



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2009 Volume I: Writing, Knowing, Seeing

---

## Controlling Sight and Knowledge in *The Tempest*

Guide for Curriculum Unit 09.01.05  
by Leszek H. Ward

Students are often unaware of the powerful influence "artists" exert on their daily lives and the extent to which their understanding of the world around them is limited by what they see. Studying *The Tempest* can help remedy this situation by providing students with a powerful metaphor for the artist in the character of Prospero, who is able to use his magical arts to control and manipulate what other characters in the play see and know. Seeing becomes a metaphor for understanding as students are asked to evaluate how various characters see each other, how the audience sees the play, how Europeans saw indigenous peoples, and how students themselves see criminals in need of forgiveness. In each of these situations students will evaluate the extent to which what is seen determines what is known and learn that our frequently limited perspectives often lead to imperfect understandings. The variety of strategies used to achieve these objectives include journals, reading logs, seminar discussions, artistic analysis, and acting.

(Recommended for English and Literature, grades 11 and 12)

---

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University  
For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>