

Characters from *The Tempest* – From the site “No Fear Shakespeare”

Prospero

The play's protagonist and Miranda's father. 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 an island refining the magic that gives him the power he needs to punish and reconcile with his enemies.

Miranda

Prospero's daughter, whom he brought with him to the island when she was still a small child. Miranda has never seen any men other than her father and Caliban, although 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, a powerful supernatural being whom Prospero controls completely. Rescued by Prospero from a long imprisonment (within a tree) 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 change shapes at will. Ariel carries out virtually every task 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 that Prospero stole it. Caliban's speech and behavior is sometimes coarse and brutal, sometimes eloquent and sensitive, as in his rebukes of Prospero in Act 1, scene 2, 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 Prospero's approval.

Alonso

King of Naples and father of Ferdinand. Alonso aided Antonio in unseating Prospero as duke of Milan twelve years before. Over the course of the play, Alonso comes to regret his past actions and desire a reconciliation with Prospero.

Antonio

Prospero's thoroughly wicked brother who betrayed Prospero's trust and stole his dukedom years before the play begins. Once on the island, Antonio wastes no time demonstrating that he is still power-hungry and murderous, persuading Sebastian to help him kill Alonso. Though Prospero forgives him at the end of the play, Antonio never repents for his misdeeds.

Sebastian

Alonso's brother. Like Antonio, Sebastian is wicked and underhanded. Antonio easily persuades him to agree to kill Alonso. Also like Antonio, Sebastian is unrepentant at the end of the play.

Gonzalo

An old, honest lord. The goodhearted Gonzalo helped Prospero and Miranda to escape and survive after Antonio usurped Prospero's title. During the play, Gonzalo does his best to cheer up the despondent Alonso, maintains an optimistic outlook on the island where they're stranded, and remains unfazed by the insulting taunts of Antonio and Sebastian.

Trinculo and Stefano

Two minor members of the shipwrecked party. Trinculo, a jester, and Stefano, a drunken butler, 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 angers the noble characters with his foul-mouthed and rude remarks, but remains competent and resourceful in the shipwreck scene, demanding practical help rather than weeping and prayer.