Daily Bard

LESSON PLANS

The Tempest: three lesson plans

Three hour-long lessons that take a class from Caliban's claim to the island, through the broken masque, to Prospero's choice of virtue over vengeance, with a printable worksheet and indicative answers.



LEVEL
Ages 14-18 (GCSE, A-level, AP Lit, IB); adaptable for first-year seminars

SEQUENCE
3 lessons of 60 minutes

FOCUS
Power and dispossession; art and illusion; forgiveness and its limits

YOU WILL NEED
Copies of Act 1 Scene 2, Act 4 Scene 1 and Act 5 Scene 1; the worksheet below; highlighters; mini whiteboards or paper

Overview

This sequence teaches three passages that carry the play's main arguments. Students should already know the plot in outline; the act summaries in the Tempest study guide are enough preparation. Each lesson moves from a close look at the words to a debatable judgement, so that students practise the habit examiners reward: a claim, a short quotation, a named method and its effect.

- Students will be able to analyse how verse form, word choice and imagery shape our response to Caliban and Prospero.
- Students will be able to explain how the masque and the revels speech connect magic with theatre.
- Students will be able to evaluate how complete Prospero's forgiveness is, using evidence from Act 5 and the Epilogue.
- Students will be able to use context, including colonial encounter and the court masque, to sharpen an interpretation.

Assessment focus. The sequence develops an informed personal response supported by quotation (AO1), analysis of language, form and structure (AO2), and the use of relevant context (AO3). For older students, Lessons 1 and 3 introduce competing critical interpretations. The assessment map sets out this alignment in general terms.

Lesson 1: Whose island is it?

Key question: Does Shakespeare want us to accept Caliban's claim that the island was stolen from him?

- Read Caliban's first exchange with Prospero and Miranda (Act 1, Scene 2) closely.
- Analyse how verse and word choice give Caliban dignity as well as menace.
- Weigh two readings of the scene: rightful master or coloniser.

TIME	ACTIVITY	WHY
0-8 min	**Starter.** On the board: "Someone arrives where you live, is kind to you, learns everything you know, then takes charge." Pairs list three feelings and three words they would use for the newcomer.	Builds the emotional logic of Caliban's speech before the language is met.
8-18 min	**Teaching input.** Recap: Prospero arrived twelve years ago; Caliban, son of Sycorax, was already there. Define blank verse and enjambment. Explain briefly that Shakespeare's audience was reading reports of voyages to the Americas.	Gives the terms and context students will need to apply.
18-35 min	**Main task 1.** Read the worksheet passage aloud twice, the second time with students standing whenever Caliban says "me", "mine" or "I". Complete worksheet questions 1-5 in pairs.	Makes the pattern of possession audible; moves from comprehension to analysis.
35-47 min	**Main task 2.** Read on to Prospero's reply and Miranda's *"Abhorred slave"* speech. Half the room collects evidence for "Prospero is justified", half for "Caliban is wronged". Three quotations each.	Stops the scene becoming one-sided; the attempted assault on Miranda must be faced.
47-56 min	**Discussion.** Structured debate using the stems "The strongest evidence is ..." and "That reading ignores ...". Ask: why does Prospero never answer the claim itself?	Practises evaluation and counter-argument aloud.
56-60 min	**Plenary.** On a whiteboard, each student completes: "Shakespeare makes Caliban's claim hard to dismiss by ...".	Quick check that method, not just opinion, is being named.

Differentiation

- **Support:** provide a glossed copy of the passage and limit analysis to questions 1-4, with the stem "The word ... suggests ... because ...".
- **Core:** complete questions 1-6 and contribute one quotation to the debate.
- **Stretch:** consider why some editors have given Miranda's *"Abhorred slave"* speech to Prospero, and what that changes.

Assessment and homework

You will know they have learnt it if plenary sentences name a specific method, such as the possessive pronouns or the verse form. Homework: the worksheet writing task, one paragraph.

Lesson 2: The masque and the revels speech

Key question: Why does Prospero stop his own show, and what does the speech that follows say about art?

- Understand what a masque was and how Act 4, Scene 1 imitates one.
- Analyse the imagery and structure of *"Our revels now are ended"*.
- Connect Prospero's magic to Shakespeare's theatre.

TIME	ACTIVITY	WHY
0-7 min	**Starter.** Project today's page from Daily Bard, or any short passage. Students have two minutes to put it into plain English, then compare with the reading on the back of the leaf. Then ask: what is the last performance you saw that you did not want to end?	Warms up paraphrase, the skill the lesson depends on, and opens the theme of endings.
7-17 min	**Teaching input.** Explain the court masque: song, dance, goddesses, expensive spectacle, usually in praise of order and marriage. Read the stage direction where Prospero *starts suddenly* and his line *"I had forgot that foul conspiracy"*.	Context that directly explains a structural choice.
17-32 min	**Main task 1.** Read the speech from *"Our revels now are ended"* to *"rounded with a sleep"*. In threes, students draw a ladder of what dissolves, in order: actors, vision, towers, palaces, temples, globe, us.	Reveals the widening structure of the sentence.
32-45 min	**Main task 2.** Annotate for: the pun in *"the great globe itself"*; the repetition in *"into air, into thin air"*; the lines after the speech, where Prospero says *"Sir, I am vexed"*. Question: is this a calm philosopher or a shaken man?	Tests the popular reading of the speech as serene against its dramatic situation.
45-55 min	**Discussion.** "Prospero's magic is just another word for theatre." Agree, disagree, or qualify, with one quotation.	Moves from passage to whole-play theme.
55-60 min	**Plenary.** Exit ticket: correct the common misquotation "such stuff as dreams are made of" and explain *"rounded"* in one sentence.	Secures accurate quotation.

Differentiation

- **Support:** give the ladder with the first two rungs filled in and a word bank (dissolve, illusion, temporary).
- **Core:** complete the ladder and annotate at least three features.

- **Stretch:** read the essay on "We are such stuff as dreams are made on" and compare Jaques's view of life as theatre in "All the world's a stage".

Assessment and homework

Exit tickets show whether students can quote the line accurately and gloss it. Homework: learn the last three lines of the speech by heart and write five sentences on why the interruption matters.

Lesson 3: Virtue or vengeance?

Key question: How complete is Prospero's forgiveness?

- Trace Prospero's change of mind in Act 5, Scene 1.
- Compare how he addresses Alonso, Antonio and Caliban.
- Evaluate the ending, including the Epilogue, in an extended paragraph.

TIME	ACTIVITY	WHY
0-6 min	**Starter.** Opinion line across the room: "You can forgive someone who is not sorry." Students stand where they agree and justify their place.	Sets up the problem of Antonio.
6-16 min	**Teaching input.** Read the exchange from Ariel's *"Mine would, sir, were I human"* to *"The rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance"*. Ask: who changes Prospero's mind, and why does it take a spirit?	Shows that mercy is a decision made on stage, not a fixed trait.
16-34 min	**Main task 1.** Groups each take one moment: the forgiving of Antonio (*"most wicked sir"*), the abjuring of *"rough magic"*, *"This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine"*, or the Epilogue. Each prepares a one-minute explanation: what is said, how, and how warm it is on a scale of 1-5.	Divides a long scene; forces attention to tone.
34-44 min	**Feedback.** Groups report; the class records a "warmth score" and one quotation for each moment. Note what Antonio says in reply: nothing.	Builds a shared evidence bank for writing.
44-56 min	**Writing.** One paragraph answering the key question. Success criteria: a clear claim; two short quotations; one named method; one sentence on an alternative reading.	Individual, assessable outcome.

TIME	ACTIVITY	WHY
56-60 min	**Plenary.** Two volunteers read aloud; the class identifies each success criterion.	Models the standard through peer work.

Differentiation

- **Support:** sentence stems: “Prospero forgives … but his words … suggest …”.
- **Core:** meet all four success criteria.
- **Stretch:** argue whether the Epilogue’s plea, *“Let your indulgence set me free”*, makes Prospero equal at last to Ariel and Caliban.

Assessment and homework

Mark the paragraph against the four criteria. Homework: plan a full essay on forgiveness with the essay planner. As a low-stakes habit, invite students to read the day’s page in the Daily Bard app and bring one word they had to look up; it supports close reading but does not replace reading the play.

Student worksheet: Caliban's claim

Caliban has been called out of his cave by Prospero, who has threatened him with cramps. This is his reply.

> This island's mine by Sycorax, my mother,
> Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first,
> Thou strok'st me and made much of me, wouldst give me
> Water with berries in 't, and teach me how
> To name the bigger light and how the less,
> That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee,
> And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle,
> The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile.
> Cursed be I that did so! All the charms
> Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you,
> For I am all the subjects that you have,
> Which first was mine own king; and here you sty me
> In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
> The rest o' th' island.
>
> CALIBAN · THE TEMPEST · ACT 1, SCENE 2

1. On what grounds does Caliban say the island is his?
2. List three things Prospero did for Caliban when he first arrived, and one thing Caliban did in return.
3. What are *"the bigger light"* and *"the less"*? Why might Caliban describe them this way?
4. Find the line where the mood turns from memory to anger. Which word signals the change?
5. What does the verb in *"here you sty me"* suggest about how Caliban feels he is treated?
6. Caliban says he is *"all the subjects that you have"* and was once *"mine own king"*. What point is he making about Prospero's power?
7. The passage is written in blank verse. Why might it matter that Caliban speaks verse, not prose?
8. Later in the scene Caliban does not deny that he tried to assault Miranda. How far does that change your response to this speech?

Writing task. How does Shakespeare present Caliban's sense of injustice in this speech? Write one paragraph of 120-150 words.

- Begin with a clear claim that answers the question.
- Use at least two short quotations, embedded in your sentences.
- Name at least one method (for example verse form, verb choice, listing, pronouns) and explain its effect.

- End with a sentence on how an audience might respond.

Teacher notes and indicative answers

1. Inheritance: it came to him from his mother, Sycorax.
2. Prospero stroked him, gave him water with berries and taught him to name the sun and moon; Caliban showed him the island's resources.
3. Sun and moon. The periphrasis recalls a child's first lesson and recreates the moment before he had the words.
4. *"Cursed be I that did so!"* The shift from *"loved"* to *"Cursed"* turns generosity into regret.
5. A sty is for pigs: he is penned like an animal, which answers Prospero's insults with an accusation.
6. A ruler with one subject is barely a ruler; Prospero's sovereignty exists only through Caliban's subjection, and Caliban ruled himself first.
7. Verse usually marks seriousness and status. It gives his grievance dignity and contradicts the label of brute.
8. Accept reasoned responses. Stronger answers hold both truths: the grievance is just and the offence is real.

Model paragraph. Shakespeare presents Caliban's injustice as a betrayal of trust. He begins with a legal claim, *"This island's mine"*, and the blunt verb in *"thou tak'st from me"* names Prospero's rule as theft. The middle of the speech is tender: the list of *"fresh springs, brine pits"* records knowledge freely given, so that *"Cursed be I that did so"* turns the curse on his own generosity. Because Caliban speaks measured blank verse, the grievance sounds reasoned, not bestial. An audience may recall his attack on Miranda, yet the animal image of *"sty me"* makes his confinement hard to accept as simple justice.

Extending the sequence

For a fourth lesson, set a timed essay from the questions in the **study guide** and let students quote only from the **Tempest quotation sheet**. The **close reading toolkit** gives a routine for annotating unseen passages, and the **guide to Shakespeare's language** covers verse, prose and "thou". For comparison across plays, pair Prospero's storm with Lear's in **"Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks"**. A printable version of these plans is available as a **PDF**.



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