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

Examining Shakespeare's Characters, Character's Choices and the Consequences to Make Them Relevant to Middle School

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So why is it that William Shakespeare—a long dead author whose plays were written for playhouses very different from today—should be celebrated as an author of enduring significance? He was a master of telling a gripping story and he has this uncanny ability to render personality that makes his personages seem so *real*. With this unit, I want to provide my sixth grade students an early exposure to Shakespeare and determine how his characters are still relevant and similar to the students themselves when they need to make choices. We will study the personalities and choices the characters make in Shakespeare's two plays, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*, while first reading the graphic novel interpretations of the plays. This will act as a springboard for my students to examine how the plot unfolds based on the decisions the characters make or how they respond. Next, we will compare the graphic interpretations with segments of the original verse to dig deeper into the thoughts and emotions of the characters.

(Developed for English/Language Arts, grade 6; recommended for English/Language Arts, grades 6-9)

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