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English 162W
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The New York Tempest: A Modern Interpretation of The Tempest

REFLECTION

The purpose of reimagining *The Tempest* in a modern setting is to emphasize its universal themes and motifs. One of the major themes of *The Tempest* dealt with the concept of control and imprisonment. On one hand, Prospero and little Miranda were exiled to the island and left deserted by Antonio and the rest. On the other hand, Prospero essentially enslaves Ariel and Caliban and uses magic to control the fates of the rest of the cast. Prospero is not necessarily seen as a villain in the play, but this reimagining of the story will put emphasis on his hypocrisy and question the morality of having control over others.

We are keeping the same play form of *The Tempest* to keep the feel of the story consistent. The difference is that the language will be modern, which will add a sense of relatability to the characters. The play will just showcase one act of this story, which involves Charles Prospero being a film producer that was kicked out of his own company by his brother (who had help from a rival film producer, Alonso). Charles is now living in a solitary building in New York in which he has created his own mini city on a stage, and he has homeschooled Miranda to save her from public embarrassment. He has also kept his assistants Ariel and Cal (short for Caliban) with him so he could create the best theatrical performance in the world. When the other producers are nearby, he tricks them into thinking they will be coming for a film deal, only to have them trapped in his own mad world. The scene that we will showcase will have Caliban and Ariel having an intervention with Prospero, essentially explaining that he is not as righteous as he thinks he is, and that there is a better way to deal with all of this.

I was inspired by a movie called *Synecdoche, New York*, which deals with a theatre director trying to create a hyperreal, postmodern play, only to have him slowly lose his mind. I saw a similarity in Prospero in the fact that he spends a lot of time trying to control fates and people, and that he does not really see how he affects other people. Prospero thinks he is in the wrong for being exiled, but does not see how enslaving Caliban is morally wrong.

The audience I intend for the project is anyone, who has read the play and will understand the new take on the story. I will have an explanation to set the context of this reinterpretation, but the rest of the details will need to be picked up on by the readers as I will not spoon-feed every plot point; they will need to see the connections on their own.

One of the major themes of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is that if someone can harness the power to control fate, they can get what they want. The character who has the power to control fate and events in people's lives is Prospero, who uses his sorcery to his advantage. He brings his wrongdoers to his island to teach them a lesson and have them ask for forgiveness. This modern interpretation of *The Tempest* brings Prospero to current day, and there is no magic involved. However, he is able to bring Alonso and company to his theater stage, and has the resources (modern technology) to create illusions and visions similar to how Prospero does in the original story. However, Prospero's hypocrisy is also shown in this new interpretation. He does not always treat Ariel and Caliban well in the original as they are essentially his slaves; he uses them to get what he wants. This is emphasized strongly in *The New York Tempest*. I wanted to create a story that has Prospero realize that his techniques to get what he wants are not necessarily moral, and that confronting Antonio and Alonso in a straightforward manner may be the best option. He also sees how he wronged Caliban ("Cal" in the new play) and Ariel by nearly enslaving them to get what he wants. The stage is a metaphor for both the island and Prospero's need to have control over fates. By putting all of this together, I wanted to tell the ending of *The Tempest* in a new fashion, by having Caliban confront Prospero and explain to him what the right thing to do is.