

Prompt: How does Prospero's treatment of the island's natives invite readers to feel about colonialism? More specifically, how does the play invite readers to feel about how indigenous peoples should react to their usurpers. Does *The Tempest* seem to be in favor of rebellion and anti-colonialist ideals or submission of servants/slaves. If so, how? If not, why not?

A reader of *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare might easily conclude that the play is anti-colonialist in nature. This is supported by Prospero's continual mistreatment of Caliban throughout the play and his manipulation of the natives that might lead readers to believe that Prospero is a villainous character. Despite Prospero's violent and manipulative tendencies, the play ultimately invites readers to feel positively towards colonialism and submission of subordinates, as seen by his treatment and subsequent release of Ariel, while providing reason behind his aggression towards others.

Prospero is very clearly the colonial force in the play, and support for him correlates very heavily to the support of colonialism itself. His colonialist ideals are supported by the sympathy that he garners from both readers and characters alike. This can be seen through his telling of his backstory to Miranda, where he explains how he was wronged by his brother and lost his position as the Duke (1.2.88-106). It is only natural for someone to want to get back at the person who stole something as big as dukedom from them. Although Prospero first uses this reasoning to justify his treatment of his brother's ship, it can be extended to the rest of the island as well. His yearning for his lost power and control serves as his true motivation for taking over the island and causes readers to sympathize with him, as we would never want to be stabbed in the back by a family member.

- *This Paragraph will be developed further, talking about the sympathy prospero gets from the reader in moments like the epilogue and the wedding celebration*

Prospero exercises his control over the island consistently throughout the play, which leads to us as readers being drawn to him and ultimately respecting him. From the summoning of a destructive storm to summoning spirits for a wedding celebration, Prospero clearly has full control over his own magic and the island's natives as a whole. While readers today may feel that this dominance over a foreign land is evil and should be faced with rebellion, the opposite is true in the play. As the majority of the spirits, or natives, never explicitly comment on Prospero's behavior, Ariel and Caliban serve as the means of discerning how Prospero's actions are really received. On one hand, Caliban despises his master, going as far as attempting to dishonor his daughter (1.2.347-349). Caliban was once well-loved by Prospero until he attempted to rape Miranda, which is when things started to go down hill. The island was at peace until Caliban slipped up, which suggests that the obedience of servants leads to a perfect world where everyone can coexist and live contently. Ariel and Prospero's relationship backs this up, as Ariel is nothing but obedient to Prospero, leading to his eventual freedom. He is threatened if he tries to gain his freedom without Prospero's permission (1.2.246), but Prospero does end up keeping his promise, releasing Ariel after being a good and obedient slave for so long (5.1.317). Caliban and Ariel correspond to two sides of the same coin. Ariel's eventual freedom as a result of his

submission to Prospero suggests that the play believes that a ruler's subordinates should be loyal above all else, as that leads to a favorable outcome for both parties.

- *This previous paragraph may diverge into a separate paragraph that discusses slave's loyalty more in depth*

Some readers may feel that the play is anti-colonialist because of its display of Prospero's evil and oppressive tendencies. Prospero is clearly aggressive towards Caliban and Ferdinand, as seen through Caliban's view on his torture and the incitement of fear he used on Ferdinand. Caliban explains that "For every trifle are they set upon me: / Sometime like apes that mow and chatter at me... / Lie tumbling in my barefoot way and mount / Their pricks at my footfall" (2.2.8-12). This depiction is truly grotesque and presents Prospero as an unforgiving villain. Although this type of torture is not put onto Ferdinand, he is threatened with an unhappy life if he chooses to "break her virgin knot" before the ceremony (4.1.15). This can be said to be a form of torture itself, and some readers may cite these characters' interactions with Prospero to suggest that the play is not in favor of colonialism and submission. While Prospero's actions towards Caliban suggest unnecessary violence, his interactions with Ferdinand regarding Miranda actually serve to justify his actions. Prospero clearly treats marriage and copulation as very serious topics, and it is made more than clear to Ferdinand that he will be miserable if he does not respect Prospero's wishes. It is known that Caliban attempted to dishonor Miranda at some point, and that is what led to his torture. Knowing how seriously Prospero takes this topic, it can be assumed that Caliban was well aware of Prospero's beliefs about it. Caliban purposefully going against his master's wishes and even going as far as to say "Would't had been done; / Thou didst prevent me, I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (1.2.350-352). Caliban's mistreatment of Miranda and lack of remorse towards the situation is a good enough reason for Prospero to punish Caliban. While it is true that his punishment is overly cruel, the play does not present it as being anti-Prospero, as Caliban is the only person to receive such treatment. Prospero even goes so far as to celebrate Miranda and Ferdinand's marriage, suggesting that all Caliban had to do was respect Prospero's wishes to gain respect himself.

- *This counterargument may be revised or changed completely depending on the rest of this paper*