



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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

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## Shaping a Multi-Dimensional Villain: Richard III

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In this unit, 10<sup>th</sup> grade students, in an accelerated English class, will explore Shakespeare's craft in creating the title villain in *Richard III*, afterwards will learn something about the historical Richard III from a modern literary source. Students will be tasked first with answering, Who was the *literary* Richard III? Through classroom read alouds, scene analysis, and theater games, students will collect evidence to respond to this guiding question. In the individual lessons, we will carefully examine Richard's soliloquies, his manipulative performances before other characters, and various epideictic speeches. After studying the play, students will compose an original soliloquy in which Richard justifies his actions as given in the play. The class will then read Josephine Tey's novel *The Daughter of Time*, which presents historical evidence to complicate the villain created by Shakespeare. Students will document details from the novel that contradict the presentation of Richard in the play in order to answer, Who was the *historical* Richard? Students will craft their response in the form of a eulogy for the historic king. The main objective is for students to analyze fiction and nonfiction depictions of Richard III and come to an understanding of how historic figures are shaped in later times.

(Developed for English II CAS, grade 10; recommended for English/Literature, grades 9-12)

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