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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2008 Volume I: Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare

Race and Gender in Shakespeare and the Art of Rhetoric

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by Marialuisa Sapienza

This unit is primarily focused on the analysis, interpretation, and role of rhetoric in identifying and determining race and gender in some of the most important plays composed by William Shakespeare in comparison with today's expressions and/or belief(s) either in writing or in speech. The unit will start with the following two essential questions: "How do race and gender contribute to my individuality?" and "How do certain beliefs become transparent and obvious in the words I use?" It will present various documents: excerpts from *Macbeth*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Go Back to Black* by K.A. Dilday, published in *The New York Times*, February 27, 2008, *The Words We Use to Talk About Race*, published in *The New York Times*, March 3, 2008, and *Think Gender Is Over? Think Again* by Susan Faludi, published in *The New York Times* on June 15, 2008. Various written documents will be analyzed in order to understand, to compare and contrast, to synthesize, and to evaluate and discuss the concept of race and gender, and the words or phrases that are used to identify or stereotype, and relative causes and effects. The unit will also require numerous writing activities and a final project - a documented essay and a presentation, or a simple documented visual for those students who have special needs.

(Recommended for College English, grades 11 and 12)

(Developed for College English and AP English Literature and Language, grades 11-12; recommended for English, grades 11-12)

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