

### Worksheet: Biblical Allusions in *The Tempest*

The Bible is an important work that has influenced writers throughout the ages. References to famous Biblical stories allow the audience to understand the themes and ideas that the writer is trying to explore. This referral to ideas and themes from the Bible **is a literary technique called a biblical allusion.**

During the Elizabethan and Jacobean era, England was predominantly a Christian country with the majority attending church and civilians could be issued fines if they did not. Therefore, the general population would have been familiar with stories from the Bible.

#### TASK ONE:

Look at the quotes below from *The Tempest* and the Bible. Highlight the quote from *The Tempest* to that which aligns most with the quote from the Bible and the ideas being explored. The first one has been done for you.

Biblical Quote	<i>The Tempest</i> Quote	Ideas Explored
1. But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken (Jonah 1:4)	Hell is empty and all the devils are here (Act 1 Sc2)	Forgiveness for one who recognises their wrongs or forgiveness as an act of charity
2. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us <i>our</i> sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (John 1:9)	For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother. (Act 5 Sc 1)	Suffering, punishment and judgement for those who have done wrong.
3. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment. (Peter 2:4)	'Must ask my child forgiveness' (Act 5 Sc 1)	Those who fight in the path of God/goodness are rewarded and those who do not face eternity in hell.
4. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. (Genesis 37)	'PROSPERO: Hast thou, spirit, Performed to point the tempest that I bade thee? ARIEL: To every article.' (Act 1 Sc2)	The weather as a tool to punish those who have sinned/wronged.
5. Ariel, the lion of God (Isaiah 29:1)	If by your art, my dearest father, you have put the wild waters in this roar, allay them. The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch, but that the sea, mounting to th' welkin's cheek, dashes the fire out. (Act 1 Sc2)	Sibling rivalry and jealousy.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Find a quote of your own from *The Tempest* and link it to the Bible and explain which ideas/ themes they focus on.

TASK TWO:

Using the quotes in task one, write a PEEL/PETAR paragraph exploring the use of biblical allusions in *The Tempest*. An example has been written for you, exploring how the weather is used as a tool to punish those who have sinned.

*The Tempest* begins with a violent storm conjured up by Prospero to ensure he can entrap and punish his sibling Antonio who betrayed him and usurped his position as Duke of Milan. The image of the storm would have clearly been established in the minds of the Jacobean audience, as this is a prominent image in the Bible. The audience would have recognised the storm as a punishment for man's sins and their redemption, reminding them of stories in the Bible such as Jonah and the whale in Genesis.

Jonah is a prophet who rebels against God's commandment and escapes onto a ship. God sends a terrible storm which leaves the crew believing that someone has offended God.

'But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.' (*Jonah 1:4*)

The crew discover Jonah has angered God and he is thrown overboard to save themselves from further punishment. Jonah is swallowed by a whale when he is thrown into the sea. During his three days in the whale's belly, Jonah recognises his error, submits to God's will, is forgiven and freed from the whale to preach the Lord's word.

This story has clear parallels with the story of Prospero. By aligning Prospero with the 'Lord' and giving him the power to send a storm, it is clear he is the ultimate good in the play despite some of his dubious actions. Antonio is sent to the island to contemplate his 'errors' and accept Prospero as the true leader of Milan. The storm foreshadows Prospero's punishment of Antonio and his ultimate forgiveness. Thus, *The Tempest* can be seen as endorsing many of the themes established in the Bible.



**EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:**

1. Read the story of Joseph and his brothers from Genesis 37 in the Old Testament. Note the parallels between the story and themes with those in *The Tempest*.
2. Explore how Prospero can be seen as a metaphor for God in *The Tempest*.