each character
- Distribute scripts, and allow the children plenty of time to rehearse.
- At the thought bubble, pause and the 'thought tracker' uses a percussion instrument i.e. triangle, drum or cymbal to signal a 'freeze'. Prospero and the character freeze. The 'thought tracker' will ask a question and speak aloud *THEIR* thoughts i.e. *Why is Prospero behaving like this? I think he is trying to manipulate the situation!*
- At the end of the scene, the other groups provide their feedback. Do they agree with the thought tracker's interpretation? Do they have another perspective to offer to explain his words and actions in this scene? What have we learnt about him so far?
- Keep scribing all the pupils' ideas; you'll need them for the writing session!

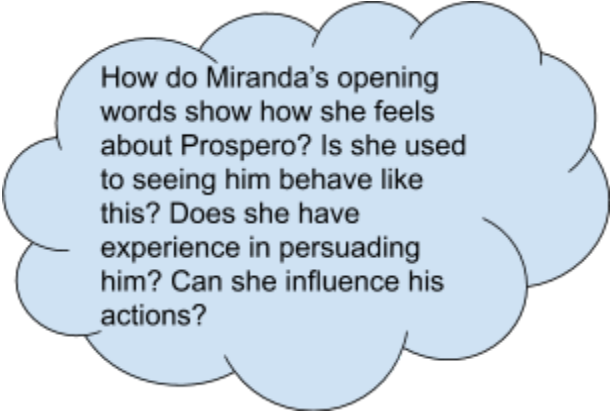
## CHARACTER 1: MIRANDA

FROM ACT I SCENE II. The island. Before PROSPERO'S cell.

*Enter PROSPERO and MIRANDA*

### MIRANDA

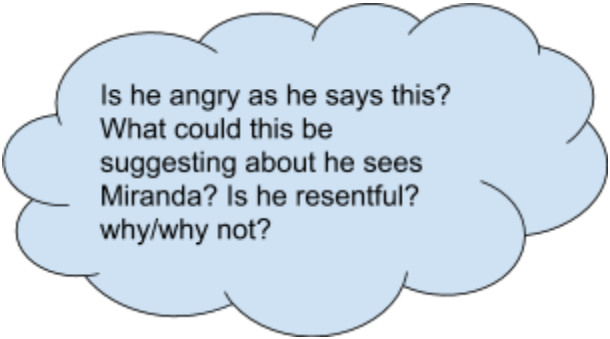
If by your art, my dearest father, you have  
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.  
The sky, it seems, would pour  
down stinking pitch,  
But that the sea, mounting to the  
welkin's cheek,  
Dashes the fire out. O, I have  
suffered  
With those that I saw suffer: a  
brave vessel,  
Who had, no doubt, some noble  
creature in her,  
Dash'd all to pieces. O, the cry  
did knock  
Against my very heart. Poor  
souls, they perish'd.  
Had I been any god of power, I would  
Have sunk the sea within the earth or ere  
It should the good ship so have  
swallow'd and  
The fraughting souls within her.



How do Miranda's opening words show how she feels about Prospero? Is she used to seeing him behave like this? Does she have experience in persuading him? Can she influence his actions?

### PROSPERO

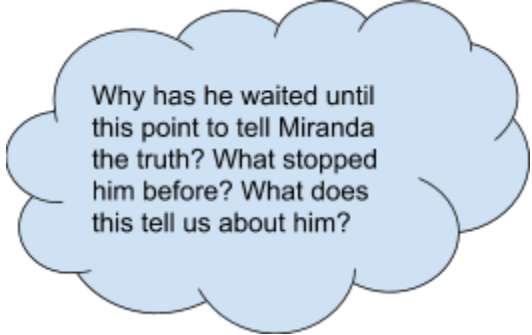
No harm.  
I have done nothing but in care of  
thee,  
Of thee, my dear one, thee, my  
daughter, who  
Art ignorant of what thou art, nought knowing  
Of whence I am, nor that I am more better  
Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell,  
And thy no greater father.



Is he angry as he says this? What could this be suggesting about he sees Miranda? Is he resentful? why/why not?

### PROSPERO

'Tis time  
I should inform thee farther. Lend thy hand,  
And pluck my magic garment from me. So:



Why has he waited until this point to tell Miranda the truth? What stopped him before? What does this tell us about him?

*Lays down his mantle*

**PROSPERO**

My brother and thy uncle, call'd Antonio--  
I pray thee, mark me--that a  
brother should  
Be so perfidious!....Thy false  
uncle--  
Dost thou attend me?

**MIRANDA**

Sir, most heedfully.

**PROSPERO**

Thou attend'st not.

**MIRANDA**

O, good sir, I do.

**PROSPERO**

I pray thee, mark me.

**MIRANDA**

Your tale, sir, would cure deafness.

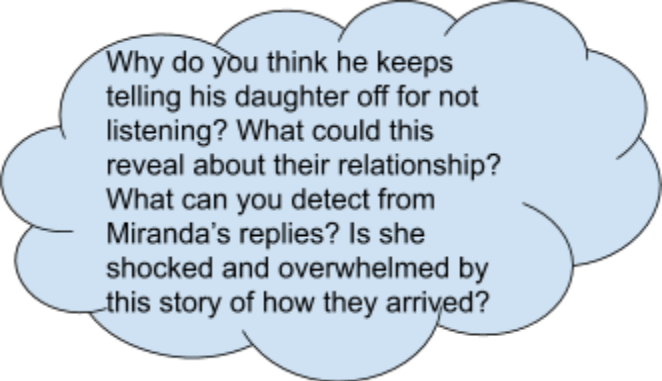
**PROSPERO**

O, a cherubim  
Thou wast that did preserve me.  
Thou didst smile.  
Infused with a fortitude from  
heaven.....

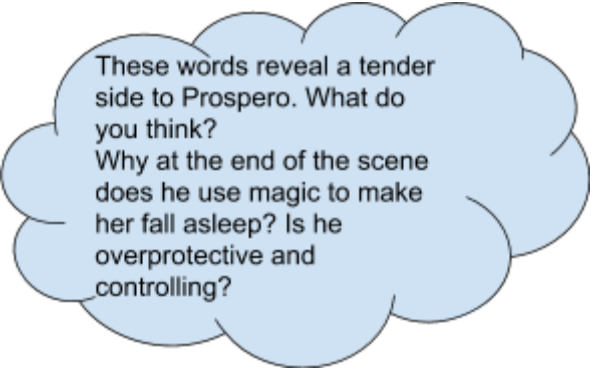
**MIRANDA**

Heavens thank you for't! And now, I  
pray you, sir,  
For still 'tis beating in my mind, your  
reason  
For raising this sea-storm?  
Here cease more questions:  
Thou art inclined to sleep; 'tis a good dulness,  
And give it way: I know thou canst not choose.

*MIRANDA sleeps*



Why do you think he keeps telling his daughter off for not listening? What could this reveal about their relationship? What can you detect from Miranda's replies? Is she shocked and overwhelmed by this story of how they arrived?



These words reveal a tender side to Prospero. What do you think? Why at the end of the scene does he use magic to make her fall asleep? Is he overprotective and controlling?

## CHARACTER 2: ARIEL

*Enter ARIEL*

### ARIEL

All hail, great master! grave sir, hail! I come  
To answer thy best pleasure; be't to fly,  
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride  
On the curl'd clouds, to thy strong bidding task  
Ariel and all his quality.

### PROSPERO

Hast thou, spirit,  
Perform'd to point the tempest that I bade thee?

### ARIEL

To every article.

### PROSPERO

Ariel, thy charge  
Exactly is perform'd: but there's more  
work

### ARIEL

Is there more toil? Since thou dost  
give me pains,  
Let me remember thee what thou hast  
promised,  
Which is not yet perform'd me.

### PROSPERO

How now? moody?  
What is't thou canst demand?

### ARIEL

My liberty.

### PROSPERO

Before the time be out? no more!

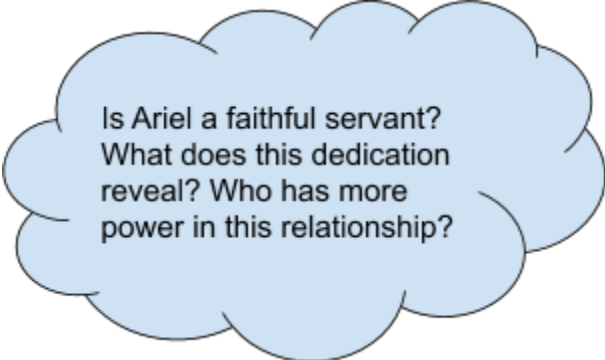
### ARIEL

I prithee,  
Remember I have done thee worthy  
service;  
Told thee no lies, made thee no  
mistakings, served  
Without or grudge or grumblings:  
thou didst promise  
To bate me a full year.

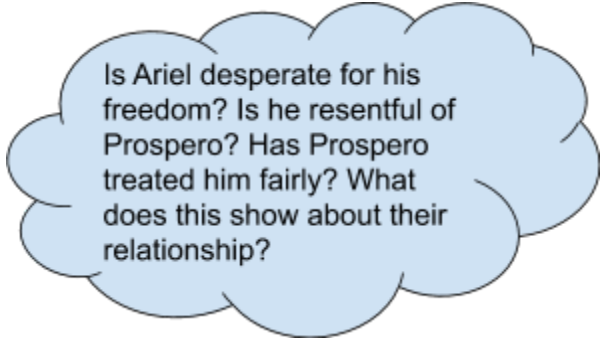
### PROSPERO

Dost thou forget  
From what a torment I did free thee?

### ARIEL



Is Ariel a faithful servant?  
What does this dedication  
reveal? Who has more  
power in this relationship?



Is Ariel desperate for his  
freedom? Is he resentful of  
Prospero? Has Prospero  
treated him fairly? What  
does this show about their  
relationship?

I do not, sir.

**PROSPERO**

Thou liest, malignant thing! Hast thou forgot  
The foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy  
Was grown into a hoop? hast thou forgot her?

If thou more murmur'st, I will rend an oak  
And peg thee in his knotty entrails till  
Thou hast howl'd away twelve winters.

**ARIEL**

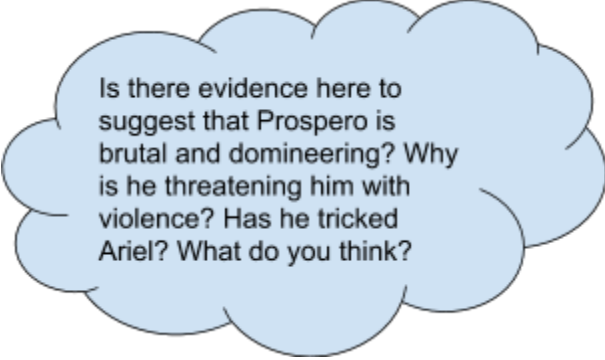
Pardon, master;  
I will be correspondent to command  
And do my spiriting gently.

**PROSPERO**

Do so, and after two days  
I will discharge thee.

**ARIEL**

That's my noble master!  
What shall I do? say what; what shall  
I do?

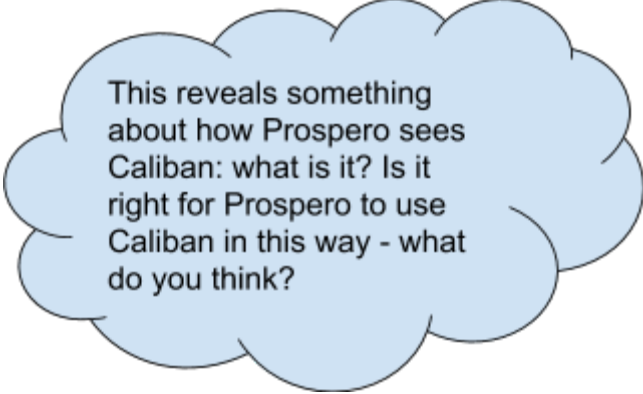


Is there evidence here to suggest that Prospero is brutal and domineering? Why is he threatening him with violence? Has he tricked Ariel? What do you think?

### CHARACTER 3: CALIBAN

#### PROSPERO

But, as 'tis,  
We cannot miss him: he does make our fire,  
Fetch in our wood and serves in  
offices  
That profit us. What, ho! slave!  
Caliban!  
Thou earth, thou! speak.



This reveals something about how Prospero sees Caliban: what is it? Is it right for Prospero to use Caliban in this way - what do you think?

#### CALIBAN

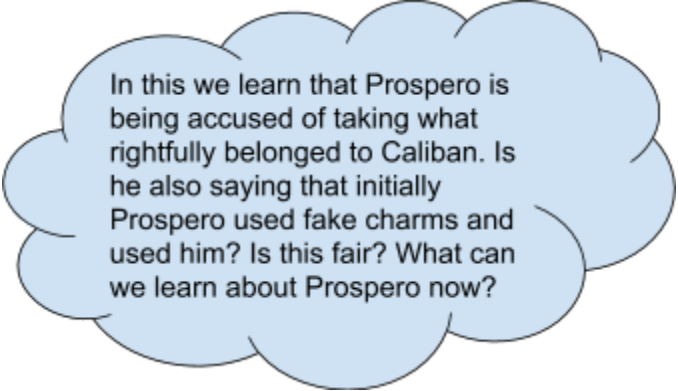
As wicked dew as e'er my mother  
brush'd  
With raven's feather from  
unwholesome fen  
Drop on you both! a south-west blow  
on ye  
And blister you all o'er!

#### PROSPERO

For this, be sure, to-night thou shalt have cramps,  
Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up; urchins  
Shall, for that vast of night that they may work,  
All exercise on thee; thou shalt be pinch'd  
As thick as honeycomb, each pinch more stinging  
Than bees that made 'em.

#### CALIBAN

I must eat my dinner.  
This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,  
Which thou takest from me. When thou camest first,  
Thou strokedst me and madest much of me, wouldst give me  
Water with berries in't, and teach me how  
To name the bigger light, and how the less,  
That burn by day and night:  
and then I loved thee  
And show'd thee all the  
qualities o' the isle,  
The fresh springs, brine-pits,  
barren place and fertile:  
Cursed be I that did so! All the  
charms  
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles,  
bats, light on you!  
For I am all the subjects that  
you have,

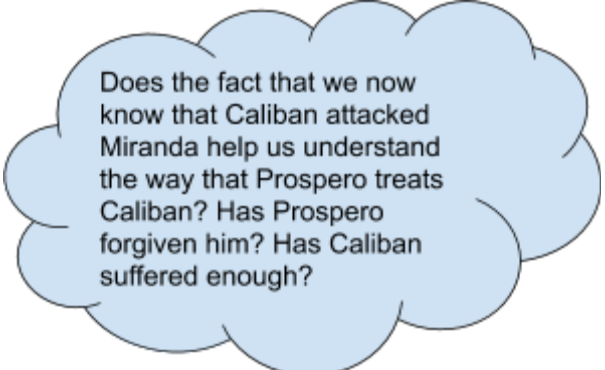


In this we learn that Prospero is being accused of taking what rightfully belonged to Caliban. Is he also saying that initially Prospero used fake charms and used him? Is this fair? What can we learn about Prospero now?

Which first was mine own king: and here you sty me  
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me  
The rest o' the island.

**PROSPERO**

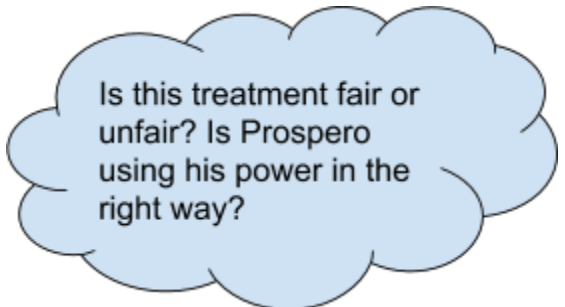
Thou most lying slave,  
Whom stripes may move, not  
kindness! I have used thee,  
Filth as thou art, with human  
care, and lodged thee  
In mine own cell, till thou didst  
seek to violate  
The honour of my child.



Does the fact that we now know that Caliban attacked Miranda help us understand the way that Prospero treats Caliban? Has Prospero forgiven him? Has Caliban suffered enough?

**PROSPERO**

Hag-seed, hence!  
Fetch us in fuel; and be quick, thou'rt best,  
To answer other business. Shrug'st  
thou, malice?  
If thou neglect'st or dost unwillingly  
What I command, I'll rack thee with  
old cramps,  
Fill all thy bones with aches, make  
thee roar  
That beasts shall tremble at thy din.



Is this treatment fair or unfair? Is Prospero using his power in the right way?

## Writing

Explain to the class that they will now write a short response piece in response to the question:

### Is Prospero a victim or a villain? Discuss

All the pupils' ideas from the drama session need to be gathered. On large pieces of sugar paper, in groups, the children should select their TWO favourite points to support both sides of the argument. But they need to make sure they have their evidence!

#### PLAN FOR WRITING

VICTIM	VILLAIN
1. POINT and EVIDENCE 2. POINT and EVIDENCE	1. POINT and EVIDENCE 2. POINT and EVIDENCE

#### L.O. To compose a book response piece

Success Criteria	Tick?	Comment/Evidence
Introduction, points in paragraphs and conclusion		
Ideas well introduced, sequenced and connected using sentence starters		
Use of P.E.E. evidence provided to support points (examples from the text )		
Correct SPAG		
Interesting and enjoyable to read		



<p><b>SEQUENCING</b></p> <p>To begin with,...Initially,...  Firstly,... Secondly, ....  Thirdly, ....  Next,...Continuing this.....</p>	<p><b>RECOGNISING</b></p> <p>Some might say,...  According to some,...  Other people point out that,...  Some might argue that,....</p>	<p><b>EMPHASISING</b></p> <p>Doubtlessly,...Predictably,..  No one can deny/argue that.,,  Unarguably,...Indisputably,...  Certainly,...Predictably,...</p>	<p><b>COMPARING</b></p> <p>Likewise, Similarly,...  In the same way,...Equally,....  Just as,...In each case,....  In the same way,...</p>
<p><b>SUPPORTING</b></p> <p>For example,...  For instance,....Such as,...  As suggested by,...  This can be seen, .....</p>	<p><i>What sentence starter shall I use in my essay?</i></p> <p><i>How shall I link my ideas?</i></p>		<p><b>CONTRASTING</b></p> <p>Although,...On the other hand,...  Alternatively,...  However,...On the contrary,...  But....To contradict this,...</p>
<p><b>PRIORITISING</b></p> <p>More significantly,...  Even more relevant is,...  Above all,..  Especially,...In particular,...</p>	<p><b>PERSONALISING</b></p> <p>In my opinion,...In my mind,..  In my experience,...  My personal view is that...,  As I see it,...</p>	<p><b>ADDING</b></p> <p>In addition,...Furthermore,...  Moreover,.....As well as this,...  This is also true of,...  Just as,...Not only,....</p>	<p><b>CONCLUDING</b></p> <p>Finally, ....To conclude,....  To sum up,...Taking all this into account,....  After weighing it up,...  In conclusion</p>

### Book Response - Sample

Optional modelled example of introduction and paragraph 1:

*Question: There is often a moment in a story when a character has to take a risk. Have you come across an example of this in a story you know? Explain how this made the story more exciting for the reader.*

*Some might say that a character taking a risk is important to the plot of a story. Equally, others may argue that this is not the case. In this essay, I will be referring to two texts to show that risk-taking does add to the excitement for the reader.*

*To begin with, the first text which I will be exploring is The Tempest by William Shakespeare. This is a comedy about a wizard called Prospero who, following a storm at sea, lives on an island and uses magic to control friends and family. Prospero has a daughter called Miranda, and they live on the island on their own with a slave monster called Caliban, and a spirit, Ariel. Prior to his arrival on the island, he was betrayed by his usurping brother. At the start of the play, he ponders whether or not to tell his daughter about their traumatic past in Italy, and the truth about Caliban and Ariel. Prospero has to decide if he should take this major risk. Doubtlessly, this risk turns out to be a wise decision, as ultimately it leads to a harmonious*

*end to the play: Prospero's conflict with his brother is resolved, Miranda meets her future husband, and Ariel and Caliban are freed. Therefore, it could be said that this is more satisfying for the audience, and the reader, to see such a positive outcome.*

Having read this example, the teacher can then conduct a shared writing activity exploring a second example from *The Tempest*, collecting ideas together and scribing directly the board.