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

To See or Not to See? A Visual Approach to Identity in Shakespeare

Guide for Curriculum Unit 08.01.05, published September 2008

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This unit was written for eighth grade students enrolled in an Art I high school credit course. Concurrent to the teaching of this unit in the art class, the students will be involved in a unit of instruction on *Romeo and Juliet* in their English class. The focus of the unit will be on identity and how identity is communicated visually. We will examine how identity is communicated in Tudor portraits and then have the students use the techniques of Tudor artists to create their own "portrait" of a Shakespearean character. During this unit the art students will select one play (*Othello*, *Macbeth*, or *The Taming of the Shrew*) to explore and will look in depth at one of the main characters from their chosen play. I want them to learn how identity is conveyed, both by writers and artists. They will be exposed to the complex characters of Shakespeare and how he developed those characters. They will also be exposed to the development of portraiture, and how artists contemporary with Shakespeare were also creating "documents" showing identity. This in turn will enable them to begin to be able to read portraits for their complex, deeper meanings.

(Developed for Art, grade 8; recommended for Art, Middle and High School grades 8-12)

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