

- 1  **Shakespeare's Comedies: *The Tempest***
Dr. Alan Haffa
- 2  **William Shakespeare 1564-1616**
 - Family
 - Education
 - Marriage to Anne Hathaway
 - Established in London theatre by 1592
 - 1594: Lord Chamberlain's Men
 - 1597: Purchased New Place in Stratford-upon-Avon
 - 1603: King's Men
- 3  **Shakespearean Comedy**
 - Theme of Love
 - Mistaken Identities
 - Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well*
 - Twins: *A Comedy of Errors*
 - Gender Play
 - Rosalind in *As You Like It*
 - Comic word play
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- 4  **"Problem Plays" or Dark Comedies**
 - Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Troilus and Cressida*
 - Highlights problems and contradictions in society
 - Abuse of Power and Gender Inequality in *Measure for Measure*
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- 5  **Romance Plays**
 - 1608 Shakespeare wrote 4 plays: *Pericles Prince of Tyre*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*
 - These plays are more concerned with reconciliation, magic, renewal, forgiveness, providence, music, and community.
- 6  **The Tempest and the Unities**
 - All of the action takes place on the island
 - The action unfolds in 24 hours
 - The plot is more complex:
 - Restoration to the dukedom of Milan
 - Marriage of daughter, Miranda, to the prince of Naples
 - Restoration of Political and Social Unity and Order
- 7  **Storm and Disorder**
 - Who is in charge? Nobles interfere with the sailors
 - "You are a counselor: if you can command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more; use your authority."
 - As the ship is wrecking, Gonzalo: "Mercy on us! We split, we split, we split!"
 - Metaphor for social division
- 8  **Miranda: Natural Compassion**
 - The child of Prospero, exiled duke of Milan, raised in the state of nature
 - She represents the good in mankind when we are not corrupted by ambition, greed, and society.
 - Seeing the ship wreck, she feels compassion and assumes those on board are "noble creatures"
 - When she meets Ferdinand, she falls in love immediately, seeing only the good in him.
 - Is he, like her, the younger generation, good? Are they different in kind from their parents

- and uncles? Or is it just that her native goodness sees and brings out in him what is best?
- 9  **Theme of Division**
- Prospero's plan splits the group from the ship up again
 - Ferdinand, prince of Naples, is brought to the camp so he can meet and fall in love with Miranda
 - The nobles are in one group
 - The servants in another
- 10  **Is Prospero truly virtuous?**
- Or, is he as ambitious as his brother and as prone to manipulating those around him to his own ends?
 - He DOES manipulate Miranda, Caliban, and Ariel
 - Did he "steal" the island from Caliban?
 - It seems Caliban tried to rape Miranda and one way of looking at Prospero is he shows restraint in dealing with Caliban
 - Another view: Post-Modern interpretation—Prospero (white colonizers) and Caliban (native people enslaved and disenfranchised)
- 11  **Caliban as Social Outcast**
- P: "thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself upon they wicked dam..."
 - Reminiscent of Grendel from *Beowulf*
 - "This island's mine, by Sycorax, my mother, which thou tak'st from me. When thou camest first, thou strok'st me, and mad'st much of me...[and Caliban showed him all the good things of the island]...I am all the subjects that you have, which first was mine own king;"
- 12  **Prospero and Ariel**
- In Act I Ariel reminds Prospero about his promise to set Ariel free
 - We learn how Prospero set Ariel free from imprisonment in a pine tree
 - Prospero: "If thou murmur'st I will rend an oak and peg thee in his knotty entrails, til thou hast howl'd away twelve winters."
 - This shows a potentially vengeful side of Prospero
- 13  **Plot among the Nobles**
- Prospero's brother, Antonio, plotted with Naples, to steal the dukedom of Milan
 - In Act II, Antonio plots with Sebastian, brother of the King of Naples
 - The parallel between the two plots is highlighted: "Sebastian: "They case, dear friend, shall be my precedent; as thou gott'st Milan, I'll come by Naples. Draw thy sword: one stroke shall free thee from the tribute which thou pay'st; And I the king shall love you."
 - Ariel disturbs the plot
 - Bottom line is that with the exception of Gonzalo, all the nobles are Machiavellian usurpers.
- 14  **Low Class Characters: Revolt and Treason**
- Caliban discovers the servants of the ship's nobles: Stephano and Trinculo
 - He pledges his service to them like gods (similar to how the Native Americans saw the Spanish as gods)
 - They plot to murder Prospero and become lords of the island
 - High and low alike are possessed by boundless ambition and are willing to betray and divide society to achieve their ends.
- 15  **Reconciliation and Unit**
- In the final scene, everyone is brought together by Prospero and Ariel
 - The king begs forgiveness
 - Prospero forgives his brother, but...
 - The honest, innocent, and chaste love of Miranda and Ferdinand transforms the scene:
 - Miranda: "O, wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world that hath such people in it!"
- 16  **Summary**
- Comedy ends happily with a marriage

- The end of *The Tempest* does resolve the social division through love and forgiveness, magic and renewal.
- Are we to take Miranda's idealistic view of things as the authoritative view?
- Is Prospero as kind and compassionate as he appears?
- Is the magic of love as powerful as Miranda imagines it?