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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2010 Volume I: Connecting the Visual to the Verbal in the Classroom

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## **Examining Poems about Love and Loss**

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by Karen Scher

Leonardo da Vinci, the master of art and science, is said to have been asked the great secret of his creativity and brilliance. His answer? "Saper Vedere," or to know how to see. By studying poetry, with a focus on sonnets, elegies, and ecphrasis, my hope is to arm my students with the tools they will need to know how to "see" literature, poetry and art in a deeper and more meaningful way.

Unlike da Vinci, my 11<sup>th</sup> grade AP English Literature students often struggle when they attempt to examine, not to mention articulate, what they see. Many students resist this process of examination. Furthermore, when faced with the daunting task of studying poetry, many students are stopped in their tracks. "I hate poetry" is a phrase I hear often.

Accordingly, I will work to counteract these feelings about poetry in my unit, "Examining Poems about Love and Loss," which will take place in my Advanced Placement English Literature course. This unit, devoted to sonnets, elegies, and ecphrasis, will take approximately four weeks, during which time I will meet with students every other day for one hundred minute blocks.

(Developed for AP English Literature, grade 11; recommended for AP English Literature, American Literature, and World Literature, grades 11-12)

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