



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2011 Volume I: The Art of Reading People: Character, Expression, Interpretation

An Unforgettable Snapshot of Reading Character in *The Help* and *Romeo and Juliet*

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This unit will be taught in my 9th and 10th grade English courses. The goals of this unit are to teach students about characterization and character analysis in fictional and nonfictional texts and to discuss and dissect characters from the Deep South in the early 1960's and Elizabethan England. My English I course is an introduction to fiction and the author's craft. Specific attention during the first half of the year is devoted to plot and setting, character, narrator and voice, and comparing themes. Of the aforementioned literary elements students in both 9th and 10th grade struggle the most with analyzing the methods a writer uses to reveal character. Therefore, this unit seeks to introduce various authors' techniques for developing characters via film clips, text excerpts, and audio presentations. Additionally, students need to build mental stamina for reading and deepen their comprehension skills, so short stories, primary sources, prequels, and translated versions of text are studied to accommodate struggling and proficient readers.

While character analysis is the specific focus of this unit our studies will also focus on critical thinking skills of evaluation and synthesis. To accomplish this task students will perform a series of writings that require them to research, interview, and adapt text to demonstrate their in-depth knowledge of multi-dimensional characters that they encounter before reading a complete novel or drama.

(Developed for English I/II, grades 9-10; recommended for Middle School Literacy, grades 7-8, and English I-IV, grades 9-12)

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