The Tempest

This extract is a modern–day adaptation of the opening scene of one of William Shakespeare's famous plays – The Tempest. A tempest is a violent, windy storm, which is an appropriate title for this play as the action starts whilst a storm, which is threatening to destroy a ship carrying Alonso – the King of Naples and others, is raging.

Characters: Boatswain, ship's Master, Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo

Act One, Scene One

The scene starts in the middle of an aggressive storm. There are loud noises of a storm heard from backstage, with thunder and lightning being represented to create a dramatic opening to the play.

(A ship's master and a boatswain enter)

Master: (shouting at the top of his voice)   Boatswain!

Boatswain: *I'm here sir. How can I be of assistance?*

Master: (looking flustered)   *Ah excellent! Go and tell the other sailors that they are required immediately before we're shipwrecked. Hurry! Hurry!*

(The Master exits)

Boatswain: (shouting loudly so that he can be heard above the sound of the storm)   *Men! You must take up your duties with haste. Quickly, take in the upper sail. Come on – you must listen to the master's orders. We cannot run aground or we will all be doomed.*

(Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo and others enter)

Alonso: (attempting to take charge and clearly not understanding the severity of the situation) *Where's the Master Boatswain? Are these men working with sufficient effort?*

Boatswain: (in a strained voice showing he is conscious of who he is speaking to)   *I can guarantee that they are carrying out their duties with great diligence. However, I plead with you to stay below deck sir: it will be far safer for you and your guests there.*

Antonio: *Where's the Master?*

Boatswain: (growing increasingly frustrated)   He's busy! Surely you can hear him giving orders? You're a hindrance whilst you remain on deck; you must stay in your cabins, where you're more likely to be safe. At the moment, you are helping the storm and not us!

Gonzalo: (jokingly slapping the Boatswain on the back)   Don't get wound up now my good fellow!

Boatswain: (losing his temper)   If you think I am wound up then you have not observed the sea, for she is the truly angry party here. Do you think she cares who you are – kings and officials mean nothing to her and her temper! You must realise it is necessary for you to leave and retire to your cabins?

Gonzalo: (looking affronted by this outburst)   I'll have you remember who you're talking to good man.

Boatswain: (speaking plainly)   I am speaking to no-one who I care about more than myself! You're a king's advisor so does that mean you can order the storm to calm down so that we might put down our ropes and rest? May I recommend that you use your authority to tell the storm to stop? If you can't, then I suggest you be grateful for the fact you've lived this long and return to your cabin, where you can wait to die…if indeed it comes to that. Now, for the last time, get out of my way!

(The Boatswain exits)

(Gonzalo and the other men of the court, who are extremely angry about how they've been spoken to, discuss the insubordination of the Boatswain and how he should be hanged for his actions. Meanwhile, the Boatswain and the other sailors continue to try and save the ship from the storm. An argument ensues between the Boatswain and some of the members of the court, with insults being exchanged between the two parties).

(Sailors enter and are soaking wet)

Sailors: (in unison)   It's no use! Pray for your lives while you can. All hope is lost!

(Gonzalo, Antonio and Sebastian remain on deck)

Gonzalo: (looking subdued) The king and the prince are praying. We should take this opportunity to join them since whatever happens to them will happen to us too.

Sebastian: (angrily) I'm out of patience!

Antonio: Yes! We've been cheated of our lives by a bunch of incompetent, drunken sailors – the worst being that wide-chopped rascal, the Boatswain; I hope he dies ten times over!

(Desperate voices can be heard from offstage)

Voices: Mercy! We beg for mercy! The ship is breaking up! We will all be drowned. Farewell wife; farewell children! This is surely the end.

Antonio: (turning forlornly to Sebastian) Come, let's all sink with the king.

(Antonio and Sebastian exit)

Gonzalo: Right now, I would give a thousand furlongs of sea for one, little patch of dry ground: a barren, weed patch; wild heathland; anything if it means that I can be dry when I die!

(All remaining characters exit the stage)

1. What is a tempest? Circle one. (1 mark)

a bad temper   *a type of ship*   *a violent storm*   *a character*

2. What is the master worried about at the start of the extract? (1 mark)

_____

3. Which two words suggest that the Boatswain wants the sailors to react swiftly? (2 marks)

_____   and   _____

4. How does the way the Boatswain talks to the men change? Why does his tone change in this way? (3 marks)

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Why does the Boatswain want the men to return to their cabins? Provide two reasons. (2 marks)

a. _____

b. _____

6. The sailors say, "Pray for your lives while you can." What does this suggest about how they are feeling about the situation? (2 marks)

_____

_____

7. Who does Antonio blame for the situation? Why? (2 marks)

_____

_____

8. Match the words from the text to their closest synonym in the grid.

subdued	pity
mercy	downcast
forlornly	despondently

9. What is Gonzalo's final wish? (1 mark)

_____

10. Place these events in the correct, chronological order from 1 – 5. (1 mark)

The Boatswain explains that the sea's temper does not change depending on your rank. ☐

The Master summons the Boatswain. ☐

Antonio and Sebastian leave to pray with the king. ☐

The Boatswain confirms that the sailors are working hard. ☐

The men are extremely angry about how they've been spoken to. ☐

1. What is a tempest? Circle one. (1 mark)

a bad temper   a type of ship   (a violent storm)   a character

2. What is the master worried about at the start of the extract? (1 mark)

The storm and the ship becoming shipwrecked.

3. Which two words suggest that the Boatswain wants the sailors to react swiftly? (2 marks)

haste and quickly

4. How does the way the Boatswain talks to the men change? Why does his tone change in this way? (3 marks)

• Initially he is polite as it says in the stage directions 'in a strained voice showing he is conscious of who he is speaking to' which shows he isn't showing his true emotions. He uses words like 'plead' and says he wants the guests to be safe.
• He then becomes 'increasingly frustrated' when the men still don't listen to him. He uses words like 'hindrance' to describe the men but still explains that he wants the men to be safe.
• By the end of the exchange he 'loses his temper' and 'speaks plainly' which shows that the men aren't listening to his warnings. He explains that he doesn't care about anyone aboard more than himself and is no longer being polite to the guests.

5. Why does the Boatswain want the men to return to their cabins? Provide two reasons. (2 marks)

a) so they can be safe
b) so they don't get in the way of the sailors working on the deck

6. The sailors say, "Pray for your lives while you can." What does this suggest about how they are feeling about the situation? (2 marks)

By saying 'while you can' it suggests that there isn't much time left until the ship is destroyed by the storm and so even a quick and simple task like praying might not be achieved in time.

7. Who does Antonio blame for the situation? Why? (2 marks)

The sailors because he says they are drunk and incompetent.

8. Match the words from the text to their closest synonym in the grid.

subdued		pity
mercy		downcast
forlornly		despondently
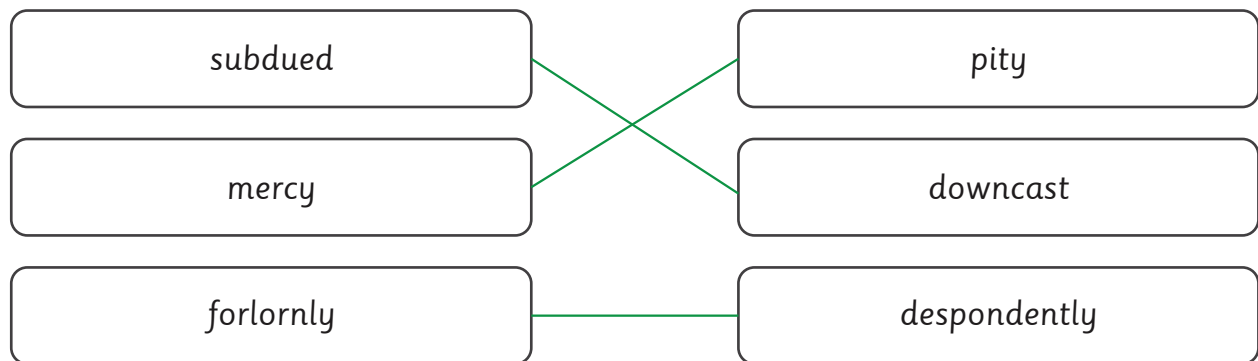
9. What is Gonzalo's final wish? (1 mark)

To die on dry land or be dry when he dies.

10. Place these events in the correct, chronological order from 1 – 5. (1 mark)

The Boatswain explains that the sea's temper does not change depending on your rank.　　`3`

The Master summons the Boatswain.　　`1`

Antonio and Sebastian leave to pray with the king.　　`5`

The Boatswain confirms that the sailors are working hard.　　`2`

The men are extremely angry about how they've been spoken to.　　`4`