



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2015 Volume II: Explaining Character in Shakespeare

Tragedies and Plots Shaped by Characters of Shakespeare and Navajo Oral Myths

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by Irene Jones

In my unit for fourth grade English language Learners I will compare two characters in a Navajo oral myth of the kind our students hear at home and at school, *Changing Bear Maiden*, with two characters from graphic novels based on Shakespeare plays. My students sometimes lack the reading abilities for their grade level; however, I still need to teach them using fourth grade standards. Fourth grade reading standards and standardized assessment emphasize reading comprehension. Determining character traits and motivation, together with plot development, are the main standards that students need to learn. The students will compare the actions of Tingly Woman in *Changing Bear Maiden* with Kate from *Taming of the Shrew*, and Coyote will be compared with Iago from *Othello*. The characters in the stories of oral myths create the course of the plots of the stories. When oral myths are retold, they are told in a way that leaves little mystery in solving character traits, or character motivation. The only mystery is the outcome, usually ending with a moral to be learned. This unit will allow students to identify character traits and motivation, and to learn how motivation changes the course of the plot.

(Developed for Reading and Writing, grade 4; recommended for Reading, and Writing, grade 5)

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