

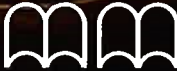
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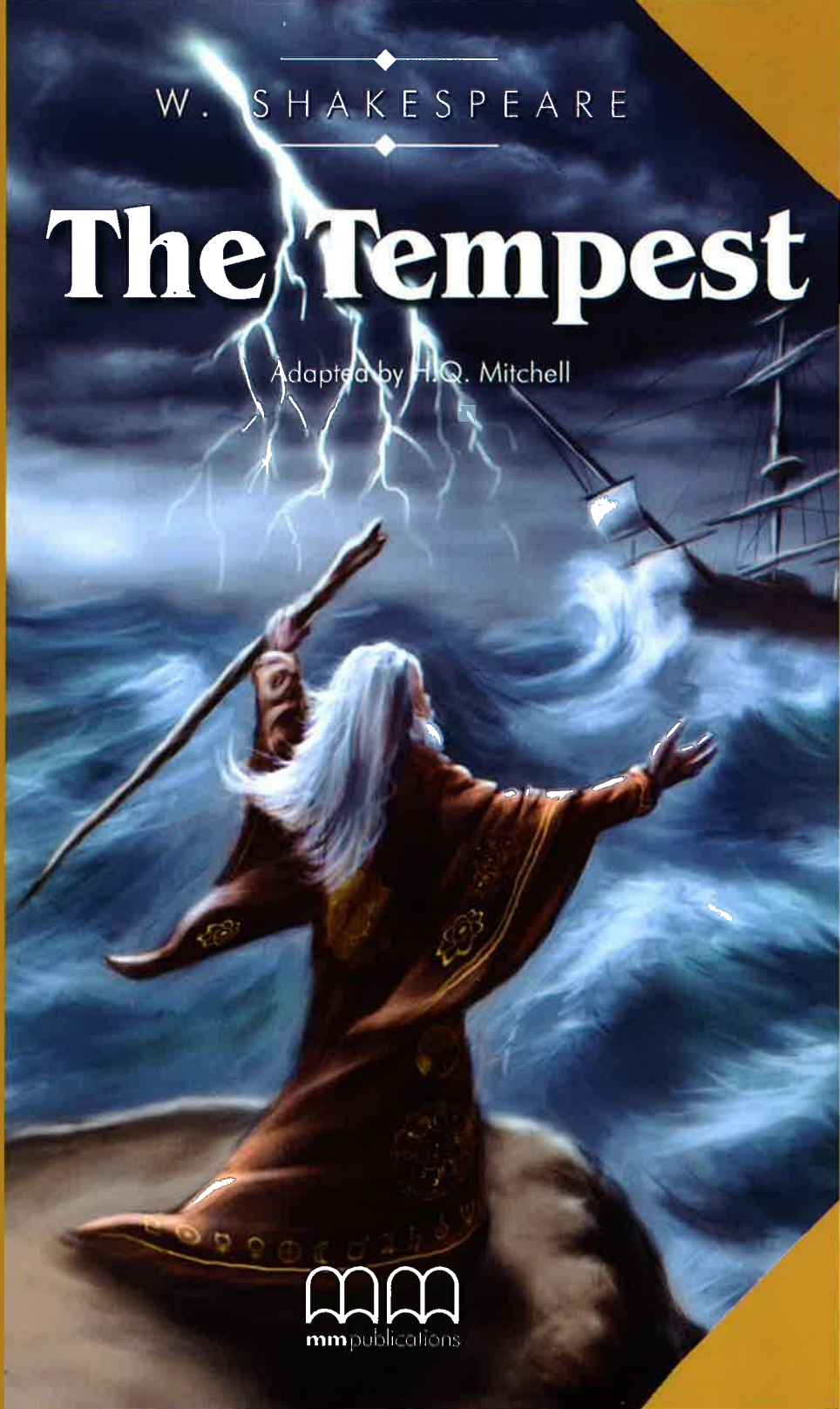
W. SHAKESPEARE

The Tempest

Adapted by H.Q. Mitchell

level
5


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Contents

Chapter 1	4
Chapter 2	9
Chapter 3	14
Chapter 4	18
Chapter 5	24
Chapter 6	30
Chapter 7	35
Chapter 8	40
Chapter 9	46
Chapter 10	52
Chapter 11	58
Activity Section	65
Chapter 1	66
Chapter 2	68
Chapter 3	70
Chapter 4	72
Chapter 5	74
Chapter 6	76
Chapter 7	78
Chapter 8	80
Chapter 9	82
Chapter 10	84
Chapter 11	86

CHAPTER 1

ON A DARK STORMY NIGHT A TALL SHIP WAS BATTLING THE waves. The ship was in the middle of its long journey between Africa and Italy, when the great storm began. The wind howled fiercely and the masts were about to break.

Sailors were running everywhere, attempting to keep the ship from sinking. The captain watched them fearfully, realising that panic was making them lose control of the ship.

"Boatswain!" he called out. He could hardly be heard above the howling of the wind. "Boatswain!"

Finally, the boatswain heard him. He struggled towards the captain. The wind was very strong, and he felt he could move no faster than a snail.

"Here, Master! Your orders?" he asked when he finally reached the captain.

"Take in the topsail, fast! We will overturn, or be smashed on rocks! Speak to the sailors, quickly man, quickly!" shouted the captain.

The boatswain went towards the sailors, who were close together, fearful and uncertain.

"Men ! Men!" he shouted. "Take in the topsail, fast, or we'll sink!" They could barely hear him above the storm's roar. He shook his fist at the sky. "Blow! Blow all you like! Just let us get away from these rocks!"

Then a door opened and a group of passengers came out. They slowly made their way to where the boatswain stood, ordering the sailors to work harder.

He turned, feeling a tap on his shoulder, and looked into the worried face of the most important of the group. It was Alonso, the King of Naples. "Good boatswain, be more careful. We are in danger of sinking! Where's the captain?" asked Alonso.

The boatswain became angry at this interruption. "You can hear him on the top-deck, can't you? You are blocking our work! Stay in your cabins! You're helping the storm, by interrupting me like this!" he shouted.

"My good fellow, please be more patient!" It was Gonzalo who



spoke this time. He was an aged, kindly-looking man. He stood next to the King, as he was the King's most trusted councillor.

"I will be more patient when the sea is!" yelled the man. "Go away, all of you. Do you think these waves care if there is a king on board? Go back to your cabins, and don't trouble me anymore!"

Gonzalo's voice was sterner now. "I know you are doing your best, but don't forget who is on your ship! This is the King you're talking to," he said.

The man shouted back, "I assure you, there is no-one on this ship I love more than myself! You are the King's councillor, but can you command this storm to silence, and give us all peace? If you cannot, then thank God that you have lived this long. Go to your cabin, and prepare yourself for whatever fate is ahead of you!" He paused, looking at Gonzalo mockingly. "No? You can't? Then get out of my way!" he said and pushed his way through the group.

Gonzalo watched him with a hard smile on his face. He turned to



his companions and said, "Do you know that old proverb 'he who is born to be hanged will never drown?' Well, I feel our boatswain's character will get him hanged one day and he will never drown. I certainly hope that is his destiny: if he is saved, we will be along with him. If not, his destiny to drown will be our destiny too!"

The wind howled stronger and now angry waves were crashing onto the deck. Lightning flashes were like a blinding light in the darkness. With a terrifying sound the ship began to sway more than ever. Sailors and nobles alike were pushed off their feet. The boatswain heard cries coming from below where the nobles were. "A curse upon you!" he shouted. "You're worse than this tempest!" As he struggled up, he saw that three of the nobles had followed him. It was Gonzalo and two younger men: Sebastian, Alonso's brother, and his friend Antonio. "Are you back again? What trouble will you cause this time?" he asked angrily.

Sebastian lost his temper. "I hope you lose your voice, you rude



dog!” he said out of his mind. Suddenly a sailor who looked very worried came over to the group. “Water is coming in below! All lost! All lost!” he shouted. People were now running everywhere, shouting in panic and despair. It was obvious to the nobles that the sailors had given up all hope of saving the ship.

“Bah! We will lose our lives because of these fools who call themselves sailors!” Antonio commented sarcastically.

Gonzalo’s face was stern as he said, “Even now, I still believe that this boatswain of ours will not drown. But let’s go down below the deck. The king and his son are praying, we’d better join them.”

“Yes, let us all sink with the king,” Sebastian added. The three men slowly made their way back to the cabins. Through the screaming wind, Gonzalo shouted “What I wouldn’t give for just a small piece of earth! Oh, I would much prefer a dry death!”

