



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
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## **English Language Learners (ELLs) Investigate the Identity of Shakespeare and His Characters**

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Many teachers tend to stay away from using challenging subject matter such as Shakespeare with English Language Learners (ELLs). Do not be afraid! This curriculum unit was created with this in mind and is for middle school ELLs although it can be adapted to include high school ELLs or struggling readers at any secondary level. It spans four weeks and uses three Shakespeare plays: *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. The reading process is scaffolded by using comic strips, children's versions and original acts/scenes from the plays.

In this unit, students will focus on identity: their own, Shakespeare's, and that of his characters. As they have recently immigrated here, they are acclimating themselves to a new way of life, culture, language, country, and school system. In addition, they are going through adolescence! Imagine the turmoil of this experience for a moment. In fact, it might involve enough traumas to rival a Shakespearean tragedy! In scaffolding this process of learning about and analyzing self, Shakespeare, and then Shakespeare's characters, students will be able to better develop and comprehend the meaning of identity, answering the questions: Who am I? and What are the characteristics that make me unique from others?

(Developed for English Language Learners and English Language Arts, grades 6-8 multi-grade; recommended for English Language Arts for English Language Learners, grades 6-12 with modifications)

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