Far, far away, upon the shore of a strange island that was forever wrapped in mists that the sun changed into moving curtains of gold, there sat an ageing man and his young, lovely daughter. They were staring out to sea. About the man’s shoulders was a blue cloak, embroidered all over with silver, and beside him on the sands lay a carved staff and a book as thick and richly bound as a bible. Sometimes his hand rested on the book, and sometimes upon his daughter’s arm, as if to comfort her, his face was calm; hers was pale and frightened.

They were watching a ship that was about to be smashed into pieces. A tempest had seized it, an uncanny fury of the elements that seemed to enclose it in a swirling black bubble. As it heaved and tossed, its masts scribbled frantic messages against the blotchy sky, and its rigging all fell down like a madman’s hair. Tiny figures, black as fleas, and with patched white faces, clung where they could; and shrieks and screams, small as the squealing of mice, drifted to the watchers on the shore. Then it was over. Fire, liquid as blazing ink, ran along the yards. The timbers snarled and cracked, the ship split, and was lost. The tempest subsided, the dark bubble dispersed, and the sea was calm.

“Be collected,” comforted the father, his arm about his daughter’s trembling shoulders: “no more amazement: tell your piteous heart there’s no harm done.” He spoke the truth. He himself, Prospero the enchanter, has raised the storm and, as he promised his daughter Miranda, not a soul had been lost. He had, by his strange power, brought them all safe to the island.

He stood up, and, frowning, began to pace to and fro, making little yellow tempests in the sand, which his long, heavy cloak smoothed away, so that he seemed to have walked, invisibly, on air. Silently, Miranda watched…

From Shakespeare Stories, by Leon Garfield and Michael Foreman

1. In the first sentence the island is described as ‘strange’. What other description in this sentence supports this idea?

2. ‘There sat an ageing man and his young, lovely daughter’. Which two words in this sentence contrast the ages of the two characters.

3. In the first paragraph what three items suggest to us that this man is able to do magic?
4. Why do you think Prospero sometimes has his arm ‘rested on the book, and sometimes upon his daughter’s arm’?

5. What were Prospero and Miranda watching?

6. ‘Its masts scribbled frantic messages against the blotchy sky’
If the masts were really writing messages in the sky, what do you think they would be saying?

7. Which two words in the text tell us the ship was being thrown around by the storm?

8. What words and phrases tell us the sailors on board the ship were scared?

9. ‘Be collected,” comforted the father.’ What does Prospero mean?

10. How many people had died in the storm? Use evidence from the text to support your answer

11. ‘He stood up, and, frowning, began to pace to and fro’.

   A Circle the two synonyms for ‘frowning’
   smiling     glaring     grimacing     laughing

   B Why do you think Prospero was frowning?

12. ‘Silently, Miranda watched’.
How do you think Miranda is feeling?