



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1986 Volume II: Writings and Re-Writings of the Discovery and Conquest of America

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## **Shakespeare’s “the Tempest,” the Chronicles of the New World, and E.S.O.L. Instruction**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 86.02.06  
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According to many literary analysts, the basis for “The Tempest” was an account of an actual storm at sea as recorded in the Bermuda Pamphlets in 1609 and illustrates one of the ways in which Shakespeare’s work ties in with the discovery and development of the New World by European explorers. In addition to this particular historical reference, the play contains other elements found in the chronicles of the Indies, showing the influence on the playwright of the literature of the period pertaining to the newly expanded world. Both a detailed description of the Bermuda Pamphlets and parallel references in the chronicles of the Indies and related writings are contained in this curriculum unit in order to illustrate the historical perspective from which Shakespeare wrote. The play itself is analyzed by extracting sections with relatively simple vocabulary and high interest for the purpose of introducing students to the basic plot and suggesting oral and written language arts activities.

The particular emphasis placed in this unit is on Caliban and his relationship with his two language teachers, Prospero and Miranda. The play suggests that Caliban learned his first language from the European colonizers—I feel from a close reading of the text that he was instructed in a second language and because they couldn’t understand his “gabble,” his form of communication was considered worthless. This focus on language acquisition makes “The Tempest” particularly relevant to the E.S.O.L. instructor. When we witness the patronizing tone with which he is taught and his subsequent loss of self, the dark side of second language acquisition is portrayed and we are once again reminded of the importance of balancing the new language with the native tongue.

(Recommended for E.S.O.L. classes, grades 6-12; English literature classes, grades 6-12; Drama classes, grades 6-12; and History (Latin American) classes, grades 6-12)

### **Key Words**

*ESL Teaching Drama Literature Bilingualism Hispanic Latin American*

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