

Essay 1

QUESTION: *In textual conversations, the later text is often seen as a shadow, lacking originality and the power of the earlier.*

To what extent is this statement true of the two prescribed texts you have studied in Module A?

Introduction: Comparing The Tempest and Hagseed shows how their ideas connect and differ, with Hagseed adding modern viewpoints to create an equally powerful story by adapting to changes in context. This claim is somewhat true because while Hagseed has similar ideas, it reshapes them to suit today's audience, making the story fresh and impactful. Both texts, The Tempest (1611) by William Shakespeare and Hagseed (2016) by Margaret Atwood, focus on art, theater, and forgiveness, with their interpretations blending and clashing. The shift in context—from the Christian ideals of Jacobean times to postmodern and postcolonial values—shows the lasting relevance of these themes despite the passage of time.

- Shakespeare and Atwood both explore the role of theater and art, but Shakespeare uses his play to show it as a tool of control, reflecting his Jacobean ideals through clever dramatic techniques.
- Atwood reshapes this idea, showing theater and art as tools for healing, influenced by her postmodern outlook. By using prose fiction, she creates her own unique take.
- Both writers also highlight forgiveness as a way to find freedom, with Shakespeare reflecting Christian values of kindness. Atwood revisits this theme but interprets it through a secular lens, using third-person narration to reveal Felix's thoughts and emotions.

Conclusion: By studying the connection between The Tempest and Hagseed, readers gain deeper insights into the themes of both texts. Both works remain powerful and original because of the changes in context. Their focus on art, theater, and forgiveness emphasizes the timeless value of great stories.

Essay 2

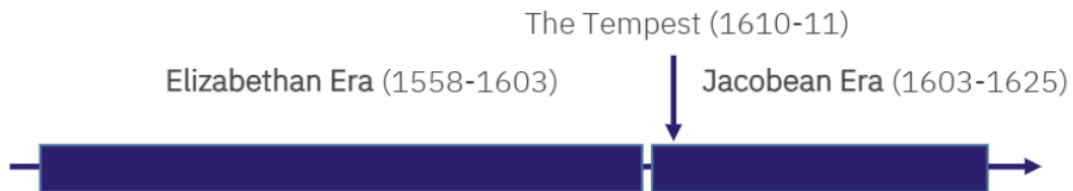
Introduction: The statement is mostly untrue; Margaret Atwood's novel *Hagseed* (2016) reimagines and reshapes Shakespeare's earlier play, *The Tempest* (1611). Atwood's focus on modern ideas, like empowerment and forgiveness, along with her feminist values about women's independence, makes her version challenge how characters and ideas are portrayed in *The Tempest*. Her modern concerns clash with Shakespeare's older humanist and colonial ideas, which are deeply rooted in his work. These differences mean that while *Hagseed* takes inspiration from *The Tempest*, Atwood reshapes its values, making it equally fresh and impactful for readers. This is seen in how Atwood reinterprets power and promotes new views on female independence.

- In *Hagseed*, Felix is a new version of Prospero, and his illusions of control show how performance hides his grief while helping him cope, challenging readers to rethink Prospero's seemingly perfect power.
- Returning to *The Tempest* shows how Prospero's loss of god-like control questions human capability. Atwood's version of Miranda, portrayed as Anne-Marie, shows her feminist ideas about strong female characters.
- Revisiting *The Tempest* reveals how Miranda is limited by the expectations of Jacobean society, highlighting the contrast.

Conclusion: Atwood's retelling encourages readers to see new ideas about performance and female independence. *Hagseed* is not a copy but is just as powerful as *The Tempest*. It challenges readers to rethink their view of the world while emphasizing the importance of these themes.

CONTEXT: Jacobean Era

Jacobean Era



The Tempest was written in the Jacobean Era, which is a term we will use to describe the period in which King James I of Scotland reigned over England: from 1603 to 1625*. While it is important not to confuse this with the Elizabethan Era in your essays (in which many of Shakespeare's plays were written), this is more a technical point than anything else. What we really care about are the values and concerns that existed during this era, specifically around 1610-1611, and these are inevitably going to overlap with the values from the Elizabethan period which ended less than a decade earlier. The subsequent points on context will shed some light on these.


* King James' reign over Scotland alone was from 1567–1625, and in this context is called King James IV.

Renaissance (14th – 17th Century)

The Renaissance, a period of increased social mobility, presented the opportunity for taking on new roles. A firm example of this is the transformation of Michelangelo himself; an emblem for the Renaissance, from small-town administrator's offspring to dazzling artist. Shakespeare was, himself, the son of a glove maker, and he went on to become a favourite of the Elizabethan Court. The celebration of the individual, and the capabilities of mankind, were pivotal to the Renaissance Period. This feature of historical context helps to explain Shakespeare's interest in human malleability and personal transformation.

Literary critics have attributed two ways of self-transformation within the Renaissance Period. The first, lateral transformation; which refers to one's willingness to take on different positions in society. The second, vertical transformation, where the individual has the power to define their transformation; to be reborn as divine, or, live the life of a beast, a lower form of life. Renaissance texts, such as *The Tempest* show the individual's awareness of lateral and vertical transformation. Increased self-consciousness and the prospects of self-definition are central to Shakespeare's text. Characters develop new identities through: arriving, physically, to new destinations; taking on disguise; manipulation of others; forming relationships with others and challenging one's self.

By contextualising *The Tempest* within its Renaissance origin, we are forced to consider the questions of that time with reference to power relations and society's theological stance. More specifically, the play is political and philosophical in a sophisticated Renaissance manner, applying the then latest Machiavellian views on society and rulership. In the 16th century, power was regarded, under the influence of the Italian thinker, as a force for both good and evil, the figure of the prince being central. This ideal ruler had skills which made him "multifunctional": he was a monarch, a strategist, a politician, a philosopher, heredity being doubled by competence in his endeavour to reach his supreme goal of regular leadership. Ruthless action, sometimes taken for tyranny, can be excused, in the **Machiavellian** line of thought, if it serves a superior target, if it is only a necessary tool in the game of power.



Age of Discovery (15th – Early 17th Century)

Even though it had started way before these years with the discovery of America in 1492, the opening of new frontiers and the domination of new lands was very much influencing Shakespeare's mind at the time that the play was written. In fact, it was during his writing of *The Tempest* that what we now refer to as "The First British Empire" was taking place, which saw the colonization of America and Africa and the related emergence of the slave trade. A 'New World' was coming into being, and Shakespeare reflects many aspects of this New World in his play. For instance, Prospero's control over the island can be viewed as a reflection of Europe's voyages of discovery and subsequent colonisation of the **'New World'**, while the descriptions of the Island's native inhabitant, Caliban, as primitive and the Island itself as an Edenic world and a Utopia, seems to parallel the accounts of explorers and early colonists of the Americas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.