

African-American Shakespeare Company presents:

The Tempest

A Shake-It-Up Study Guide



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CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

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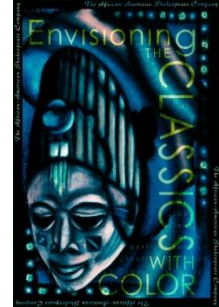
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Introduction to the African-American Shakespeare Company

History

African-American Shakespeare Company was introduced in 1994 to open the realm of classic theatre to a diverse audience; and provide an opportunity and place for actors of color to hone their skills and talent in mastering some of the world's greatest classical roles. We do this by producing work from the canon of classical theatre including Shakespeare and great American and world playwrights that is lively, entertaining and relevant.



Values

- We create theatrical experiences, which celebrate our pride, diversity and integrity.
- Our work has at its core an African-American aesthetic, steeped in an American sensibility, and a commitment to artistic and cultural experience.
- We value the ability to impart a theatrical knowledge base, teach style and content, and share classical repertoire to under-represented actors and diverse listening audiences.
- We build a sense of community with our audiences, artists, patrons, neighbors and collaborators and see each as essential stakeholders in our company.
- We seek to build long-term personal relationships with all who engage with us and infuse every experience with our company with warmth, caring, and good humor.
- We practice persistence and a can-do attitude.
- Our organization is nimble and flexible.

Beliefs

- We believe the arts can change perceptions.
- We believe that knowledge of the classics has great potential to empower communities of color.
- We believe the classics should and need to be accessible to historically excluded audiences.
- We believe the African-American community has been alienated from discovering time-favored classics.
- We believe there exists a disparity in arts opportunities and experiences available people of color, especially youth, and companies such as ours are critical in reducing and eliminating that disparity.

The Tempest

OCTOBER 18-NOVEMBER 9, 2014

Directed by Nancy Carlin

Playwright William Shakespeare

At the beginning of the 17th century, when *The Tempest* was written, the English were fascinated by discoveries of world travel. The historic Age of Exploration, which had included Columbus's arrival in the New World, as well as the travels of Amerigo Vespucci, Magellan, Cortés, and Balboa, had been in progress for the last hundred years, and the English public was eager to hear reports of the discoveries of such voyages. A good deal of literature that was written, however, claiming to be factual reports from unknown places around the world, were actually fictional accounts with incredible exaggerations about exotic civilizations and cultures. Such "travel reports" included descriptions of people who had their faces in the middle of their bodies, and of horses with wings, or horns. The public would pay to view individuals shipped from foreign lands—primarily Native Americans and Africans—who were displayed in their native costumes, as museum pieces or circus displays. The point was not to understand the exotic cultures, but to be thrilled by their strangeness.

Shakespeare grew up in this atmosphere, and for many of his plays he created characters who appealed to audiences because of how exotic they were—Othello in the play of that name, Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, the witches in *Macbeth*. *The Tempest*, one of Shakespeare's last plays, utilizes the exotic more than any other. The setting for this play is a nameless island where twelve years ago an Italian nobleman and his three-year-old daughter had been washed ashore. When the play begins, we discover that the Italian nobleman, Prospero, has through his studies learned to control natural forces, and command two of the individuals he discovered on the island. One of those individuals is a man named Caliban, who himself was abandoned on the island with his mother, from Algiers, many years ago. Caliban is human, but he is in such rough condition from his life on the island—including abuse from Prospero—that he seems animal-like to Europeans when they arrive on the island. The other individual is a spirit named Ariel, who can fly and create illusions out of thin air. (At one point, Ariel causes a huge banquet to appear out of nowhere, then causes it to disappear just as quickly.) The exciting strangeness of all this had great appeal to Shakespeare's original audiences.

Today we are still entertained by displays of exotic, imaginary settings whether in "reality" shows set in jungles, or science fiction movies. The primary attraction of great literature, however, remains today—as it was during Shakespeare's era—in its ability to expose our weaknesses, to encourage our strengths, to offer thought-provoking observations about our psyches and our humanity. And despite the many significant differences between living conditions four hundred years ago and those today, human nature is essentially the same, and Shakespeare's characters, even when the plays are produced exactly as he wrote them, still make sense to us and teach us about ourselves. Theatre companies, however, since Shakespeare's death been interested in making adaptations to his plays to underscore their contemporary relevance. The 18th century, as well as the 19th and the 20th, all had their ways of shaping their performances of Shakespeare's plays to appeal most to their audiences. These adaptations have included changes in costuming, music, and set. In the 20th century, for instance, *Romeo and Juliet* was often been produced to represent two young lovers set in modern environments—two examples are the 1996 movie version (starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes) that set the scene in a modern

suburb; and the musical, *West Side Story*, set the action in Manhattan, where the warring families are rival gangs of Anglos and Puerto Ricans.

The African American Shakespeare Company's production of *The Tempest* follows this tradition by adding its own variations. The play is set in the year 2020, and the island is a huge trash dump floating somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. We don't have to use our imaginations much to picture such a site. There actually are several floating trash dumps in the ocean, one that is bigger than Texas. Here is a YouTube report on the problem: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qT-rOXB6NI>

In this version of *The Tempest*, Prospero is a duke of the Italian city of Milan, and a former CEO of a company called SYCORAX, a multi-product industrial conglomerate. The company is under investigation for dumping millions of tons of garbage in the Pacific Ocean. Unhappy with these consequences of SYCORAX's work, Prospero at one point threatened to testify before congress. For this, he was quickly dismissed from his company, his dukedom was usurped, and he was banished to sea with his daughter Miranda. Miraculously surviving, they floated up to the shores of this very debris field, an island named after its "creator," SYCORAX. Prospero has made the island, with its single inhabitant, the deformed spawn Caliban, his home, and plots his revenge.

Assisting Prospero in his endeavors is an Application, "Ariel," that he discovers from reclaimed parts scavenged from SYCORAX's trash. Ariel becomes his personal assistant and knowledge navigator capable of holographic manifestations and manipulation of weather patterns. When Prospero's enemies, "by Providence divine," show up on his radar, he and Ariel treat them to a storm of biblical proportions. All of their lives are tempest-tossed and ultimately re-ordered. Mankind is seen at its worst, and monsters and machines show themselves to be human. Nothing is the same after man's tsunami of greed; the very planet is scorched from unwary amassing of wealth and the resulting environmental destruction. If virtue can win out over vengeance and avarice the storm can be weathered.



Engaging Our Students

Before the show, excite your students with theater and improv games, gaining background knowledge about the play, researching the career history of the actors and actresses online, or ask the director burning questions through social media. You can also educate your students on these most frequently asked questions by framing the collecting of information as an interview with Sherri Young, the founder and executive director of the African-American Shakespeare Company.

Fake It Till You Make It!

(5-10 minutes)

African-American Shakespeare Company is proud to create the theater experience for many students for the very first time. The theater experience at the African-American Shakespeare is very unique; theater etiquette here may be different than at other venues. Follow this exercise to learn how to best enjoy *The Tempest*.

Split the students into pairs. Allow one student to be the interviewer who poses the frequently asked questions (an audience member, student, tourist, a journalist writing a review on the play, a company donor). Allow one student to act as Sherri Young, the interviewee who responds with answers.

FAQ's

Q: Who will meet us when we arrive?

A representative of the African-American Shakespeare Company will meet you in the lobby of the venue. It could be the Executive Director, Artistic Director, Stage Manager, or another volunteer with the organization.

Q: Where will we find our seats?

All school matinee shows are general seating on a first come, first serve basis. We like for the schools to check-in when they arrive. By the order of your check-in we will take each group one-by-one into the theater. We will fill out the center seating section first and then the side seating section.

Q: When should I go to the bathroom?

We encourage all students to use the bathroom before they are seated. Restrooms are located in the lobby area and on the second floor across from the elevators.

Q: What should I do during the show?

We would like for you to take the time to focus your attention on performance. Watch the actors, setting, and other production elements. What we do not want is for you to have conversation with whomever is seated next to you, or to open your phones and begin texting during the show.

Q: How will I know when the show is about to begin?

The lights will begin to slowly fade in the theater, and this is an indication the show will begin. Our student matinees will also have a curtain speech where someone provides instruction and information on the stage at the top of the show.

Q: How do I show that I liked what I saw and heard?

One of the most traditional ways is to give applause to the artists. Another important way is to write a letter to the actors or company.

Q: What do I do after the show ends?

After the actors take their bows and leave the stage they will come back out for a talk back session where you will have a chance to ask them questions about the play.

Making Theater Accessible

(30-45 minutes)

The following prompts are designed to illicit creative responses from the students, and access what they know about the art of Drama. Encourage your students to make connections about the presence of theater in their daily lives.

- 1. What is theatre? How does it fit into your life? Have you ever attended a performance before? If you have, which one? If you haven't, what do you think it would be like to attend a live performance? What do you know about William Shakespeare the Author?**

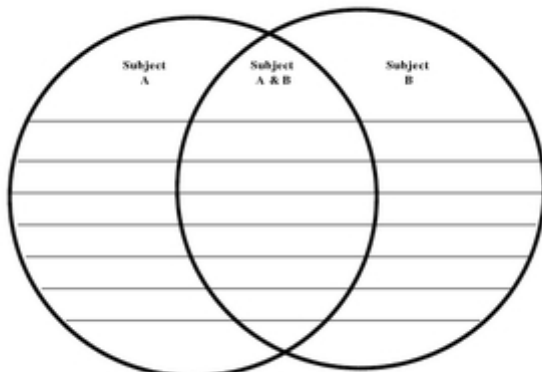
(1) Collect these responses in a shareback after turn and talk or think-pair-share. (2) Have the students create a mindmap with the word "Theatre" in the middle and draw lines that link to related ideas and life examples.

- 2. If you have attended a Shakespeare performance, what do you think made it different from other plays? How did it compare to going to a sports events or movie?**

(1) Draw a venn diagram on the board or in small student groups to discuss the differences and similarities between Shakespeare plays and other plays; and, compare and contrast going to sporting events and attending the theater.

Name _____ Date _____

Venn Diagram



3. **Have your students create their own Shakespeare Company in which they could perform in anything they wanted.**

What tasks would you choose to perform and who would you want the other members of your company to be and why? Would you hire your friends? What kinds of jobs are associated with a performing arts group? What do you think patron services agents, dancers, directors, actors, stage managers, designers, and Technical Directors do? If you could work as part of a Theatre Company, what job would you do?

(1) Have your students create their own Shakespeare Company. Have them research possible plays and characters. Have them research job descriptions, interview classmates to join their company and give them jobs, help them choose a director and set rehearsal schedules and a time to present their plays to the class or school.



Content

Teaching Our Students

This section includes sample lesson plans ready to use or be modified for your students.

The Tempest Study Guide for 6th, 7th, 8th grade

Line of Inquiry: How can imagination create change and build empathy?

Objective:

INVENT

During the process of art and story making students will explore and imagine how to shake up preconceived norms and behaviors of what is "normal", "different", "savage", "culture", "freedom and control" according to their historical context.

LOOK

Students will research, compare and contrast diverse perspectives and derive meaning.

IMAGINE

Students will reflect on how social setting, context and time can alter perception and understanding.

LESSON TITLE Part 1: Storytelling

Description: Re-envision the setting and the protagonist and write your version of the Tempest. Create a storyboard for a comic book, a mini play or a illustrated children's book.

Materials:

1. Images of past sets of the Tempest (access Google images under Tempest stage sets)
2. Writing paper and pencil
3. Drawing paper
4. Black sharpie, oil pastels and /or water colors and /or colored pencils/ markers
5. Storyboard template
6. Tempest entire play <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/full.html>

Resources:

1. Synopsis of AASC Tempest and original Synopsis of Shakespeare's Tempest
<http://www.african-americanshakes.org/productions/the-tempest/>
http://shakespeare.about.com/od/thetempest/a/tempest_Summary.htm
2. Short videos/ YouTube of past re-envisioning of the Tempest:
 - The Tempest Movie Trailer Helen Mirren (Prospero as a woman)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opjhs1mqd1s>
 - The Tempest Trailer x/ Katherine Heigl (placed in the Civil War)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G34WI0hSF1o>
 - Pocahontas Savages
("Reasoning: World travelers land on an island populated by people that they don't understand but love prevails as larger than life war wages between two patriarchs.

Also, let's talk magic. Prospero was completely able to paint with colors of the wind (Ariel) and command all of the voices of the mountain to sing on command (Caliban)". Dru Johnston
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2av9SQsMli8>
- Leslie Nielsen in Forbidden Planet Trailer

(Forbidden Planet takes the basic plot of The Tempest — a magician/scientist and his daughter, watched over by a sprite/robot, live alone on an island/planet, until a tempest/spaceship brings

visitors who shake everything up — but adds an overtly Freudian climax and some nifty special effects.) Josh Kurp

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49c4X0vese0#t=14>

LESSON: Storytelling

Description: Re-envision the setting and the protagonist and write your version of the Tempest.

Create a storyboard for a comic book, a mini play or an illustrated children's book.

Activities/Sequence 3 to 4 sessions

1. Hand out synopsis of the Tempest (The Tempest Summary for students from About Education)
Read with class.
2. Point out main characters in the play and have 9 kids volunteer to act out the characters in front of class.
 1. **Prospero** - the protagonist, usurped and exiled Duke of Milan
 2. **Miranda** - his daughter who has never seen other human
 3. **Ariel** - is Prospero's spirit servant
 4. **Caliban** - Prospero's servants-slave native of the island
 5. **Ferdinand** - Son and heir of Alonso- falls in love with Miranda.
 6. **Alonso** - King of Naples and father of Ferdinand. Alonso aided Antonio in unseating Prospero as Duke of Milan twelve years before
 7. **Antonio** - Prospero's brother- power-hungry and foolish-wants to kill Alonso so he can become king
 8. **Sebastian** - Alonso's brother.-both aggressive and cowardly. He is easily persuaded to kill his brother
 9. **Gonzalo** - An old, honest lord, Gonzalo helped Prospero and Miranda to escape after Antonio usurped Prospero's title.

Have kids each have 2 lines to improv their roles. (Or you can have them read selected lines from the actual Shakespeare play (Tempest entire play <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/full.html>)

3. Have storyboard sheet and have students draw out the sequence of the play (students can use stick figures with certain clothes and wigs or hats to identify characters)

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4. Hand out synopsis of the Tempest by AASC - Read with class

Show various shorts re-envisioning of the Tempest Helen Mirren, Pocahontas, Forbidden Planet, and Civil War

5. Ask for brief summation on how each is like the *Tempest*, and how it's different after each showing

Hand out venn diagram template, or have kids make their own using 2 intersecting circles with 2 video interpretation of the *Tempest* that they liked. Have them compare and contrast.

6. Have them pair and share.
-

7. Have kids collaborate with a group of 4 to make up their own version of *The Tempest* as a short play, a short story illustrated children's book or a comic book. Have them brainstorm time period in history, setting, and character dialogue.

8. Determine roles within the group:

a. researcher for accuracy / b. illustrator-artist/ c. dialogue writer / d. storyboard layout

If a short play - assign roles and set designers along with the other roles above.

9. After finishing - Student perform / show finished books

Summary and further extensions:

1. What were the differences in understanding of character when placed in different time periods/settings? ie. was Caliban a sympathetic indigenous native, or a monster, was Prospero a kind redeeming nobleman, or a power hungry slave owner, etc.?

2. How would students apply these differences in character perceptions due to historical contexts, with how they view issues today? (Civil rights , Marriage equality, voting rights, Immigrant rights, women)



LESSON TITLE Part 1: Envisioning a Solution to the island of Sycorax

Description: Re-envision the ending of the pollution and plastic island of Sycorax

Materials:

1. Images of past sets of the Tempest (access Google images under Tempest stage sets)
2. Writing paper and pencil
3. Drawing paper
4. Black sharpie, oil pastels and /or water colors and /or colored pencils/ markers

Resources:

1. Synopsis of AASC Tempest and original Synopsis of Shakespeare's Tempest
<http://www.african-americanshakes.org/productions/the-tempest/>
http://shakespeare.about.com/od/thetempest/a/tempest_Summary.htm
2. Videos:
 - Sylvia Earle: How to protect the oceans (TED Prize Winner)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43DuLcBFxoY>
 - Captain Charles Moore on the seas of plastic
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7K-nq0xkWY>

Activities/Sequence 1 to 2 sessions

1. Hand out synopsis of the Tempest from the AASC and the (The Tempest Summary for students from About Education). Read with class.
2. Watch both movies about the ocean at risk. Think-Pair-Share over many possibilities on how we can each or collectively help protect the ocean.
3. Have students collaborate in groups of 3 to rewrite a solution to the island of Sycorax that Prospero and Miranda have lived on. Have students choose in their group one student be the designated writer and one student to share. Have groups share out some possible solutions.
4. Individually, have students draw Sycorax before and after pictures showing how their design implemented their solution plan.
5. Use the Principles of Design and Elements of design to review art.
 - **ELEMENTS: LINE - COLOR - VALUE (dark & light)**
 - **TEXTURES- SPACE - SHAPES - FORMS (3-D)**
 - **PRINCIPLES: CONTRAST - UNITY - VARIETY - RHYTHM- PATTERN - BALANCE - MOVEMENT**