CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Tales from Shakespeare

Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb · *1807 · original English text*

The following Tales are meant to be submitted to the young reader as an introduction to the study of Shakespeare, for which purpose his words are used whenever it seemed possible to bring them in. The first tale is The Tempest: an island, an old man named Prospero, and his daughter Miranda.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What can a prose tale for the young keep of a play, and how should these introductions be used so that they lead toward Shakespeare, rather than replace him?

"The following Tales are meant to be submitted to the young reader as an introduction to the study of Shakespeare,"

The preface, the opening purpose

The hosted text is Tales from Shakespeare (1807, PG #573), the Lambs' complete collection of prose retellings. The preface states the purpose exactly: the tales are an introduction to the study of Shakespeare, using his words whenever it seemed possible. The first tale is The Tempest, and its opening is exact: a certain island in the sea, an old man named Prospero, and his daughter Miranda, a very beautiful young lady. Map the book as a complete set of retellings, not as the plays themselves, and not as Charles only: Mary Lamb wrote a large share. Excellent for a wide younger and middle band, as a way into the plays hosted elsewhere on this site. Quote this typography.

KEY CHARACTERS

the young reader of the preface
The addressee for whom the tales are meant as an introduction.

Prospero, and Miranda
The first tale's father and daughter, on a certain island in the sea.

the later company of the retellings
The changing figures of the other plays, kept in prose for the young.

Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb
The brother and sister who made the collection; Mary wrote a large share.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

> *"The following Tales are meant to be submitted to the young reader as an introduction to the study of Shakespeare,"*
>
> The preface

> *"There was a certain island in the sea, the only inhabitants of which were an old man, whose name was Prospero, and his daughter Miranda, a very beautiful young lady."*
>
> The Tempest

Grades 3–5

Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

An Introduction, not a Replacement

THE PREFACE

The following Tales are meant to be submitted to the young reader as an introduction to the study of Shakespeare, using his words whenever it seemed possible. The book says its own law on the first page.

- The preface sentence is exact in both witnesses.
- Teach the tales as a way into the plays, not as a substitute for them.
- Cite this typography.

> *"The following Tales are meant to be submitted to the young reader as an introduction to the study of Shakespeare,"*
>
> The preface

02

A Certain Island in the Sea

THE TEMPEST, THE FIRST TALE

There was a certain island in the sea, the only inhabitants of which were an old man, whose name was Prospero, and his daughter Miranda, a very beautiful young lady. The first tale begins as a family on an island.

- The Tempest opening is exact in both witnesses.
- This is a retelling, not the play; the play is hosted elsewhere on this site.
- A wide younger and middle band can enter here.

> *"There was a certain island in the sea, the only inhabitants of which were an old man, whose name was Prospero, and his daughter Miranda, a very beautiful young lady."*
>
> The Tempest

03

The Other Tales

THE MIDDLE AND LATER BOOK

A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Winter's Tale, Much Ado, As You Like It, The Merchant of Venice, and the rest of the collection follow as separate retellings. Keep them distinct, and keep the path open toward the plays.

- The collection is complete as the Lambs' book.
- Mary Lamb wrote a large share; do not credit Charles alone.
- Some later tragedies are darker; guide younger readers.

04

The Lambs' 1807 Collection

THE HOSTED FILE

PG #573 and the site EPUB are this complete collection. Quote stretches that appear in both, from the preface and the tales.

- Complete Tales from Shakespeare.
- An introduction to the study of Shakespeare, as the preface says.
- For a wide younger and middle band.

A Way into the Plays | A Family on an Island | Brother and Sister | Tales for the Young | Shakespeare's Words Kept

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 3–5

1. The hosted text is Tales from Shakespeare (1807, Project Gutenberg #573), the Lambs' complete collection of prose retellings. The preface is exact: "The following Tales are meant to be submitted to the young reader as an introduction to the study of Shakespeare," The first tale is The Tempest, and its opening is exact: "There was a certain island in the sea, the only inhabitants of which were an old man, whose name was Prospero, and his daughter Miranda, a very beautiful young lady."
2. Map the book as a complete set of retellings, not as the plays themselves. Mary Lamb wrote a large share; do not credit Charles alone. Excellent for a wide younger and middle band, as a way into the plays hosted elsewhere on this site. Some later tragedies are darker; guide younger readers.
3. Quote stretches that appear in both the Gutenberg text and the site EPUB.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #573, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/tales-from-shakespeare/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.