

# The Tempest

What is the “Tempest” of the title?

*Online Zoom readings with Robin Williams*

*Saturdays • 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.*

A number of themes and motifs run throughout every Shakespearean play, and we always want to wonder about them. Below are a few in *The Tempest*, and we will probably discover more. I left room for you to write your own ideas!

## **Who has Authority?**

This comes up in the first few lines of the plays and continues throughout.

## **What is Justice?**

Is anyone in the play clearly on the side of Justice? What does it mean to different characters?

## **What does it mean to be Civilized? To be Savage?**

Much has been written about **The Noble Savage** (which was actually a concept back-applied to this play). How does the idea of the noble savage play out in *The Tempest*? This ties in to Power and Exploitation. Who exploits whom? Who saves whom?

## **The Power of Language**

Language and literacy are commonly viewed as civilizing phenomena. How does that work in this play?

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## Nature versus Nurture

Shakespeare loves the argument of Nature versus Nurture. How does it show up in this play, and why?

## What is Freedom?

Some might say living on a beautiful island and having magical powers is a wonderful freedom. Caliban wants freedom but willingly enslaves himself to a drunken fool. What does Ferdinand show us about freedom? What are the last three words in the play?

## Empathy, Redemption, Reconciliation, Forgiveness

Scholars say the [probably] last four plays that Shakespeare wrote, the romances (*The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest*, and *Pericles*) are focused on redemption and forgiveness. What do you think? Are those who need forgiveness truly forgiven?

## What about us?

Are we to see anything about ourselves in *The Tempest*? Should we examine the darkness of the characters? Should the characters examine their own darkneses?

## Also watch for Parallels and Contrasts

Parallels between the usurpers

Parallels between those usurped

Parallels between brothers

Parallels between Nature versus Nurture

Parallels between utopias

Parallels and contrasts between humans and non-humans