



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

The Question of Desire: A Comparison of Love in Shakespeare

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Shakespeare presents different views of desire and love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*, respectively. These plays complement one another while also existing at opposite ends of a spectrum for readers to analyze. Is love merely the lucky result of good timing or are we fated to fall for a predetermined person? One play is a comedy and the other is a tragedy, but how did the decisions made by the characters determine these genres? What was Shakespeare trying to tell his audience about love? Through examination of these questions, the class will consider character motivation through action and words in both plays, acting out scenes such as Romeo and Juliet's first meeting as well as the play put on by uneducated actors in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Students will also work together to synthesize Shakespeare's text into a modern format while making a soundtrack suited to different characters, using both music originally inspired by these plays and modern music. Finally, students will participate in a Socratic seminar where students will work together to consider the decisions made by individuals within both plays, defending a point-of-view as they take on the persona of one of these characters.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 7; recommended for English Language Arts and Drama, grades 7-12)

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