



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

"A Tide in the Affairs of Men": Looking at Leadership in Shakespeare's Roman Plays

Guide for Curriculum Unit 09.03.06, published September 2009
by Terri Blackman

A leader needs to know what to do and when. It is essential that today's students, who will become the productive citizens of tomorrow, learn to evaluate public figures, policymakers, and leaders. History provides examples, but we find more engaging lessons from a discerning master of human character: William Shakespeare. We find a wide range of leadership models in many of his plays, notably in the Roman Plays: *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

This unit, embedded in a larger study of ancient Rome, was designed primarily for sixth grade as part of a yearlong theme of leadership. While there are research and writing components to the unit, the core elements are discussion and debate through Socratic seminar. *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* present leaders who exhibit characteristics affecting the outcomes of their projects. Students identify these characteristics, determine how they affect the results of the action, and theorize the results of a different outcome. They pinpoint passages that reveal good or bad leadership and perform those scenes, along with scenes rewritten to show an alternate outcome. Peripheral goals include health and wellness. Identifying the traits that constitute a positive leader can affect the personal choices that children make.

(Developed for Social Studies, grade 6; recommended for Social Studies, World History, Language Arts, Reading Comprehension, and Expository Writing, grade 6, and can be adapted higher)

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use