



Discussion Questions: *Hag-Seed*

“Words, Words, Words” Book Club—March 2021

1. What are your first impressions of the novel? Were there any passages that stuck out to you?
2. The assignment of the Hogarth Shakespeare project is for writers to select and re-imagine the plays of Shakespeare for a modern audience. How did you feel about Margaret Atwood’s choices in this retelling of *The Tempest*? Were there any parallels that you particularly did or did not enjoy? Were there any that surprised you?
3. Why do you think Atwood named the novel after Caliban instead of Prospero?
4. *The Tempest* is often called a “self-referential” play, with Shakespeare offering small winks to the audience about the magic of theater. It acknowledges the inherent power of the playwright and actors to create a false reality that reflects and enlarges the true reality of his audience. How did you see Atwood incorporating this element? What “winks” did you catch?
5. What did you think about the choice to set this novel in a prison? Did you think *The Tempest* was a good fit for this particular setting? Are there any other plays you would be interested in seeing the Fletcher Correctional Players perform?
6. As a lifelong theater practitioner, Felix has a lot of opinions about Shakespeare that he brings to his classroom at Fletcher. What did you think of his philosophy and teaching methods? Did you have any prior experience with learning or teaching Shakespeare (or anything else) that came to mind?
7. *The Tempest* is a play that deals with themes of vengeance, forgiveness, grief, and justice. It also commonly brings up many arguments about colonialism. How did you see these larger themes addressed and discussed within this novel? Were there any you wish had been explored further?
8. Did you like Felix as a central character? Do you feel as though he was justified in his anger and feelings of injustice? Were you rooting for him? Why or why not? How did the notion of vengeance grow and change throughout the novel?
9. How did you feel about Felix’s relationship to the inmates at Fletcher? Did you feel as though he was simply using them as a means to an end or were his intentions genuine?
10. Atwood drew many direct parallels between Felix and Shakespeare’s Prospero, with the notable exception of Miranda. Why do you think she made the choice for Felix to have lost his daughter? What did you think of Anne-Marie as a proxy? How would the novel have been different if Felix’s daughter had lived?
11. What did you think of the interactive “performance” of *The Tempest*? What about the conclusion of the novel?