

The Shipwreck from *The Tempest*

The Tempest opens with a spectacular shipwreck. If you made a film of *The Tempest*, you would use special effects and expensive sets and props to make the wreck realistic. The trick in Shakespeare's time—and the fun for us—is to use simple props, costumes, actors, and sound effects to suggest a shipwreck on stage.

Use your imaginations—and bodies—to make the boat, the wind, and the waves. Don't forget sound effects! This scene has 6 speaking parts. But you also need mariners (sailors) and other actors to act out what happens to the ship as it goes down. (Don't worry—nobody gets hurt.)

Characters:

The Shipmaster or Master
The Boatswain (pronounced Bō sun) Alonso, King of Naples
Sebastian, disloyal brother to the King
Antonio, the Duke of Milan
Gonzalo, advisor to the King of Naples
Mariners (sailors) and others attending the King and Duke

Act 1, scene 1, (cut)

[A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard. Enter a Shipmaster and a Boatswain]

MASTER:

Boatswain!!

BOATSWAIN:

Here, master. What cheer?

MASTER:

Good, speak to th' mariners. Fall to 't yarely,
or we run ourselves aground. Bestir, bestir!

[Master exits]

BOATSWAIN:

Heigh, my hearts! Cheerly, cheerly, my
hearts! Take in the topsail. Tend to th'
Master's whistle.

[Enter Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, and others]

ALONSO:

Good boatswain, have care. Where's the master?

BOATSWAIN:

I pray now, keep below.

ANTONIO:

Where is the Master, Boatswain?

BOATSWAIN:

Do you not hear him? You mar our labor.
Keep your cabins. You do assist the storm.

GONZALO:

Nay, good, be patient.

BOATSWAIN:

When the sea is.
To cabin! Silence!
Trouble us not.

GONZALO:

Remember whom thou hast aboard.

BOATSWAIN:

None that I love more than myself. If
you can command these elements
to silence. Use your authority. If
you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long.
Out of our way, I say!

[Gonzalo and the others exit]

Down with the topmast! Lower, lower!
[a cry within] A plague upon this howling! They are
louder than the weather!

[Enter Sebastian, Antonio, and Gonzalo.]

Yet again? What do you do here? Shall we give o'er and
drown? Have you a mind to sink?

SEBASTIAN:

A pox o' your throat, you bawling, blasphemous,
incharitable dog!

BOATSWAIN:

Work you, then.

ANTONIO:

Hang cur, hang, you insolent
noisemaker! We are less afraid to be drowned than thou art.

BOATSWAIN:

Lay her ahold, ahold!
Off to sea again! Lay her off!

[A huge crash. Enter more mariners, wet.]

MARINERS:

All lost! To prayers, to prayers! All lost!

[Mariners exit]

BOATSWAIN:

What, must our mouths be cold?

GONZALO:

The King and Prince at prayers. Let's assist them, for our case is as theirs.

SEBASTIAN:

I am out of patience.

ANTONIO:

We are merely cheated of our lives!

[Boatswain exits]

GONZALO:

He'll be hanged yet, though every drop of water swear against it.

[A confused noise within, mariners and others cry: "Mercy on us!"— "We split, we split!"—"Farewell, my wife and children!"—"Farewell, brother!"—"We split, we split, we split!!"]

ANTONIO:

Let's all sink with the King.

SEBASTIAN:

Let's take leave of him.

[Antonio and Sebastian exit]

GONZALO:

[all alone] Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground. The wills above be done, but I would fain die a dry death.

[He exits]