

PROSPERO'S SPEECH FROM WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *THE TEMPEST*
ENGLISH 125.068

PROSPERO.

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's mine own,
Which is most faint. Now 'tis true,
I must be here confin'd by you,
Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
Since I have my dukedom got,
And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell
In this bare island by your spell,
But release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands.
Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please. Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be reliev'd by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your indulgence set me free.

(5.5.1-20)

QUESTIONS

- 1) How many words in this speech have more than two syllables?
- 2) Assuming that Shakespeare was capable of choosing his words carefully (that is, assuming he was sufficiently skilled that he would not have to pick a longer word instead of a shorter one), why do you think he chose short words for this speech?
- 3) Given that short words are the rule in this passage, what happens when Shakespeare breaks that rule and uses a longer word?