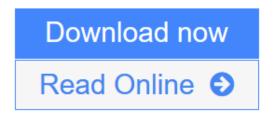


Understanding The Tempest: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents (The Greenwood Press ''Literature in Context'' Series)

Faith Nostbakken



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While *The Tempest* has always been one of Shakespeare's most entertaining and enchanting plays, it continues to stir up passionate debate throughout the world because of its ideas and attitudes toward race, class, political power, and colonialism. This casebook systematically examines these issues, as well as several others, from dramatic and historical perspectives and through parallel contemporary applications. Readers are first introduced to the play with a dramatic analysis that situates the work within Shakespeare's canon and within the romantic tradition. This fresh interpretation also casts much light on the use of imagery and language in setting, character, and thematic development. This casebook draws on the themes and issues introduced, and examines each one in turn with insightful original essays and primary documents. The shipwreck that sets the play in motion is examined in terms of the discovery of the new world, and the prevailing attitudes toward colonialism. A brief chronology of New World events helps situate the historical excerpts. Another intriguing topic explored in the casebook is the diverging Elizabethan views on science and religion, with a particular focus on the role of magic. Primary documents that help readers appreciate the significance of matters of sorcery and the supernatural include excerpts from Reginald Scott's 1584 The Discovery of Witchcraft, James I's Demonology (1597) as well as Marlowe's Doctor Faustus. Other topic chapters examine political power and treachery, as well as society in terms of marriage and the court. A full chapter is also devoted to performance and interpretation of the play. The final Contemporary Applications section investigates current global concerns that parallel those in the play, and help readers appreciate Shakespeare's play in relation to the world around us. Readers are shown dramatically contrasting perspectives on colonialism in Zimbawe. The casebook concludes with a fascinating discussion of the parallel elements of fantasy in *The Tempest* and in literary works by popular contemporary writers J.R.R. Tolkien and J. K. Rowling.

Understanding *The Tempest* follows the successful casebook format developed specifically for the *Literature in Context* series. Following a dramatic analysis, each topic chapter presents an important historical issue in the play, with insightful narrative essays supported by primary documents. In several chapters, brief chronologies of significant related events help readers understand the historical context of the play and its thematic concerns. As a tool for student research and classroom work, educators will appreciate the numerous topics for written and oral discussion suggested at the conclusion of each unit. Suggested readings further complement the content and research applications of the casebook.

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