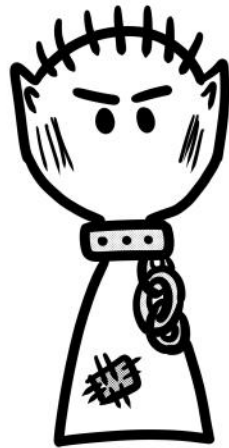


# The Tempest

## An Active Introduction to The Tempest



Shakespeare's plays and characters can be brought vividly to life for students using a variety of interactive, energetic and engaging storytelling techniques. The following active introduction provides a great first encounter with Shakespeare and offers the opportunity for large groups of children to play several different roles. This style of introduction is a technique that is regularly used by drama practitioners, including the RSC, and is often described as a 'whoosh'.

### How it works

As the teacher you are the storyteller and the whole class should sit in a circle for this activity. You will need to use 'whoosh' or chose a particular action word or phrase to use as a command. It would be a good idea to find words from the play you are introducing, for example: **Bestir** means 'rouse, make active' and is from *The Tempest*. The command signifies a change in the action and controls the pace of the storytelling. It is used to return the students quickly to their places in the circle after acting in each 'scene'. Everyone will have the opportunity to join in with the telling of the story, by becoming a character or an object in the tale.

Start telling the story and as soon as a character or an object is mentioned, indicate the first student to step into the circle. Encourage the student to strike a pose or make a shape. If two or

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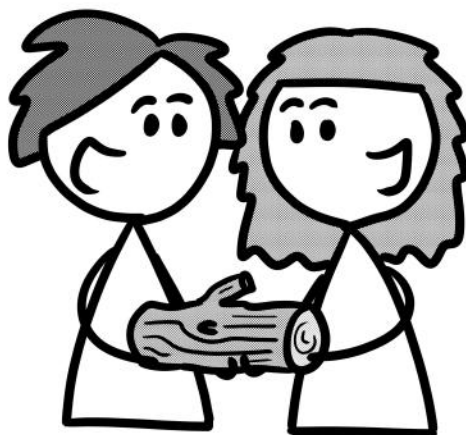
more characters are introduced then they can step in at the same time to act their part of the story. When you call out the action word or blow the whistle/beat the drum the students should sit down. Continue telling the story with the next student(s) from the circle.

As more characters or objects are introduced, move around the circle so that all the students are given a chance to take part. Explain to the students that it does not matter if the character they have been chosen to be is male or female. Using this technique means that different pupils get to play the same character at various times and everyone gets a chance at acting several roles, regardless of gender.

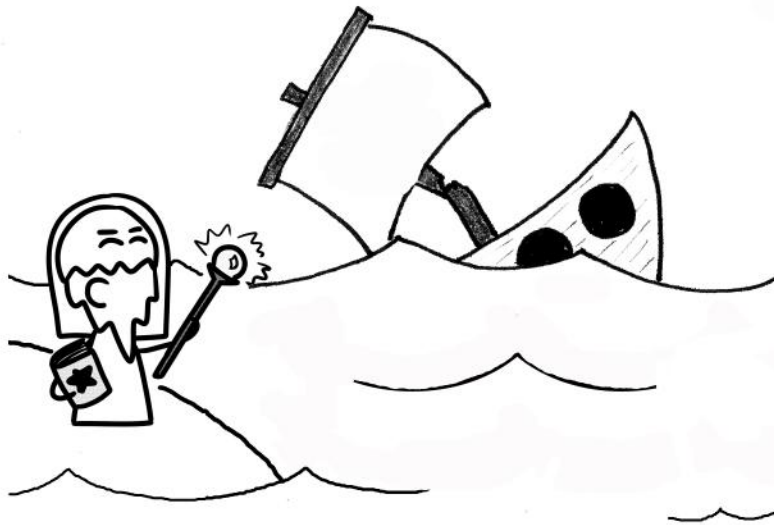
Continue telling the story, introducing more characters or actions, making sure all students are given a chance to take part. Props can also be introduced although this is not essential. At any time the students can add lines from the play or improvise with dialogue, but remember, during the telling of the story, once the teacher says 'Bestir' everyone returns to their original place in the circle. The story continues to be told to the end.

The text below gives possible suggestions for interjections; however you may choose to adapt the text for your class. You may prefer to use quotations from Shakespeare or encourage children to use their own words. For ease of storytelling new characters in each 'scene' are highlighted in bold text.

In essence this storytelling needs to be pacey and energetic. Above all, the story needs to be visual and fast moving so that it is fun, meaningful and driven.



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Once upon a time there was an island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, somewhere between Algeria and Italy. On the island there lived a magical fairy called **Ariel**. Ariel could summon up music everywhere he/she went on the island.

(Ariel plays music)

Then one day a boat was washed ashore and in the boat was a witch called **Sycorax**. Soon after she came ashore she gave birth to a son. She called him **Caliban**.

While on the island, Sycorax enslaved several spirits, including Ariel. When Ariel refused to follow Sycorax's orders, she locked him inside a tree. After she died, Caliban was left to look after himself and Ariel stayed stuck inside the tree.

"This island's mine!" said Caliban.

- Bestir -

One day another boat is washed up on the shore. On this boat there is a wizard called **Prospero** and his daughter **Miranda**. They have escaped from Prospero's brother, **Antonio**, who claimed the Dukedom that was Prospero's by right.

'I am Prospero,' said Prospero. 'Which was thrust forth of Milan.'



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'How came we ashore?' asks Miranda.

'By Providence divine,' answers Prospero.

By using magic, Prospero lets **Ariel** out of a tree.

'Make gape the pine and let thee out,' says Prospero.

'I thank thee, master,' Ariel replies.

Prospero and Miranda befriend **Caliban** and teach him how to speak.

In return, Caliban shows Prospero and Miranda where to find food.

But then Caliban attacks Miranda. As a punishment Prospero makes him his slave.

- Bestir -

**Prospero** tells **Ariel** to create a storm at sea and drive a passing ship towards the island. Prospero reveals that he has arranged the storm so that he can get revenge on those who deprived him of his Dukedom.

(Ariel moves round the circle and the rest of the class become the storm at sea.)

The first person washed ashore from the shipwreck is **Ferdinand**, the King of Naples' son. **Ariel** leads him round the island with his music to meet **Miranda**.

When Ferdinand meets Miranda they fall instantly in love.

'I might call him a thing divine,' says Miranda. 'For nothing natural I ever saw so noble.'

'I'll make you the Queen of Naples.' Ferdinand tells her.

'I am your wife, if you will marry me,' says Miranda. 'If not, I'll die your maid.'

To test their love, Prospero puts Ferdinand to work carrying wood for his fire.

- Bestir -

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Meanwhile, in another part of the island, **Alonso**, the King of Naples, washes ashore with his friend **Gonzalo**, Prospero's brother **Antonio** and Alonso's brother, **Sebastian**. Alonso is upset that the ship has gone down and everyone has been lost at sea.

'Beseech you sir, be merry,' says Gonzalo.

'Prithee peace,' says Alonso.

**Ariel** finds the king and his company and makes Alonso and Gonzalo fall asleep. At this time, Sebastian and Antonio plot to kill Alonso in order to take over his kingdom.

Sebastian says to Antonio, 'Draw thy sword!'

Antonio says 'Draw together!'

Before Sebastian and Antonio can kill Alonso, Ariel says 'Awake, awake!'

Alonso wakes up and asks 'Why are you drawn?'

Sebastian says 'We heard a hollow burst of bellowing.'

Antonio says 'It was the roar of a whole herd of lions.'

Alonso accepts their answers.

'Lead away.' Alonso says.

- Bestir -

In yet another part of the island **Stephano** and **Trinculo**, a jester and a drunkard, are washed ashore with a barrel of wine. They meet **Caliban** and they get him drunk.

'Open your mouth,' says Stephano to Caliban, and pours wine down his throat.

'I prithee, be my god,' says Caliban to Stephano.

'The poor monster's in drink,' says Trinculo.

'I'll kiss thy foot,' says Caliban. 'I prithee, be my god!'

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Together, Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo plan to kill Prospero so they can rule the island.

'O brave monster,' says Stephano. 'Lead the way.' And off they go.

However, **Ariel** stops their plan for the moment by trapping them in a pit.

- Bestir -

**Prospero** decides to bless the marriage of **Ferdinand** and **Miranda**. He stages a masque (that is a dance in which the guests are all traditionally masked) to celebrate.

(The rest of the class dance for Ferdinand and Miranda, blessing them.)

Prospero has **Ariel** bring everyone on the island to where he lives.

(Ariel leads Prospero, Miranda, Ferdinand, **Caliban**, **Alonso**, **Stephano**, **Trinculo**, **Antonio**, **Sebastian** and **Gonzalo** to one end of the room and everyone else moves to the other end of the room to become the **shipwrecked sailors**.)

The sailors crawl ashore on the island and find Prospero, Alonso and everyone else.

'We have safely found our king and company,' says the **Boatswain**.

'Behold, sir King,' says Prospero to Alonso. 'the wronged Duke of Milan, Prospero!'

Feeling bad about what he did to Prospero, Alonso gives Milan back to Prospero.

'I do forgive thy rankest faults,' says Prospero to his brother Antonio.

Ferdinand and Miranda are found playing chess and Ferdinand and his father are reunited.

Caliban and the drunken soldiers are given a stern rebuke.



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Prospero frees Ariel.

'Be free, and fare thou well!'

And they all go back home.

And so the story of *The Tempest* ends!

*With thanks to Andrew Cowie & Amelia Johnson*