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Study Guide

for

The Tempest

by William Shakespeare



New York, New York Columbus, Ohio Woodland Hills, California Peoria, Illinois

Meet William Shakespeare



He was not of an age, but for all time.
. . . Shine forth, thou star of poets

—Ben Jonson, poet and contemporary
of Shakespeare

In 1611, the year that *The Tempest* was first performed, William Shakespeare was forty-seven-years old and had written more than thirty-five plays. Considered the greatest dramatist of his time, he was an accomplished actor, part-owner of the best theater in London, the greatest lyric poet of his time, and the monarch's favorite playwright. He was also a wise investor and a wealthy man. With all these accomplishments, perhaps it is not surprising that Shakespeare's thoughts had begun to turn toward retirement and a quieter life in the country with his family.

Even though more facts are known about Shakespeare than any other writer of his time, we know little about the man compared to what we know about later literary figures. Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, a bustling country market town about seventy-five miles northwest of London. His birthday is celebrated on April 23, although no records exist to prove this is his date of birth. His father was a glove maker, grain merchant, and local political leader. In 1582, at the age of eighteen, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. They had three children, one of whom died at age eleven.

By 1592 Shakespeare had moved to London and was working as an actor. He had also begun to write plays. Around this time, Shakespeare's name appears in a pamphlet in which a university-educated playwright calls him "an upstart crow." The educated playwright pokes fun at the thought that a lowly actor without a good education would dare to write plays. Two years later Shakespeare joined an acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, for whom he eventually wrote most of his plays. His early works were, for the most part, based on English history. Other early works include comedies and a few tragedies.

Shakespeare went on to write the plays that earned him great recognition. From the mid-1590s to about 1607, he wrote masterpieces such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*. All were produced by Shakespeare's acting company in the famous Globe Theater. Shakespeare was a shareholder in the Globe, which was located just outside London.

In Shakespeare's day, his plays were immensely popular, probably because they held appeal for all levels of English society, from peasants and poor city folk, to other writers and university graduates, to Queen Elizabeth I herself. Shakespeare's heroes left his audiences in awe, his heroines melted their hearts, his villains froze them in horror, and his clowns and comic figures left them in stitches. The language of his dramas ranges from the most delicate and elevated poetry to clever puns and bawdy jokes.

In spite of this acclaim, Shakespeare chose to leave the stage at the height of his success. His final four plays—of which *The Tempest* is considered the greatest—all share a melancholy sense of things ending, but all four also focus on happiness lost and then regained.

In 1610 Shakespeare left London to retire to his large home in Stratford. He lived his final years as a wealthy man and town leader, dying on April 23, 1616, at the age of fifty-two. On his tomb in Stratford's church rests a sculpted bust, one of only two authentic likenesses of the man regarded as the greatest writer who ever lived.

Introducing the Play

*Though with their high wrongs I am struck to
th'quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance.*

—***The Tempest*, Act 5, Scene 1**

With these words, Prospero, the magician and main character of *The Tempest*, makes a crucial decision to forgive his enemies. Like the man who wrote these words, Prospero has struggled in life but is now prepared to leave behind both his triumphs and his failures. He is ready to turn his eyes toward the future.

Fresh winds were blowing across Europe when Shakespeare was writing *The Tempest*, his final play. European countries were exploring the boundaries of the known world and founding new settlements in America. Europeans were coming into contact with people from other parts of the world and wrestling with the questions such contact raised. The Renaissance, a period of reawakened interest in the learning of ancient Greece and Rome and in human achievements in general, had spread from Italy to England. Scientific discoveries about the solar system and the world threatened to undermine traditional ways of looking at people and their station in life.

In England itself, momentous changes were occurring. The nation had broken with the Roman Catholic Church less than a century before, shattering the unity the Church had forged. England was on its way to becoming a great power, although the people were troubled by the death of their great queen, Elizabeth, who was succeeded by James I in 1603. The English language had grown during the 1500s into a rich and flexible tool, one used effectively by playwrights and appreciated by audiences.

One change that strongly influenced Shakespeare as he was writing *The Tempest* was the public's taste for romances. Lighter in tone and containing more music, dance, and spectacle than the tragedy, the romance became Shakespeare's favorite form for his final plays. Romances often took as their theme the need to be patient and trust in providence during times of misfortune. Romances

featured such fairy tale–like elements as magic, shipwrecks, young lovers reunited after various trials, exotic settings, and supernatural creatures. In general, characters in romances are not as well developed as those in tragedies. Shakespeare's romances lacked the profound psychological portraits of tragic characters like Hamlet, Macbeth, and King Lear.

All of these changing currents influenced Shakespeare's final works, of which *The Tempest* is considered the greatest. Many critics and readers detect in the play a melancholy feeling of retirement, withdrawal from life, and wistful resignation. In fact, historical records indicate that just before finishing *The Tempest*, probably in 1611, Shakespeare retired to Stratford to live a quiet life with his family. The play's main character, the magician Prospero, is frequently identified with the author himself. In fact, one famous speech by Prospero at the end of *The Tempest* is often referred to as Shakespeare's farewell to the stage.

However, other admirers of the play caution against viewing the play as semiautobiographical. They argue that Shakespeare was only in his mid-forties when he returned to Stratford and that it was far too early for him to be making a farewell to the stage he dominated. These readers suggest that Shakespeare was merely proving that he could write in any style, including the romance—the latest fad at the court of King James I. As the greatest and most versatile writer of his age, he seemed to succeed at anything he tried.

Whether one sees autobiographical elements in *The Tempest*, its theme of suffering, repentance, and forgiveness is powerful. In a society where bloody revenge was common and even admired, the meaning of *The Tempest* was radical. Even the fact that the supernatural elements facilitate forgiveness does not hide an important message of the play—the real magic of forgiveness springs from within the human heart.

The fairy-tale world of *The Tempest* has important lessons for those in the real world, both of Shakespeare's time and today. It is better to choose forgiveness and belief in a brighter future—what Prospero calls “the rarer action”—than to choose vengeance. It is better to spread the magic of human

love than to practice the magic of spells, enchantments, and “airy charms.” And it is better to choose life in the real world, even with its terrifying freedom, heartbreaks, and evil, over life in a fairy tale.

THE TIME AND PLACE

The setting of *The Tempest* is an isolated island in the Mediterranean Sea, somewhere between Italy

and the north coast of Africa. The play takes place roughly during Shakespeare’s time, the early 1600s. Unlike Shakespeare’s earlier plays, *The Tempest* is not set in the real world but in an enchanted fairy-tale world of the imagination that blends everyday people and elements with monsters and spirits.

Did You Know?

The theaters of Shakespeare’s time were different from our own. Knowing how *The Tempest* would have been staged during the early 1600s will help you understand the actions of the characters and visualize how they looked on stage. The first difference that you would probably notice is that there were no actresses. Males played all the parts, including the female roles. Ariel, the sprite in *The Tempest*, probably would have been acted by a young boy.

Most theaters of Shakespeare’s time were six- or eight-sided buildings without roofs. Three galleries housed the audience. The galleries faced an open courtyard. The simple stage extended out into the yard. At the back of the stage were a balcony, two doors, and a trapdoor leading into a space underneath the stage.

Because the sets were simple, the texts of the plays described the time of day, the setting, and other important information. (Notice, for example, in *The Tempest* how often someone asks what time it is.) Costumes had to be elaborate to help audiences differentiate characters. Most of Shakespeare’s plays were performed in the Globe, the theater his company built on the River Thames across from London.

Another theater used by Shakespeare’s acting troupe, the King’s Men, was the Blackfriars. Many scholars believe *The Tempest* and Shakespeare’s other late romances were written for the Blackfriars and performed there. Unlike the Globe, this theater had a roof. The enclosure allowed stagehands to create artificial lighting with candles. Admission prices were up to five times higher than those for the Globe. As a result, a more cultured audience came to the Blackfriars, one familiar with the popular new romances. *The Tempest* was also performed in 1611, indoors at the court of King James I, and two years later, to celebrate the wedding of the king’s daughter.

As you read *The Tempest*, try to imagine what it would have been like to see the play in 1611—no actresses, no realistic sets, no electric lights, and no sound system to amplify voices or provide background music. Though stagecraft was in its infancy, Shakespeare’s audiences would probably have been impressed by special effects like the disappearing banquet in Act 3 and the flying chariot of Act 4.

Before You Read

The Tempest Act 1

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Do you believe advertisements and commercials place too much emphasis on physical beauty?

Discuss

Why do we value physical beauty? Does society equate physical appearance with personal worth and goodness? As a class, discuss society's view of physical beauty and its worth.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out what Shakespeare says about the relation between physical beauty and inner virtues.

BACKGROUND

A Storm and a Shipwreck

Even though *The Tempest* is set in an imaginary, fairy tale–like world, actual events strongly influence the plot. Like most writers, Shakespeare used real-life events as starting points for his creations and let his artistic imagination transform them. One event that scholars believe influenced Shakespeare as he was writing *The Tempest* was a famous shipwreck. In the spring of 1609, nine ships left England for the newly founded colony of Jamestown, Virginia. During the voyage, the lead ship, the *Sea-Adventure*, was separated from the others during a storm and feared lost. The crew and passengers were shipwrecked in the Bermudas. They survived and eventually reached Jamestown about a year later.

Pamphlets and letters describing the powerful storm, the shipwreck, and the year that the survivors spent as castaways were later published. The most detailed letter, written by William Strachey, was circulated to members of the Virginia Company, the group that sponsored the Jamestown colony. Shakespeare knew several leaders of the Virginia Company, and scholars believe he almost certainly read Strachey's letter. Several key descriptions included in the letter appear in altered form in *The Tempest*. For example, Strachey describes the dreadful storm as so powerful “we could not apprehend in our imaginations any possibility of greater violence.” Just when all appeared lost, land was spotted, and by “the gracious and merciful providence of God” the ship was saved. The survivors found that the island was “habitable and commodious” rather than “dangerous and dreaded” and the home of “devils and wicked spirits,” as they had previously believed. While on the island, the survivors fell to quarreling, and violence was narrowly avoided. As you read *The Tempest*, Act 1, notice how Shakespeare portrays the tensions between the shipwreck survivors and their faith in divine providence.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

abhorred [ab hōrd´] *adj.* hated

allay [ə lā´] *v.* to calm

chide [chīd] *v.* to scold

fen [fen] *n.* marsh or bog

fortitude [fōr´tə tōōd] *n.* bravery

homage [hom´ij] *n.* tribute

perfidious [pər fid´ē əs] *adj.* treacherous

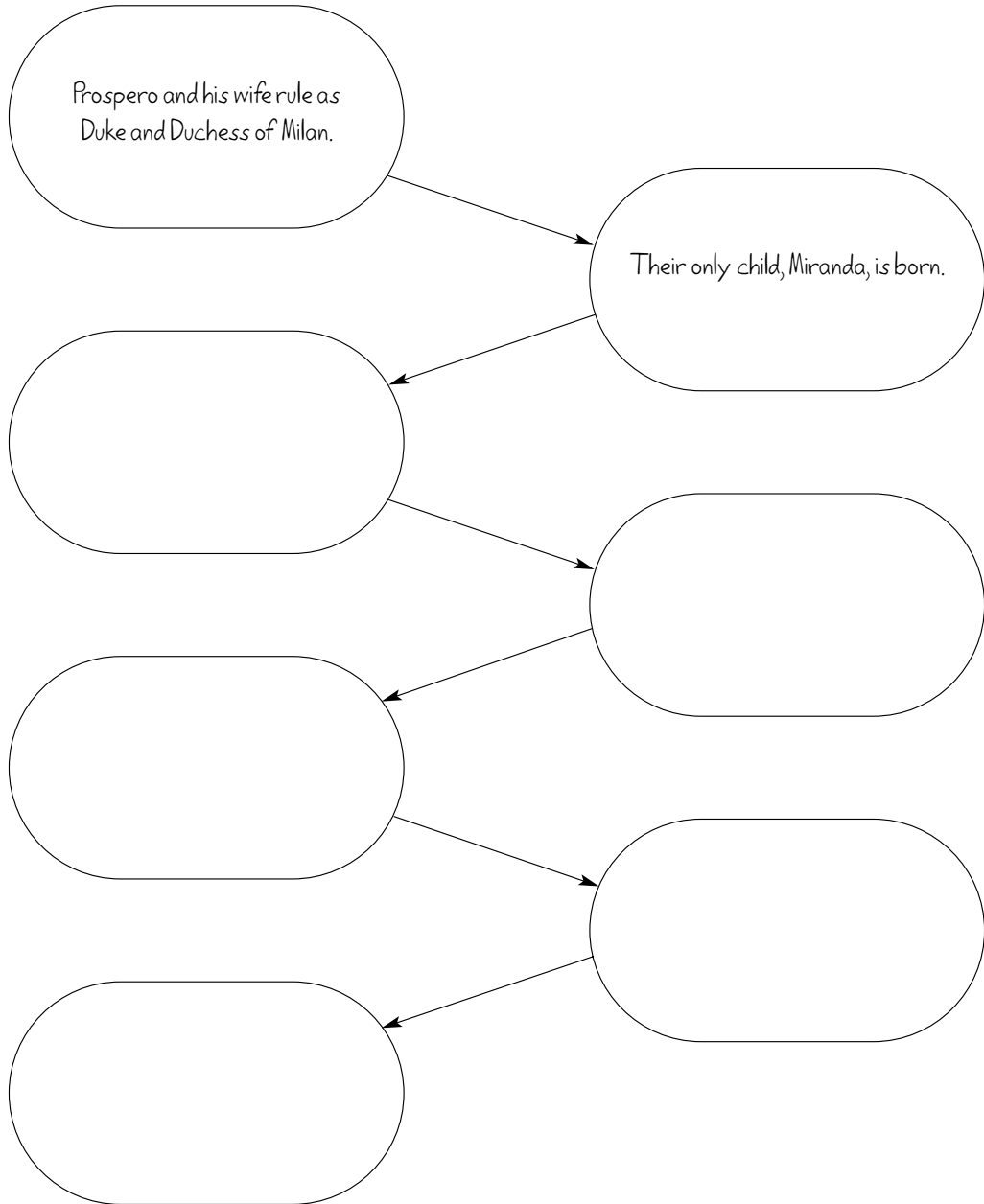
precursors [pri kur´sərs] *n.* ones who go before

prerogative [pri rog´ə tiv] *n.* privilege

Active Reading

The Tempest Act 1

In Act 1, Scene 2, Prospero recounts the events that brought him and Miranda to the island. The sequence of events has important implications later in the play. Use the chart below to list these events in chronological order. You may add or omit ovals from the chart.



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Responding

The Tempest Act 1

Personal Response

What passages, images, or incidents from the first act linger in your mind?

Explain why they made an impression on you.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. How does Gonzalo behave during the storm? Antonio and Sebastian? What clues to their characters do you get in this scene?

2. How did Ariel and Caliban come to be Prospero's servants? How do they feel about their status?

3. What is Prospero's emotional state at the end of Act 1? What might be a reason for it?

Responding

The Tempest Act 1

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. In what way are Miranda and Ferdinand like characters in a fairy tale? Why might Shakespeare have chosen to portray them in this way?

5. In the play, Miranda and Ferdinand fall in love immediately. Do you believe in “love at first sight” in real life? What are some dangers of falling in love so fast?

Literature and Writing

Character Analysis

Ariel and Caliban are probably the two most striking characters in *The Tempest*. Compare and contrast them on a separate sheet of paper, citing lines from the play to support your written analysis. Note what kinds of words Shakespeare uses to describe each character, with what activities and actions each is associated, and what their attitudes are toward Prospero. In what ways are Ariel and Caliban opposites? In what ways are they similar?

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

In the **Focus Activity** on page 12, if you discussed the role of physical beauty in our society. In your literature group, take a look at how Act 1 of *The Tempest* addresses this issue. Pay particular attention to Miranda’s opinions about the people she sees and meets and to Prospero’s statements about physical appearance. Cite lines from the text that describe the connection between physical appearance and inner worth. Also look for indications that Shakespeare may be creating tension between the outward appearance and the inner value of characters.

Learning for Life

In Scene 2, lines 89–105, Prospero admits that he neglected his duties as a ruler. Reread this passage and decide what major fault Prospero possessed as a ruler. Then explain what qualities you think a modern ruler of a country or state needs. What characteristics might be especially harmful in a modern-day ruler? Note an example of both a good and a bad leader and explain what personal qualities he or she displays.

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Before You Read

The Tempest Act 2

FOCUS ACTIVITY

American essayist and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “The less government we have, the better.” Do you agree or disagree?

Chart It

Work with a partner to make a simple, two-column chart listing the advantages and disadvantages of having a government.

Setting a Purpose

Read to discover what the characters in *The Tempest* think about government and what Shakespeare himself might have thought.

BACKGROUND

A Golden Age?

In his speech in Scene 1 (lines 158–164), Gonzalo describes how he would govern the island if he were king. His description is based on an essay called “Of the Cannibals” by the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592). Montaigne describes the primitive people of an imaginary nation who are so naturally good that they do not need business, written language, mathematics, justice and political systems, money, or jobs. “The very words that import [mean] lying, falsehood, treason, dissimulation, covetousness, envy, detraction, and pardon, were never heard amongst them,” Montaigne marvels.

Montaigne, along with Gonzalo, seems to be saying that people are inherently, or naturally, good; the evils of society make people evil. In the world Gonzalo portrays, people do not need social conventions to control them; their good natures automatically make them behave well. The idea of a “golden age,” in which a perfect society exists without need of laws, dates back at least to the times of the Greek philosopher Plato (428–348 B.C.) and the Roman poet Ovid (43 B.C.–A.D.18). Both writers described societies similar to the one pictured by Gonzalo. In this view, society itself is the evil force that corrupts people who are basically good.

As you read Gonzalo’s speech, ask yourself whether Shakespeare himself agrees with the idea that such a society is possible. What evidence can you find that shows Shakespeare’s beliefs about people’s basic natures and the influence of society and laws? For clues to the playwright’s attitude, notice how Antonio and Sebastian react to Gonzalo, as well as which event follows Gonzalo’s speech after Alonso falls asleep. Also pay attention to Caliban’s speeches in Scene 2.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

abominable [ə bŏm’ə nəbəl] *adj.* dreadful

celestial [sə les’ chəl] *adj.* heavenly

enmity [en’ mə tē] *n.* hostility

nimble [nim’ bəl] *adj.* quick, alert

prate [prāt] *v.* to chatter, gab

spendthrift [spend’ thrift] *n.* wasteful spender

trifle [trī’ fəl] *n.* insignificant thing

upbraid [up brād’] *v.* to scold

Active Reading

The Tempest Act 2

In Scene 1, lines 201–291, Antonio presents several arguments to convince Sebastian to commit a crime. Clarifying the steps of this argument will help you better understand the two characters and will also supply information about the past events that influence the action of the play. Use the chart below to record the series of points Antonio makes as he tries to persuade Sebastian. After writing the line, paraphrase it.

<p><i>"th' occasion speaks thee, and / My strong imagination sees a crown / Dropping upon thy head": Now is your big chance to steal the throne.</i></p>

Responding

The Tempest Act 2

Personal Response

Describe your reaction to Scene 2.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. How would you describe the moods of Alonso, Gonzalo, Antonio, and Sebastian during Scene 1?

2. Where were the castaways going when they were shipwrecked? Why is Alonso especially unhappy?

3. Which character speaks in verse in Scene 2? Which characters in prose? Why might Shakespeare have made this distinction?

4. Based on what you learned in this act, which character would you call the villain of the play? Why? Support your answer with examples from the text.

Responding

The Tempest Act 2

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

5. Act 2 contains a serious scene followed by a humorous one. What are some reasons Shakespeare might have chosen to include both kinds of scenes? Do you think that the juxtaposition of serious and funny episodes reflects real life? Explain.

6. As *The Tempest* begins, Alonso has overthrown Prospero, the legitimate ruler of Milan. Prospero himself admits early in the play that he was an inattentive ruler. Is the overthrow of a legitimately chosen government ever acceptable? Refer to the lists you created in the **Focus Activity** to remind yourself of what role a government performs in society.

Literature and Writing

Analyze Theme

Act 2 introduces the important theme of providence, the belief that God directs all actions. Believers in providence accept seemingly unhappy events as part of God's plan with faith that misfortunes will turn out to be blessings in the end. In addition, believers in providence refuse to despair because despair indicates doubt in God's all-powerfulness. Analyze how the theme of providence is developed in the words and actions of Gonzalo and Alonso.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

This act contains two very entertaining episodes. One is Scene 1, lines 199–320, when Antonio convinces Sebastian to kill Alonso. The other is Scene 2, lines 14–105, when Trinculo crawls under Caliban's cloak and is discovered by Stephano. In your group, choose one of the scenes to read aloud. Discuss how each character feels and why. Practice capturing the character's emotions in your voice. Then read the scene aloud.

Music Connection

In Act 2 of *The Tempest*, Ariel sings to Gonzalo. Using a piano, guitar, or other musical instrument, compose a melody to accompany Ariel's lyrics. Perform the song for your class.



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Before You Read

The Tempest Act 3

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Some people say that accomplishments and acquisitions mean more to them when they have to work hard to achieve them. Do you agree or disagree?

Quickwrite

Describe on paper an occasion when you had to work hard to achieve something. How did it make you feel? Would the achievement have been as meaningful if you had accomplished it without hard work?

Setting a Purpose

Read to see how different characters must struggle to achieve something of value.

BACKGROUND

The Three Unities

The Tempest is unique among Shakespeare's plays because in it he observes the three unities of drama. These unities, or rules, which were often observed during Shakespeare's time, are based on an interpretation of the theories of the Greek philosopher Aristotle. According to these rules, (1) dramas should occur in a single place; (2) the events of the play should be limited to the actual length of time it takes to act them, or to a single day; and (3) no action should be shown that does not relate directly to the main idea of the drama. The point of the three unities was to increase the realism of the play. Why Shakespeare observed the three unities in *The Tempest* is not known. In most of his other plays, events occur on several days and characters visit numerous settings. Some scholars have suggested that, because *The Tempest* contains so much fantasy, Shakespeare may have wanted to observe the unities to help audiences suspend their disbelief. Others have pointed to criticism that Shakespeare received for ignoring the unities; they say he may have wanted to prove once and for all that he could follow rules if he felt like it.

Did You Know?

People of Shakespeare's time believed that God created an orderly universe and that people should seek to preserve God's order. Anything that violated this order was "unnatural" and led to evil consequences. Notice how often in the first two acts of *The Tempest* that the "natural order" of things is disrupted. Nature is in disorder during the storm, and human society is in disorder because a rightful ruler has been overthrown. In the third act, Shakespeare presents other types of disorder. In Scene 2, Stephano and Trinculo, although they are human, fall to the level of the beast Caliban, while Caliban himself expresses some lovely and elevated sentiments in poetry. The entire scene is a parody of the correct social order, and to emphasize this point Shakespeare includes a series of puns on the word "nature."

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

brine [brīn] *n.* salt water

jocund [jok'ənd] *adj.* merry

odious [ō'dē əs] *adj.* hateful

peerless [pēr'lis] *adj.* without equal

sinews [sīn'ūz] *n.* tendons

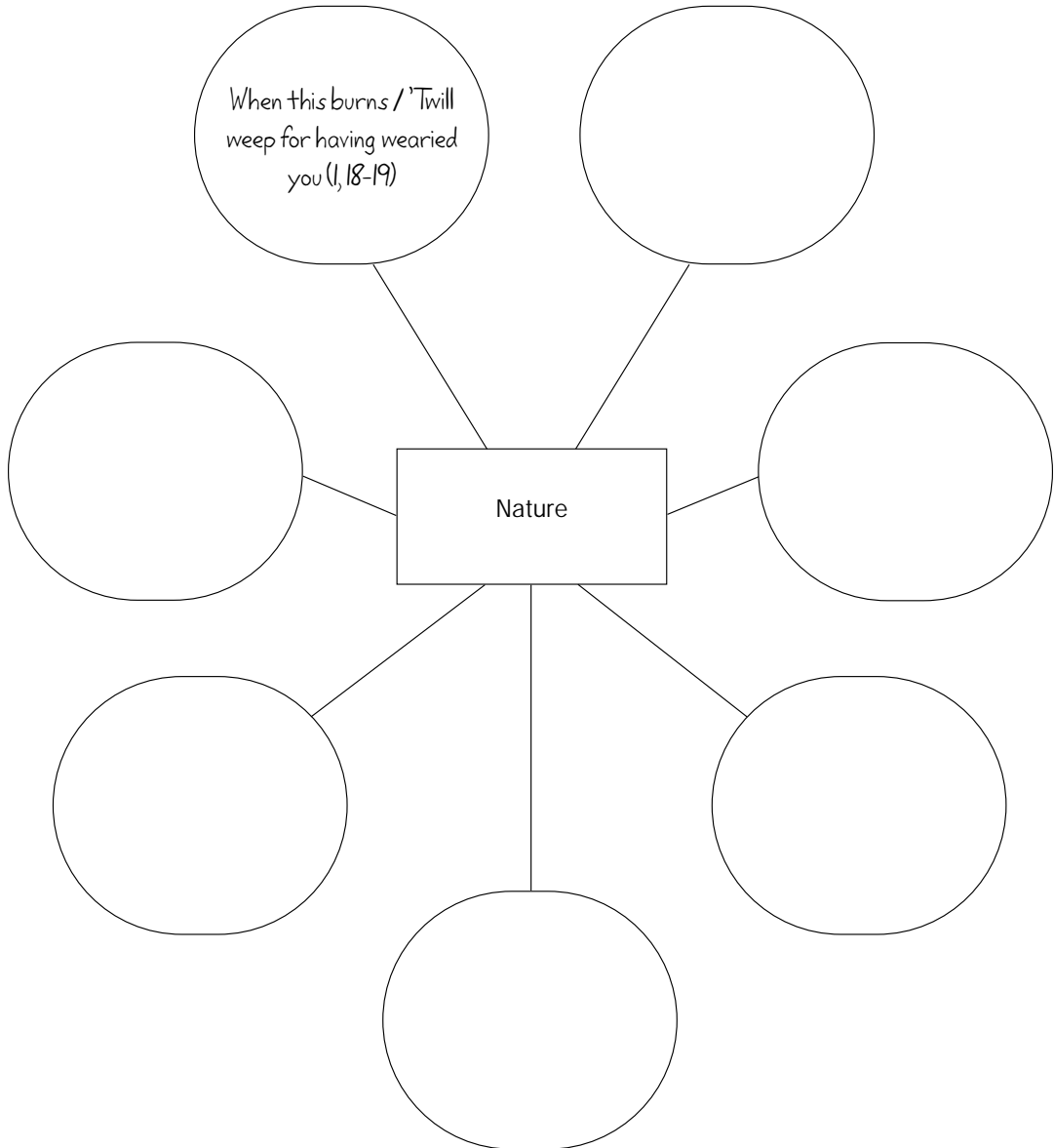
surfeited [sur'fit əd] *adj.* full, satisfied

vigilance [vij'ələns] *n.* watchfulness

Active Reading

The Tempest Act 3

Act 3 of *The Tempest* contains numerous images of nature and natural elements such as the sea, winds, sounds, and other natural processes. As you read, use this cluster diagram to record words and phrases that create this imagery. Include the scene and line numbers, as shown in the example.



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Responding

The Tempest Act 3

Personal Response

What went through your mind at the end of the Act 3?

In your journal, describe your reactions to the banquet scene and to Ariel's stern speech.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. What is Prospero's goal in letting Miranda and Ferdinand get to know each other? What will Prospero gain by the arrangement?

2. What plan does Caliban suggest for killing Prospero? What earlier scene does this echo?

3. What terrible realization does Alonso have at the end of Act 3 about his conduct toward Prospero and what he believes to be Ferdinand's fate? What does he decide to do? How is nature involved in his realization?

Responding

The Tempest Act 3

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. Caliban’s speech that begins “Be not afeared . . .” (Scene 2, lines 130–138) is one of the best-known in the play. Paraphrase the speech. Then evaluate it for what it reveals about Caliban as a character in the play and as poetry.

5. In the **Focus Activity** on page 20, you wrote about how hard work makes an accomplishment or acquisition more meaningful. Why does Ferdinand continue to do a task he feels is beneath his dignity as a prince? Do you feel that certain kinds of work have more value than others? Explain your answer.

Literature and Writing

Contrast Characters

In Act 3, what motivates Miranda to vow that she will serve Ferdinand? What motivates Caliban to promise that he will serve Stephano? In a few paragraphs, contrast Miranda’s and Caliban’s motivations, and explain how the contrast helps develop the theme of divine order.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Ariel’s speech to the “three men of sin” during the banquet in Scene 3 is an important one. Examine this passage, paying attention to imagery of nature and natural disorder, and to what Alonso and Gonzalo say. What is the religious message of the passage, and how does it relate to the themes of guilt, repentance, and forgiveness? Discuss these questions in your group, then explain your conclusions to others.

Learning for Life

In *The Tempest*, Miranda and Ferdinand, the younger generation, play a role in healing the conflicts between members of the older generation, for example, Prospero and Alonso. In your group, discuss if and how this happens in real life. What contributions can members of your generation make to healing conflicts between older generations, both in your personal sphere and throughout the world?



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Before You Read

The Tempest Act 4

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Self-discipline and self-control are important qualities that are learned over time. How do you convince yourself to exercise self-control when you are tempted to do something you shouldn't?

List Ideas

Think of a time in your life when exercising self-control really paid off. Do not disclose the specifics, but use this situation as a basis for creating a list of general steps to follow that would help a person assess a situation, examine potential consequences, and exercise self-control.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out what Prospero has to say about the conflict between a person's appetites and self-control.

BACKGROUND

The Masque: Special Effects, Seventeenth-Century Style

Act 4 of *The Tempest* includes a masque, a dramatic entertainment popular in England during the sixteenth century. The masque usually featured splendid sets, gorgeous costumes, spectacular stage effects, dancers and musicians, and complicated, highly poetic speeches spoken by actors wearing fanciful masks. Plots were simple and were often based on stories from Greek and Roman mythology. The characters were usually either gods and goddesses or symbolic representations of qualities such as virtues and vices. Masques were often presented in honor of special occasions like weddings or coronations.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

abstemious [ab stē' mē əs] *adj.* moderate, sparing

barren [bar' ən] *adj.* infertile

compensation [kom' pən sā' shən] *n.* payment; something given in return for a debt

deity [dē' ə tē] *n.* god

disdain [dis dān'] *n.* scorn

mute [mūt] *adj.* unable or unwilling to speak

oracle [ôr ə kəl] *n.* fortune-teller

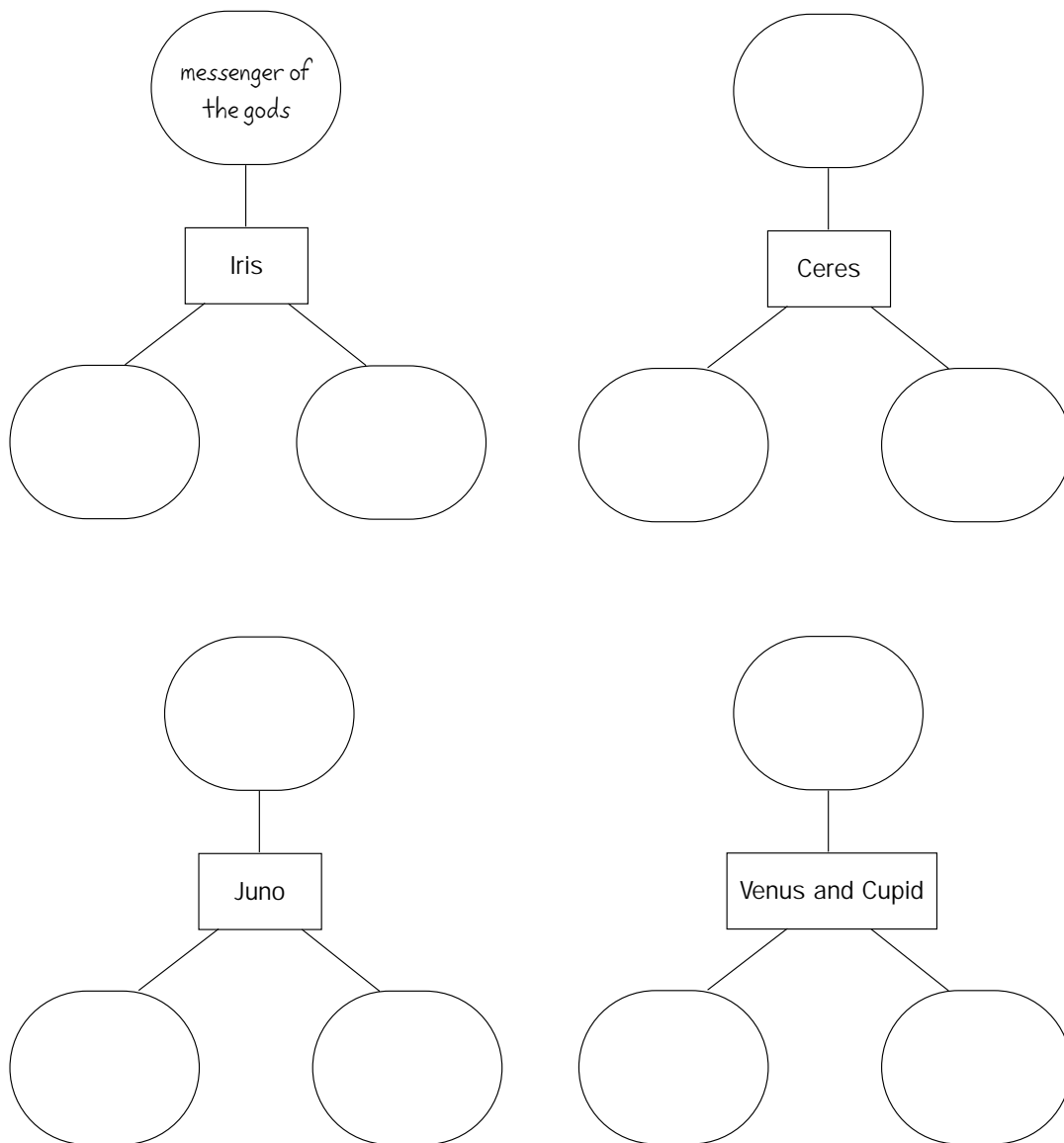
rabble [rab' əl] *n.* unruly crowd

vexed [vekst] *adj.* troubled

Active Reading

The Tempest Act 4

The wedding masque in Act 4 provides a break from the main action of the play. However, its characters reflect themes that are prominent in *The Tempest* and are associated with ideas important to the main action. Use the chart on this page to keep track of the ideas and symbolic values associated with the main characters in the masque.



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Responding

The Tempest Act 4

Personal Response

How did you feel when Prospero says, at the end of Act 4, “At this hour / Lies at my mercy all mine enemies”?

Do you think that Prospero will take revenge on the men who wronged him? Why or why not?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Summarize Prospero’s warning to Ferdinand and Miranda at the beginning of Act 4. What characters have been guilty of the weakness Prospero warns against?

2. What is the occasion for the masque? What images dominate the speeches? Why is this imagery appropriate to the occasion?

3. What does Caliban begin to realize about Stephano at the end of Act 4? What did Caliban think of Stephano earlier in the play?

Responding

The Tempest Act 4

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. Some readers believe that the long masque that dominates this act detracts from the action of the play and seems unrelated to the plot. Do you agree? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

5. The beginning of this act, along with parts of the masque, concerns two of the play's key themes, the importance of self-control and the conflict between reason and passion. Review your answer to the **Focus Activity**. In what ways has Prospero himself not always shown the complete self-control he praises? How might one achieve a balance between self-control and creative passion?

Literature and Writing

Analyze Character

Prospero's speech beginning "Our revels now are ended" indicates his psychological state. What is the magician's mood at this point in the play? Examine the text to analyze Prospero's thoughts and feelings about himself, his art, and his accomplishments. Write at least two paragraphs to analyze Prospero's psychological state. Use specific examples to support your analysis.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Compare your responses to the **Active Reading** activity on page 25 with those of others in your group. As a group, come to a consensus about the values associated with each of the major figures in the masque and their relation to the themes of *The Tempest* as a whole. Then present your consensus to others in your class.

Internet Connection

Prospero calls Caliban "a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick." He is referring to the debate over the relative influences of education and society (nurture) and the traits, personality, and abilities we are born with (nature). Modern-day terms for these two important influences are *environment* (nurture) and *heredity* (nature). Use the Internet to research modern theories about the nature-nurture dichotomy. Which has a greater role in determining who we are: heredity or the environment? Discuss these questions in your group. Present your findings to your class.

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Before You Read

The Tempest Act 5

FOCUS ACTIVITY

“To err is human, to forgive divine.” You have probably heard this saying before, which is actually a line from Alexander Pope’s long poem *Essay on Criticism*. What does this saying mean to you?

Think-Pair-Share

With a partner, discuss different kinds of experiences and situations in which forgiveness is a virtue. Describe the effects of forgiveness on both the one who forgives and the one forgiven.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out about the effects of forgiveness on both the major characters in *The Tempest*.

BACKGROUND

Shakespeare’s Farewell

One interpretation of *The Tempest* identifies Prospero with William Shakespeare himself. Like Prospero, Shakespeare was an imaginative artist, a kind of magician who created characters and dramas to entertain and enlighten. Believers in an autobiographical interpretation of *The Tempest* identify Ariel with Shakespeare’s soaring genius, Caliban with his earthly appetites, and the enslavement of Caliban with Shakespeare’s own self-control and discipline. In this interpretation, Prospero’s long speech that begins “Ye elves of hills” (Scene 1, lines 33–57) is known as Shakespeare’s farewell to the stage. In the speech, Prospero describes the great feats of magic he has performed. Then he renounces his magical powers, vowing to break his staff and throw his book of charms into the sea. While it is probably true that Shakespeare’s retirement from the theater left him with some of the same divided and melancholy feelings that Prospero expresses, Prospero’s feelings are completely understandable on their own in the context of the play.

Is It Over?

After *The Tempest* ends, you’ll find that the play is not quite over. An epilogue is delivered by one of the actors. Such epilogues occur in other plays by Shakespeare, including *As You Like It*, *All’s Well That Ends Well*, and *Henry IV, part 2*. Some scholars believe that the epilogue to *The Tempest* is inferior writing and was added by another writer.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

auspicious [ɒs pɪʃˈəs] *adj.* favorable

chastise [ˈtʃɑːstɪz] *v.* to punish

discourse [dɪsˈkɔːrs] *n.* conversation; discussion

nuptial [ˈnʊpʃəl] *n.* marriage

promontory [ˈprɒmənˈtɔːri] *n.* mountain top

rapier [ˈræpiə] *n.* small dagger

score [skɔːr] *n.* twenty

Active Reading

The Tempest Act 5

In Act 5, several of the plot complications in the play are brought to resolution. Characters gain new knowledge, earlier mysteries are explained, and events foreshadowed (hinted at) in the opening scenes come to pass. As you read, use the chart below to note how the plot developments listed are resolved.

Developments	Resolution
1. Prospero's enemies are completely in his power.	<i>He decides to forgive them.</i>
2. Prospero has accomplished everything with his art that he wants.	
3. Prospero tells Antonio and Sebastian that he knows they tried to kill Alonso.	
4. Alonso grieves because he believes Ferdinand was drowned.	
5. Alonso wonders if the girl with Ferdinand is a goddess.	
6. The shipwrecked courtiers believe that the ship sank with all its sailors.	
7. The courtiers wonder what happened to Stephano and Trinculo.	
8. Caliban has taken Stephano for his lord and master.	
9. Ariel has longed for freedom.	

Responding

The Tempest Act 5

Personal Response

What do you think of the ending of the play and the epilogue?

If you had written the play, would you have ended it differently? Explain your answer.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. How are Ferdinand and Miranda revealed to the others? How does the language and imagery used reflect the theme of rebirth and regeneration?

2. What ironic comment does Prospero make when Miranda marvels at the “brave new world” (Scene 1, line 186)? What do you think he means by this comment?

3. What significant gesture does Antonio not make at the end of the play? What might Shakespeare be saying about the power of art by this omission?

Responding

The Tempest Act 5

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. In many ways Prospero is similar to a god. In other ways, he is not. List characteristics that make him seem both like *and* unlike a god. Then decide what Shakespeare thought about Prospero’s godlike status. Use the evidence you list to support your position.

5. Prospero forgives all of the men who have wronged him, even those who have not repented. Was he right or wrong to forgive all of them? In the **Focus Activity**, you shared experiences about forgiveness. Apply your answer to real life. Under what circumstances should people convicted of crimes be paroled or pardoned?

Literature and Writing

Turning Point

Reread the dialogue between Prospero and Ariel at the beginning of Act 5 (lines 20–32). At this point, Ariel describes how, if he were human, his affections would become tender at the sight of Gonzalo weeping for Alonso. In what way might this be considered the turning point of the play? What does Prospero realize and then decide to do? On a separate sheet of paper analyze these lines and summarize Prospero’s chain of reasoning. Then explain how events earlier in the play have led up to this moment.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Unless characters in a play speak an “aside,” the audience may not understand what the characters are secretly thinking. In your group, choose one of the characters who appear in Act 5. For the character you choose, write an aside that reveals what the character is secretly thinking. Share your aside with the rest of the class and explain why you think it is appropriate to the character.

Learning for Life

Prospero uses his art in the play for a number of purposes: to restore the moral order; to bring about changes in other people; to help sinners recognize their wickedness and repent their evil deeds; and to instruct others about virtue. However, all of these positive changes take place on the enchanted island, not in Milan and Naples. Do you believe these kinds of changes are also possible in the real world? With a partner, find examples of how Prospero’s art achieves positive results. Then discuss what real-life powers have this ability to change people, their behavior, and society. Support your opinion with evidence from history and current events.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Two Control Freaks Take on Shakespeare

Patrick Pacheco

Before You Read

Focus Question

Have you ever acted in a play? If so, how did you come to understand the character you played? How might you apply this skill when reading literature?

Background

In this interview with freelance writer Patrick Pacheco, actor Patrick Stewart and director George Wolfe discuss their 1995 stage production of *The Tempest*. In the interview, both men discuss what their first experiences with Shakespeare were and how together they developed the character of Prospero.

Responding to the Reading

1. Patrick Stewart notes that his brother read some of Shakespeare's plays to him as bedtime stories. Do you think most children who are eight- or nine-years-old would enjoy Shakespeare's stories? Why or why not?

2. Do you agree with Wolfe that Prospero was a "control freak"? Support your answer with examples from the play.

3. **Making Connections** Does Stewart's choice to say the phrase "My Brother!" in an explosive manner change your perspective about the play? In what way? Do you agree with his choice? Why or why not?

Learning for Life

People still enjoy Shakespeare's plays four hundred years after they were written. Make a list of five books, plays, or movies that you think people will still be interested in reading or seeing two hundred years from now, and explain your choices. Compare your choices with those of the other students.

The Tempest on the Stage Sylvan Barnet *from Caliban's Hour* Tad Williams

Before You Read

Focus Question

If you were presenting a play with Caliban as a major character, how would you make him look?

Background

Staging sets the mood for a play and tells the audience members how they should interpret what they hear. Equally important is how certain roles are played out on the stage. Editor Sylvan Barnet describes various productions of *The Tempest* and a number of ways Caliban has been played over the centuries. In *Caliban's Hour*, fantasy author Tad Williams offers a different view of Caliban. Both readings reflect the times in which they were produced.

Responding to the Reading

1. Which kind of production would you prefer to see, "plain" or "fancy"? Why?

2. Which kind of production would you prefer to stage, "plain" or "fancy"? Why?

3. Do you think it is important to perform a play exactly as the author wrote it? Explain.

4. **Making Connections** Which interpretation of Caliban's part do you like best? If you were to stage the play, how would you present Caliban?

Perform a Scene

Working in small groups, choose a scene to stage from *The Tempest*. Present the set as a model, a video, a sketch or series of sketches, a storyboard, or a live performance. Present your set to the class.

A Discovery of the Bermudas, Otherwise Called the Isle of Devils

Silvester Jourdain

Before You Read

Focus Question

What story currently in the news would make a good movie?

Background

Scholars believed that Shakespeare may have based *The Tempest* on a shipwreck that occurred in 1609. He read two eyewitness accounts of the incident, one an unpublished letter written by William Strachey and the other a work by Silvester Jourdain. Jourdain's account, by far the shorter of the two, is reproduced here. As you read it, imagine how Shakespeare might have scrutinized it for background information for his play.

Responding To The Reading

1. In Jourdain's account, what facts or descriptions struck you as being especially vivid or interesting? Include at least three.

2. What did the travelers expect Bermuda to be like? What did they think of the island after they arrived there?

3. Which was easier for you to read, *The Tempest* or *A Discovery of the Bermudas*? Why?

4. **Making Connections** What similarities do you see between Jourdain's description of the storm and Shakespeare's depiction of it?

Yesterday's News

Working in small groups, rewrite Jourdain's story as a newspaper or TV news story. Include drawings, maps, interviews with survivors, or other features to dramatize your report. Present your work to the class.

from *Is Shakespeare Dead?*

Mark Twain

Before You Read

Focus Question

How would you react if someone refused to give you credit for something you had done well? Why?

Background

Who wrote Shakespeare's plays? At first the question seems akin to asking who is buried in President Grant's tomb. The answer seems so obvious that the question seems ridiculous. But the authorship of Shakespeare's plays and sonnets has been the subject of a long and enduring dispute. In this reading, famed American author Mark Twain explains his doubts about whether Shakespeare could have written the plays attributed to him.

Responding to the Reading

1. What reason does Mark Twain give for changing his opinion about the authorship of Shakespeare's plays?

2. Briefly sum up Twain's arguments. Do you think the arguments are convincing?

3. In your opinion, is it important to know who wrote the plays? Explain.

4. **Making Connections** Describe a particular scene or character in *The Tempest* that you think showcases Shakespeare's talents as a writer. Explain your choice.

Internet Connection

What do today's scholars think about the authorship of Shakespeare's plays? Use the Internet to research the controversy. Form an opinion and defend it in a brief oral report to your class.



“Those Huddled Masses”

Tim Clark

Before You Read

Focus Question

Have you ever had a close call in which you narrowly escaped physical danger? How did you react? How does it feel to recall that incident now?

Background

Imagine the fear and danger involved in a real shipwreck. Editor Clarissa M. Silitch has compiled a series of true stories, including “Those Huddled Masses,” about actual shipwrecks that have occurred over the years.

Responding to the Reading

1. What caused the *Danmark* to founder?

2. How were the passengers aboard the *Danmark* rescued?

3. **Making Connections** Based on their actions during the shipwreck in *The Tempest*, how do you think Sebastian and Antonio might have handled themselves on the *Danmark* when it was going down?

Learning for Life

Pick two people involved in the shipwreck that you would like to interview. Make up a list of ten questions that you would like to ask.