



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2009 Volume III: Shakespeare and Human Character

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## **That Lady is Loca! or Speech as the Main Method of Characterization in Shakespeare's Plays**

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In the North Carolina 12th grade English curriculum, students are expected to understand the methods of direct (the author stating what a character is like) and indirect characterization (the author showing what a character is like) in order to analyze characters. In a play, there is no direct characterization; in other words, the playwright does not tell the reader, "Macbeth is ambitious." Instead, all character analysis is dependent on the different types of indirect characterization. Indirect characterization is demonstrated through a character's speech, private thoughts, actions, looks, and/or the effect he/she has on other characters. In this unit, students will focus on speeches as the main method of characterization that Shakespeare uses. The students will identify the other methods of indirect characterization within the speeches and analyze characters in a more holistic manner. Through their analyses, the students will also work through two true but seemingly contradictory aspects of speech: in one respect, they must be aware that they reveal the type of people they are through the things they say and the manner in which those things are said; on the other hand, they must be careful to not always take what other people are saying at face value.

Keywords: Shakespeare, speeches, characterization, EC, disabilities, IEP, character analysis, Macbeth

(Developed for English, grade 12; recommended for English and Language Arts designed for High School Special Education, grades 6-12)

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