



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2011 Volume II: Love and Politics in the Sonnet

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## Teaching History through Poetry

Guide for Curriculum Unit 11.02.04, published September 2011

by Anjali R. Kamat

In this unit, students will become familiar with how to read poetry and learn how to make inferences about the historical circumstance of the poems they read. The unit, designed for seventh-grade students in a Humanities class that addresses both English and Social Studies standards, will help students gain a deeper understanding of the Renaissance through the study of the Shakespearean sonnet. The skills students will acquire during this unit will also help them understand how to make inferences about the speaker, reader, and historical circumstance when reading forms of poetry other than the sonnet. Students will begin with familiar forms of poetry before moving on to closely examine a selection of Shakespeare's sonnets and discover what is revealed through the speaker and intended reader about the poems' cultural and historical circumstances. Students will develop the skill of making inferences from poems and then use those inferences to construct historical context, which they will compare with their readings from the history textbook. Finally, students will write a sonnet series of their own which will be discussed by their classmates.

(Developed for English Language Arts and History, grade 7; recommended for English Language Arts and History, grades 7-9)

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