

## Shakespeare Imaginarium: Workshop Information Pack 3 – *The Tempest* and emotion: feeling politics

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### Aims

In this workshop we discuss ‘empathic intelligence’ in the classroom and consider the importance of emotions to characterisation and plot in *The Tempest* and in teaching. How do emotions permeate and complicate politics in the play? How do empathy and reason complement each other and enrich educational contexts?

### Readings

- Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*.
- Arnold, Roslyn. ‘Empathic Intelligence: The Phenomenon of Intersubjective Engagement.’ Online research paper. Open Access Link: <http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/creativearts/assets/drama/pdf/empathic.pdf>

### Focus points

- Emotional *Tempest*
- Empathic intelligence
- Prosperous teaching

### Emotional *Tempest*

*The Tempest* is a play that wears its heart on its sleeve. It is a stunning compendium of emotional experiences. Characterisation and plot sequences are permeated by emotions that are at times forceful, gentle, changeable and complicated (multiple or ambiguous).

- Discuss how you as a teacher have approached *The Tempest* in the past. How did you respond to the complex emotions at work in the play?
- What are (or might be) the challenges of discussing emotions in a classroom context?
- Have a brainstorm around the room to share moments in the play where emotion is manifested or implied. You might want to write these up on the board so the richness is apparent to all. It is often said that our emotional vocabulary is poor because it is used only at a shallow and general level. Refer to Tom Drummond’s ‘Vocabulary of Emotions’ (<http://tomdrummond.com/emotion-vocabulary/>) to expand the range of terms being applied to emotional moments in the play.
- Consider the conversation between Prospero and Miranda in 1.2.1-188. Spend some time in small groups going through this conversation from start to finish writing down

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- the emotional sequence or trajectory of Miranda, and then of Prospero. What are the emotions they experience and at what points in the dialogue do they occur?
- Reflect on the emotional map you have created of Miranda and Prospero in 1.2.1-188:
    - Identify moments where Miranda and Prospero respond to each other's emotions (by affirmation, modification or contradiction). How important is this responsiveness?
    - How might staging, posture, gesture and voice manifest the changing emotional landscape? How might these theatrical considerations complicate or provide different alternatives for this emotional sequence?
    - How do the emotions you've identified relate to political positioning and actions (i.e. personal, family, gender and state politics)?
  - Has this exercise changed the way you think about the play as a whole and how you might teach it in the classroom?

### **Empathic intelligence**

This focus point invites discussion of Roslyn Arnold's idea of 'empathic intelligence' and its relevance in educational contexts.

Arnold writes in her online article 'Empathic Intelligence':

[L]earning is best achieved in a climate of care and mutual respect. Such care is offered, not imposed, and respects humans' need for autonomy, self-determination, and challenge, as well as their need for security and safety in making mistakes. In this model, learning is a dynamic, democratic process engaging both the past and the present, the felt and the known, the tacit and the visible, kinetic and potential energy. An understanding of this process and the ability to put it into effect generally mark an empathically intelligent person. Such a person harnesses complex intellectual, affective and interpersonal skills primarily for the benefit of students and others for whom they are responsible, and secondarily for the creative self-affirmation which can occur in the service of meeting others' needs.

She describes 'intelligent caring' thus:

Intelligent caring embodies within it attention, engagement and an assessment of the consequences of care. The intelligent carer is mindful of the context in which the need for care arises, and mindful of the need to offer support which mobilises the other's coping strategies in preference to developing co-dependency. For example, engrossment in another's issues can swamp one's critical faculties and run counter to intelligent caring. Nonetheless, a capacity to engage with experience in an attuned, mindful way is necessary to 'data-gather' and learn from experience. Without attention, engagement and the application of intelligent caring inter-subjective experiences are perfunctory.

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- What do you think of Arnold's ideas of 'empathic intelligence' and 'intelligent caring' in the English classroom?
- Here are some key terms from Arnold's article. Discuss how Arnold defines them in her article and explore their meaning, operation and value in the English classroom:
  - 'mirroring'
  - 'self-understanding'
  - 'imagination'
  - 'attunement'
  - 'humanising'
- How alert are you to the interactions between thoughts and feelings within the teacher, within the student, and between teacher and student?
- Can you think of examples from your teaching where consciousness of feelings (by teacher or student) has had a significant effect on teaching and learning?
- What are the shortcomings or dangers (in your opinion) of focussing too much on 'emotional intelligence' while you teach?

### **Prosperous teaching**

In this focus point we will test-run a character exercise for *The Tempest* that could be tried in class. An aim of this activity is to make visible the interactivity of thought and feeling in a selected character and also in the student who is doing the analysis.

Here are some key characters:

- Prospero
- Miranda and Ferdinand
- Caliban
- Ariel
- Antonio and Sebastian
- Stephano and Trinculo
- Alonso

Break into small groups and select a character from this list for a detailed emotional profile. Identify important moments throughout the play for your character – especially moments where emotions feature significantly.

Select two passages to present to the entire group that illustrate different emotions at work in your character. Explain how the emotional state of the character affects his/her reasoning and use of poetic language in the passages. Consider the impact of the passage on its intended

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audience (eg. on other characters or theatre audience) and consider what exactly causes the impact (expression of emotion, logic or reason, rhetorical or poetic language).

- Put yourself in the position of Shakespeare's character and explain how your feelings and thoughts interact and how you'd behave.
- What does this exercise teach you about:
  - Shakespeare's characterisation;
  - Shakespeare's plots;
  - Yourself and your behaviour (especially regarding thoughts and feelings).
- Think about your response to the passage/s. How do our feelings as readers or spectators affect or change our understanding of the character's feelings?
- As a reader or spectator, how do your thoughts and feelings interrelate when you experience these passages? Can you identify what causes an emotional response and what causes an intellectual response in you? How do these responses interact or blend?
- In light of this exercise, if you had to define the term 'prosperous teaching' (a phrase we have invented for this exercise) what do you think it might mean or include?
- Think about other ways (activities, ideas, discussions) in which you might incorporate a focus on the interaction of thoughts and feelings in *The Tempest*.