

## What's so special about Shakespeare's language?

# English

A series of workshops and resources written and performed by Michael Rosen for Shakespeare Week.

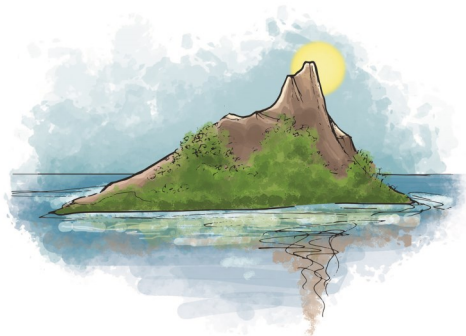
### Workshop Three

Now I want you to imagine an island. It's the same island I talked about in Workshop One where the man was washed up on the beach and Ariel tricked him into thinking that his father had drowned... 'Full fathom five thy father lies...' It's from Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*.

On this island there is also a character called Caliban and at one point Caliban tells us about this island:

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,  
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices  
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,  
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,  
The clouds methought would open and show riches  
Ready to drop upon me that, when I waked,  
I cried to dream again.

(*The Tempest*, Act III Scene 2)



Resource written by Michael Rosen.

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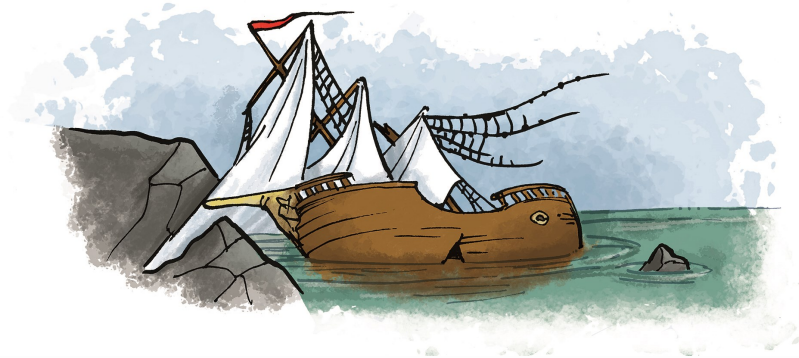
### Workshop Three (continued)

What did you think of Caliban's words?

What is Shakespeare doing with his language this time?

He's trying to create what we call a **contrast**: between the beauty of what Caliban hears and imagines and the sadness he feels when he wakes up to the reality.

When we looked at Shakespeare's winter scene it was very ordinary and down-to-earth. This time it's magical and strange and imaginary.



### Writing suggestions

- ♦ Maybe you've had a lovely dream and you woke up and were sad that it wasn't real. You could try writing about that.
- ♦ Or you could just pretend you have a beautiful dream and you wake up and you're sad that it's not real, so you try to get back to sleep, to dream it again.
- ♦ Think about how Shakespeare wrote those words for Caliban. He used some alliteration ('**s**ounds and **s**weet **a**irs'). He thought about what Caliban could hear ('a thousand twangling instruments') and what he could see in the dream ('the clouds open and drop riches'). What would you most like to see and hear in a beautiful dream?
- ♦ You could also try to write an interesting contrast, something like 'I was awake in my sleep' – the posh word for this is '**paradox**'. Shakespeare and other writers in his time were very interested in paradoxes.