



The Tempest

Facilitator's Guide for a script-in-hand performance

BEFORE YOU GO

The production you will see of *The Tempest* will differ from what you and your students might think of a “fully-staged” show. **Script-in-hand** by definition means the actors will perform with their scripts in hand, or on music stands in front of them. There will be the sounds and lights of a fully-staged production, but not the costumes or set. Discuss the difference in these two performance mediums with your students. What are their expectations walking into the performance? Why might this be the medium a company chooses to tell a particular story? What makes *The Tempest* a good fit for a script-in-hand production?

For those whose first time it might be experiencing Shakespeare's works, it is useful to have a general understanding of the play's plot. This is especially true when the performance is script-in-hand, as students won't have full costumes to help distinguish characters throughout. Have students research a bit about *The Tempest*, including where this script falls in Shakespeare's writing career.

Additional questions for consideration:

1. Shakespeare's works are classified in four primary categories: comedy, tragedy, history, and romance. How was romance defined in Shakespeare's time? What elements makes *The Tempest* a Shakespearean romance? How does that definition differ from what we know as “romance” today?
2. The plot of *The Tempest* centers around Prospero's need for revenge. Explore the theme of revenge. Why might someone seek revenge? What's the purpose of revenge? When might revenge ever be justified? When, if ever, is revenge considered a positive force for action?
3. Magic in Shakespeare's time was also referred to as alchemy. Explore the definition of magic in the Elizabethan era. How was magic regarded by Elizabethans? By Shakespeare himself? How might magic have been performed using Elizabethan staging techniques? How might you envision this magic today? What might you consider a “successful” way of indicating magic on the stage for a script-in-hand reading?
4. Consider the play's title, *The Tempest*. “Tempest” by definition is a “violent windy storm”. What did storms signify to Elizabethans? What might the storm reveal about Shakespeare's characters? About Shakespeare himself?
5. Aside from being one of Shakespeare's only romances, *The Tempest* is also one of only two Shakespeare plays that maintains the classical unities of time, place, and action. Why might Shakespeare have chosen the *The Tempest* to observe these unities? How did the unities originate? How might the unities be maintained in the script-in-hand performance?

AFTER THE SHOW

When you return from the performance, encourage your students to jot down a few thoughts of the production that they might want to reference in later discussion. What images stick with them? Which character did they relate the most to? Where does this play fit in their knowledge of Shakespeare and Shakespeare's other works? Have them consider the circumstances surrounding the production itself. How did either research or discussion aid their understanding of the play in performance? What about where they are—personally, academically, spiritually—impacted their own personal experience with the play? How does their own personal response differ from other students in the class? How does this attest to the both the universal and subjective nature of theatre?

1. Refer to your discussions about tempests. How does the play create a storm, both literally and figuratively? Why is the beginning of the play the perfect time for the storm to happen? What causes the storm? How does the storm disrupt the lives of those in the play? What is lost and gained in the storm? In your opinion, which of the characters is affected most by the storm?
2. Refer to your research and discussion on the classical unities of time, place, and action. Define each of these unities with reference to *The Tempest*: how much time passes, where the play takes place, and what the actions are. How did the designers help designate these unities in the script-in-hand performance? How might you as a designer indicate these unities in your own reading? In your own fully-staged production?
3. Refer to your research on Shakespearean romances. Though a romance by nature, could it also be defined as a comedy or tragedy? What elements of the play lead you to that conclusion? How does *The Tempest* fulfill all the requirements of a romance? How does it fit our own contemporary notion of romance?
4. Refer to your research on alchemy. What are Prospero's magical powers? Where does his power come from? In what ways is Prospero's magic transformational? Who does his power affect the most? How does it differ from other supernatural elements included in the story?
5. Though many design elements are not fully realized, the script-in-hand production utilizes sound and music in a variety of ways. How does music contribute to the "magic" of the play? What is significant about the moments where song is used? How does the music both divide and harmonize different characters or moments? How is music a useful tool in storytelling?
6. Along with sound, descriptive passages are used to help indicate mood or evoke the senses. Consider Caliban's speech below:

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.

For someone repeatedly called a “monster” throughout the play, what is the significance of these words coming from Caliban? What contrast is there between Caliban as a character and the language employed here? How does this speech help convey the unity of place in ways other design elements cannot?

7. Think of Prospero’s references to his books. What do his books symbolize? How does Prospero use them? Evaluate your own connection with books. What are your favorites? How do they inspire, influence, or challenge you? How is your connection with books different from Prospero’s connection with his?
8. Explore the themes of leadership, freedom, and forgiveness in terms of the play’s characters:
 - a. *Leadership*. Many of the characters are jockeying for the title of “king”. How do each of them define kingship? What motivates their desire for this power? How does their idea of king differ with our idea of effective leadership?
 - b. *Freedom*. There are varying definitions of freedom explored in the play, along with individuals who either seek or obtain freedom by the play’s end. What does being “free” mean in the context of *The Tempest*? What motivates their desire for freedom? How does this contrast with our modern-day ideas of freedom?
 - c. *Forgiveness*. Prospero’s desire for revenge is also motivated by his need to forgive. From who does he, or any other character in the play, seek forgiveness? How is reconciliation born over the course of the play?
9. As a romance, *The Tempest* blends elements of both illusion and reality. In what ways is illusion created in the play? How do these illusions alter the characters’ sense of reality?
10. *The Tempest* is often referred to as Shakespeare’s “farewell to the theatre”. Refer to your research on Shakespeare’s works, and *The Tempest*’s place in his writing timeline. How might you argue that this play is his farewell? What does he include in the play that conveys a sense of closure? What parallels do Shakespeare and Prospero share when it comes to their respective arts?

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION:

- Explore Shakespeare’s life and works through the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/>
- Access the full text of *The Tempest* free online here: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/full.html>
- View historical images and learn more about Shakespeare’s other works through the Folger Shakespeare Library, found online here: <http://www.folger.edu/tempest>
- Read about a newly imagined version of *The Tempest* at Royal Shakespeare Company: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/news/archive/a-new-magical-tempest>
- For a quick historical overview, check out this “*The Tempest* at a Glance” feature: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/the-tempest-at-a-glance-a-brief-guide-to-the-william-shakespeare-play-a6952986.html>

Heart of America Shakespeare Festival offers year-round education programs and a number of summer camps. For more information about our programming, visit kcshakes.org. Interested in having HASF host a workshop or performance at your school? Contact Matt Rapport, Director of Education, at mrapporrt@kcshakes.org.