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## Race and Gender in Shakespeare and the Art of Rhetoric

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### Introduction

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This unit is primarily focused on the analysis, interpretation, and role of rhetoric in identifying and determining race and gender in some of the most important plays composed by William Shakespeare in comparison with today's expressions and/or belief(s) either in writing or in speech. It is appropriate for College English 3, College English 4, AP English Language and Composition, and AP English Literature. The unit will start with the following two essential questions: "How do race and gender contribute to my individuality?" and "How do certain beliefs become transparent and obvious in the words I use?" The unit will present various documents: excerpts from *Macbeth*,<sup>1</sup> *The Taming of the Shrew*,<sup>2</sup> *Hamlet*,<sup>3</sup> *Othello*,<sup>4</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*,<sup>5</sup> *Go Back to Black* by K.A. Dilday, published in *The New York Times*, February 27, 2008, *The Words We Use to Talk About Race*, published in *The New York Times*, March 3, 2008, and *Think Gender Is Over? Think Again* by Susan Faludi, published in *The New York Times* on June 15, 2008. The unit will analyze various written documents in order to understand, to compare and contrast, to synthesize, and to evaluate and discuss the concept of race and gender, and the words or phrases that are used to identify or stereotype, and relative causes and effects. It will also require various writing activities throughout the entire unit together with a final project that will be in the form of a documented essay and a presentation, or a simple documented visual for those students who have special needs.

### Rationale

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In the last five years, I have been teaching Language Arts in Cooperative Arts and Humanities, New Haven, Connecticut. My school is a public magnet school for visual arts. This is a relevant factor. In fact, all the students who attend it come from the Greater New Haven area and choose this school because they want to develop their specific artistic interests. It is also fascinating to me because I have the opportunity to engage my students' arts interests and accomplish tasks that are normally considered "boring."

Demographically, my students come from all possible backgrounds ñ 49% African-Americans, 35 % White and 16% Hispanics. I have a group of ten students who are not native speakers and do not have an ESL teacher in

the school. About twenty-four other students have various special needs. They are included in all my classes with the exception of the Honors, but the Special Education teacher co-teaches with me and works with all students irrespective of their abilities or special needs. This is particularly valuable because it helps overcome the barriers of diversity. About ten percent of all the juniors excel in both writing and reading. All my classes are good examples of the "melting pot" pattern with very effective and positive results as far as learning is concerned. In fact, I constantly see substantial improvements in both the struggling and proficient students.

Our curriculum goals are to develop an understanding and an appreciation of the variety of texts we analyze. The curriculum also requires that students respond to these texts critically and individually in order to achieve a true independence of thought and to build the character of a "real" citizen. Consequently, at the beginning of the school year, my students and I determine an overarching essential question, which will lead us through the various units. This essential question is important because it helps them understand the material we cover and responds to the curriculum requirements. It is also a steady reference for the promotion of concrete-operational thinking to accept the self and others, to explore and understand individual contributions, and to improve the social life of any human being. For my juniors this overarching essential question is: What is the author's theory in relation to mine? For this unit, I will rewrite the essential question in more specific terms: What is Shakespeare's theory about race? What is Shakespeare's theory about gender? Do these theories resemble and differ from my own? Why?

Another factor needs to be considered: my students tend to reject the so-called "appropriate" curriculum because it seems irrelevant to today's values and interests. Each unit needs to be planned around their interest and appropriate zone of proximal development in order to result in an effective learning segment with a high percentage of proficiency. This allows me to overcome the problem of lack of motivation and to make learning real and not "boring." I know my students are attentive observers of today's reality. They easily sympathize with people who live in disadvantageous conditions or who suffer from any form of discrimination or prejudice, and from injustices connected to race or gender. They share and make these issues their own. Consequently, my unit will be based on the analysis of these two concepts in Shakespeare's works as well in today's society. I know many of my students use epithets they learn from pop music or TV shows and they use them easily without pondering their real meaning and possible effects.

Timing is an important factor for the unit's failure or success. If I planned it too early in the school year, I would not be able to use the deep knowledge I have acquired of each of my students, and take advantage of their complete trust to overcome their spontaneous opposition to and rejection of the proposed topic. Owing to these considerations, I plan this unit at the beginning of the second marking period because I know that my students will do anything I will ask of them by then. They will have internalized the overarching essential question and the Socratic method that I deem pivotal in the free development of their skills and thoughts.

As I plan my unit, the need for differentiated instruction plays an essential role. I think it is the key for closing the gap because each student is so different and unique that a standard, linear approach would be a complete failure. The theory of multiple intelligences suggests that the individual has strengths and weaknesses in one or several areas. Gardner's multiple intelligence theory suggests the cultivation of desired capabilities. This means each student has a very specific skill. This skill needs to be valued because it helps the student reinforce his/her self-esteem with a direct improvement of the student's learning. Consequently, I will focus on the desired capabilities of each student together with a varied and personalized approach. Following the district's requirements, which I share, my goal is to engage the students in all the stages of the critical thinking process developed by Bloom's Taxonomy throughout the entire unit.

All my classes aim at the understanding, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of literary works from various genres. However, the same curriculum requires one or more units based on Shakespeare's works. Eleventh graders are to study *Macbeth* whereas the twelfth graders analyze *Hamlet*. Another important factor I have to consider is that my school has a well organized Theater Department where many of my students major. Shakespeare is always a challenge because the theater students tend to think they already know everything, whereas the others can be easily diverted by the language difficulty. As a teacher, I feel the emerging necessity to teach how to read from different stances, to express oneself in different modes, and to shift between varied speech events. This requires me to look to literacy as "critical" literacy, as I prepare a diverse population for citizenship and employment. At the same time, the study of Shakespeare is pivotal to my students to scaffold their skills in understanding, interpreting, analyzing, selecting, and drawing conclusions about themes that are still an essential and integral part of each individual life. The Elizabethan works can play an essential role in my students' growth toward the ultimate goal of "real" independence of thought and spirit.

## Unit Overview

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This unit will definitely offer them the opportunity to approach the curriculum requirements from a thematic perspective. It will also allow me to pursue the goal of making each student a more independent citizen who is sensitive to issues of diversity. My students need to understand the concept of Shakespeare's contemporaneity through issues that are embedded in our life. Ultimately, they will learn to read the "world" and become independent thinkers.

My curriculum unit will be built around the theme of race and gender and how we use language to communicate these concepts. The essential questions will be: "What is Shakespeare's theory about race? What is Shakespeare's theory about gender? How do they resemble and differ from my own? Why?", "How do race and gender contribute to my individuality?", and "How do certain beliefs become transparent and obvious in the words I use?" Specifically, the unit will start with an activity where the students will reflect and respond to some essential questions: What is your definition of race? What is your definition of gender? I will also expect them to write as many expressions commonly used in referring to race and gender as they can think of, together with detailed examples they can draw from their experiences and observations, as well as from literary works they already studied. They will be given time to share their responses and to prepare a poster we will keep on the board for the duration of the unit with notes from the class discussion. This is an essential step because it will be the focal point we will continuously refer to, revise and improve in order to complete the study of our theme. They will have to analyze their individual example(s) closely and determine how and whether words and/or phrases contribute to the concepts of race and gender. Of course, this pre-reading activity will tap into their prior knowledge, because they will be able to reflect, synthesize and evaluate their "reality." It will place them in Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, since their motivation will be aroused to the point at which they need the teacher's guidance to learn.

After this initial activity, we will read *Go Back to Black* by K.A. Dilday (*The New York Times*, February 27, 2008) which illustrates the various terms used to identify the Africans in different countries. K.A. Dilday also explains the reason behind the various choices that have been made, and emphasizes that certain choices like the one to use the term African ignore the experience black people have, which is more a unifying one than a dividing one. This essay will be immediately followed by the letters some readers sent to the editor of *The New York*

*Times*. I will ask my students to read and identify all the terms that were used to identify a certain group of people and the rationale behind those choices. At this point they will have to choose two terms they deem most interesting and analyze where and how they are currently used. I will require them to research the field of hip-hop and to determine exactly how the term or terms they are focusing on are used, and to consider the eventual effects and causes. This document, as well all the others aforementioned, will follow a precise structure to help my students understand, analyze, discuss, synthesize and evaluate. In fact, I will require them to do the first reading of the written document as homework and to determine the meaning of all the unknown words by either using the context or the dictionary. The first close reading will focus on the technique of highlighting whatever strikes their attention and annotating the text in the margin. Since I will consider different levels for each class, I will include modifications to adjust the activity to the various learning needs. The lowest levels will only have to write brief reflections or questions whereas the most advanced group will also have to identify the thesis statement, main ideas, facts, opinions, tone, purpose, and other features that are relevant to the students.

The second close reading of the document will require the writing of a response that will cover their first reactions, initial understanding, and a more considerate critical stance or discussion of specific features in the documents either identified by the students themselves or specifically chosen by me. For those students who are at a more advanced level, their first response to the documents will analyze the subject, the purpose, the author's thesis and the tone. A thorough discussion will follow with continuous connections to present day reality. A second, more detailed analytical response will follow. The lowest groups of students will evaluate the author's thesis, purpose and tone, whereas the advanced ones will continue to analyze specific features I will determine. To conclude the study of each document, I will ask the students to write a synthesis of the author's perspective. The length and depth of this assignment will vary according to the students' levels. Another section of the same unit will be reserved for the discussion/comparison of the various texts and the development of critical thinking. The unit will be concluded with the writing of a document: a synthesizing essay in which each student will be required to take a precise position about their perspective on race and gender. They will have to document their thesis with facts or details from the various visual and written documents examined and studied in the present unit. I will also require them to prepare a presentation with Power Point slides. The students with special needs will conclude the unit with the Power Point presentation only.

## Objectives

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1. to analyze the concepts of race and gender, and reflect about their real implications
2. to predict, infer, and see causes and effects;
3. apply their prior knowledge in determining these concepts, and before reading the written texts;
4. write an initial essay analyzing the concept of race and gender;
5. draw conclusions and evaluate the eventual differences;
6. read the written documents and start an initial understanding by underlining or highlighting the points and/or parts that grab the students' attention;
7. draw conclusions about the right interpretation of the underlined or highlighted points;
8. understand the specific vocabulary of the various texts;
9. determine the purpose(s) and the perspective(s) of each document;
10. write a close analysis of the written documents;

11. discuss the close analysis of the written documents with peers;
12. compare and contrast the various written documents, and draw the appropriate conclusions;
13. write an annotated bibliography of all the documents studied;
14. write a final essay in which each student will evaluate and theorize about his/her own concepts of race and gender, supporting his/her theory with three texts at least;
15. illustrate their theories with Power Point and present them to their audience.

## Strategies

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Race and gender are two extremely important issues my students need to analyze in order to overcome the inequalities, indignities, social disadvantages, prejudices, and discriminations that are often connected to, or derive from. At the same time, I want my students to understand that Shakespeare uses the word "race" very few times; like most of his contemporaries, he uses other terms to convey the differences of nationality, religion, ethnicity, and color. I also want them to wonder whether and in what form the concept of racial difference existed in Shakespeare's time.<sup>6</sup> According to the *Oxford English dictionary*, the word "race" was first used by the Scottish poet William Dunbar and here the word means "group". Shakespeare uses it referring to lineage or national grouping as it is expressed in Sir John Wynne's *History of Gwydir Family* in reference to the British race. He also uses it in defining a group of women or class identities, but he never uses it in relation to blackness. However, it is interesting to notice that the complete title of *Othello* is *The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice*. The word "moor" derives from a Latin word, *maurus*, which means black. Colbert Nepaulsingh observes that "Europeans knew it was tragic for a Moor to think he could be a European from Venice as well as for a Jew to be accepted as Venetian because he was a merchant in Venice."<sup>7</sup>

When Shakespeare illustrates a difference, he also underlines the consequences that this difference has on people. Of course, today the word "race" is not indicative of class, religion or gender, but the problems and the hatred that derive from being "different" are still present in our society. Shakespeare, who was a very attentive observer of human behavior, studied the differences between cultures, religions, languages, skin color, and family arrangements because these were fascinating to European royalty, colonists, merchants, writers, readers, and playgoers.<sup>8</sup> We study these differences today because our society has not been able to eliminate the hatred and grief they can produce. In Shakespeare's days, as Europeans searched for new markets, they were exposed to what was considered "foreign" and as they were fascinated by such difference, they were also building a consistent feeling of "superiority". Loomba states that "the debates about religious, cultural or bodily difference generated during this period were to shape the development of racial thinking over the next 400 years."<sup>9</sup> At the same time all over Europe, the nobility were considered as a "race" distinct from ordinary people and the class difference, together with the gender difference, were crucial in Shakespeare's times.<sup>10</sup> Loomba also observes that the encounters Elizabethan people had with other people and religions represented a cultural exchange, but they also contributed to the ideology of "superiority."<sup>11</sup>

Apparently, *Othello* is the play that reflects "race" in the sense of skin difference, but many others present other perspective on race, like *The Merchant of Venice*, in which Shakespeare brings together the issues of commerce and race while focusing also on the Jewish differences. The picture that emerges is complex because all the plays layer older and new ideas of difference.<sup>12</sup> Another difference emerges in the relationship between Petruchio and Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew* because the apparently endorsed

superiority of the man and inferiority of the woman conflict harshly with our sense of how the play concludes. In *Macbeth*, I will focus on how Shakespeare brings our attention to the issues of class and nation, and in *Hamlet*, we will analyze the gender differences.

It is also interesting to notice that in those times the word "race" was used to define women as a distinct group. In fact, Spencer speaks of a "bounteous race of woman kind".<sup>13</sup> The woman was considered a distinct social group whose inner differences correspond to inner qualities. This racial difference was routinely expressed in terms of gender and sexuality and vice versa. These analogies were crucial to the development of racial as well patriarchal structures and way of thinking. Similarly, the word "class" was considered as a noble prerogative. In feudal society, class was seen as an attribute rooted in the blood or inherited and was then commonly identified as "race". The peasants or lower classes were considered different from the upper classes. Many times the poorer people were perceived to be darker or more barbaric than their masters.

The analysis of how Shakespeare presents class, religion, color, or gender differences will be continuously discussed and compared to today's racial or gender thinking. This is the focus of the entire unit because I want my students to understand that at times in the past as well as now, being different may lead to unacceptable prejudices. Prejudice is not only ignorance or fear of the unknown, it may also become a way to legitimize particular structures of power in which some people are deprived of their social, material, sexual, and or intellectual rights.

The first text we will examine after the initial activity in which we determined the present meaning of race and gender and the terms we currently use to express these concepts, will be *GoBack to Black* by K.A. Dilday, published in *The New York Times*, Feb. 27, 2008. I will begin by writing the title of the article on the board before they even have the text and I will give my students ten minutes to write their interpretations of this title together with facts or examples (I usually use the word fact and not example with my students; otherwise they tend to write simplistic supports). This first prompt will be immediately followed by a second question, "What do you think the word 'black' means? What do we mean when we use the term African American?" My students will be given another ten minutes to respond and then we will start sharing our responses. I also want them to take notes while their peers are reading their responses and I will annotate them on the board. Soon after this pre-reading activity, I will hand out the article. I want them to read it and underline or highlight those ideas that grab their attention. As soon they have finished, we will discuss what the author, K.A. Dilday, meant by using the word 'black' instead of 'African American.' And I expect them to determine that the term African American was introduced to remind us of the origin of black Americans. Differently, in other countries, as it is stated in the article, the word African is not in use because 'black' people come from many different countries.

This article will definitely attract my students' attention because they are very sensitive to how they are called by people outside the school and inside the school. However, before proceeding, I want them to briefly research hip hop music as well as gospel music and determine which term(s) is/are currently used and what their connotation is. This is an important step because my students can really understand how words are strictly connected to a specific situation and how the same word can change its meaning when it is used in a complete different context, as Dilday points out in his article. We will certainly share and take notes on the results of their research paying particular attention to specifying the context where the word referring to a certain race is used. Anyway, before concluding these initial activities, I will ask them to synthesize their understanding of "race" and I will write their synthesis on a poster we will keep on the board for the duration of the unit in order to frequently refer to and eventually modify this original definition. Before concluding this 'warming up' activity focused on their initial understanding of 'race', I will give them copies of the letters to



the editor, *The Words We Use to Talk About Race*, published by *New York Times* on March 3, 2008. I will ask them to read them carefully and to write their own response to the article by Dilday, including their perspective or some clear point of view, and the reasons that support their opinion.

This initial activity asks the students to crystallize their thinking about race and to bring into the open any ill-advised concept or stereotype they may have. It also serves to draw their attention and interest to something that is still a heated topic in our society. As a teacher, I use it as a pre-assessment which gives me a clear overview about the depth of their writing and their ability to use appropriate examples or text support together with an adequate elaboration. In order to achieve this goal of pre-assessing their writing, I will not determine any boundaries (i.e. 350 or 500 words) other than what I indicated above.

After this introduction about race, I will present the concept of "gender," following a similar path for the pedagogical reason I just mentioned. In fact, I will start by writing on the board the following prompt: "What is gender? What is your interpretation of gender? Why?" The students will be given five minutes to respond in their journals and then I will write a second prompt. This time it will be the title of the article, 'Think The Gender War Is Over?' Think Again. What does that mean? How can 'gender' be the source of a 'war'?" They will be given another eight to ten minutes for writing and then we will start sharing. During this sharing time, I also want my students to say something to the person who has just concluded reading his/her response, and I will take notes of their thoughts on the board. When our discussion is concluded, I will hand out the article, *Think the Gender War Is Over? Think Again*, written by Susan Faludi and published in *The New York Times* on June 15, 2008. My students will be requested to read it, and highlight the main ideas together with any other statements or facts they deem interesting. I will also require them to briefly annotate the words or phrases that are used to communicate the concept of "gender" and those which determine the audience and the voice of the author. Of course, I will modify this requirement for the struggling students by asking them to simply determine the author's thesis and three facts or examples referred to by the author in support of her theory. The discussion will follow.

At this point, I know my students will vehemently point out they never expected to read an article about politics. The text, in fact, analyzes how gender ethics guided American politics, how the masculine myths were established, and how Obama is considered the "woman president". This simple statement will allow me to ask my students why a man can be identified as a woman or vice-versa, and to lead to a clear understanding of how a word can communicate more than its original meaning. Soon after this discussion I will write on the board the following prompt: "Do you think that gender is still an issue in school, workplace(s), or politics? Why?" I expect my students to analyze their perspective on gender and all the eventual problems that are connected to it or that can derive from it.

These two pre-reading activities clearly focus on the main goals of my unit by bringing my students to their zone of proximal development according to Vygotsky. Their initial concepts of race and gender have been clearly defined and discussed. At the same time, they have started to focus on the diction that is frequently used to communicate these two concepts. They are now ready to study how Shakespeare presents these two concepts of race and gender. Of course, various modifications will be necessary owing to the diversity I have in all my classes, and the fact that our curriculum requires all juniors to read *Macbeth* and all seniors to read *Hamlet*. Because of these circumstances, I will start by requiring all Honors and AP students to read the entirety of both tragedies. The juniors will have to read *Macbeth* and the seniors will do *Hamlet*. This will be essentially a homework assignment, but I already foresee that I will have to give them some time in class too, so that they can always ask whenever they encounter obstacles to understanding. I will modify the activity for the regular and the struggling students. In fact, they will only read a few excerpts and will also start with

specific pre-reading strategies to help them understand by keeping their interest alive.

After their first reading, we will focus our attention on a few scenes in order to analyze Shakespeare's concept of race and gender as group differences, and their connected consequences. The first excerpt I want my students to analyze is Act I, Scene 4 in which the former Thane of Cawdor has been executed, Macbeth and Banquo are thanked for their precious help, and Malcolm is appointed the new king's successor. The regular and the struggling students will start with a different activity, the Tea Party, in which each student will receive one index card with a phrase from the same scene. I will select no more than ten phrases which will be written more than once so that I will have a card for each student. Specifically, "Is execution done?", "treason", "repentance", "highness", "I have begun to plant thee and will labor to make thee full of growing", "nobleness", "like stars shall shine", "peerless", "kinsman", "binds us further to you". My students will be instructed to read the card and move around in the room, go to other students and read what they have to as many students as possible. The activity will last for about seven or eight minutes and then they will return to their desk and I will write the following prompt on the board: What do you think the story is about? Why? They will be given eight minutes for writing.

The first close-reading of the scene will follow. For this activity, I want them to learn the importance of annotating the text. In fact, I will ask them to read and highlight all those sentence(s), word(s), phrase(s) which grab their attention, and write brief notes in the form of question, comment and/or connection. Since this is not the first time they have annotated the text, I will only model how to determine the author's main idea, the tone and the purpose of the document. This strategy will allow me to point out how Shakespeare identifies social class as a source of possible conflict. Nevertheless, the fact that Duncan nominates his son to be his successor infuriates Macbeth. I will point out that Macbeth was expecting more according to the prediction made by the witches. Was Macbeth's expectation appropriate? Why? Or why not? Why did Duncan not nominate Macbeth? Was Macbeth a fool in believing the witches? Why? Do you think that Duncan did not choose Macbeth simply because he was not the king's son? What other factors might have influenced Duncan in his choice? How much was Duncan influenced in his choice by the hierarchical customs of the time? Was this a form of racism? (I will use the word "racism" instead of "classism" because I want my students to determine what it is specifically.) How would you define it? Can it be defined as classism? Why? Can you detect any differences in the resentment that derives from racism and classism? What connections do you have to today's world? Does this happen? Why? This will certainly lead to a class discussion in which my students will reflect on a completely different perspective on "social status" that can certainly lead to outcomes that are not different from the ones deriving from a racist point of view. It will also prompt my students to think about the consequences that will point Macbeth to his future actions.

We will then pass to Act I, Scene V. This is an interesting scene and it is also the first one in which we have the opportunity to meet Lady Macbeth. My objective for this scene is to analyze this character and determine what kind of "woman" she is. At the same time, my students can see the relation between the messenger and Lady Macbeth. The messenger represents a different social class. I expect my students to notice the fact Shakespeare's notion of class relates the ideas of inferiority versus superiority to related discriminations and/or resentments as Loomba states in *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*. This idea of superiority or inferiority contributes to prejudices and stereotyping with consequences that are similar to those caused by racism. The damage they cause to the individual is not different. As far as Lady Macbeth is concerned, I expect my students to understand why she asks the spirits to unsex her. What does it mean? What does the word "sex" mean? Is it connected to gender? What might the result of this "unsex" be? I also want them to focus on the relationship between Lady Macbeth and her husband. Are they in love? What makes you think they are or they are not? Do they have anything in common? Why? Of course, I will follow the same strategies



I mentioned before: Tea Party for both regular and struggling students. Specifically, I will select the following words/phrases to write on the index cards: "it is true", "Unsex me", "direst cruelty", "Come to woman's breast", "knife see not the wound it makes", "be the serpent under", "the night's great business". Before requiring them to write their interpretation, we will discuss the scene and I will write notes on the board. At this point, I also want them to start focusing on this character. I will write the following prompt on the board: Who is Lady Macbeth? What kind of woman is she? Why? Do you notice any similarities with or differences from today's woman? Why? I expect responses with at least three specific text references and two connections to the world for all regular students.

The third excerpt from *Macbeth* will be Act I, Scene VI, lines 13-39. I want my students to reread these lines carefully and determine the relation which exists between Duncan, the king, and Lady Macbeth. I want them to look at this relation from the point of view of their different gender. In fact, I will write on the board the following questions: What kind of relation do you notice between these two characters? Why? How do you come to this conclusion? How do your initial thoughts about Lady Macbeth change or get reinforced in these lines? Why? How do your initial thoughts about Macbeth change or get reinforced in this scene? Why? In order to help them thoroughly understand, I will read those lines aloud and will help them with the language. I will also write the questions I just mentioned on the board and discuss them before they even start writing any response.

We will then reread Act I, Scene VII. I expect my students to focus their attention on how Lady Macbeth mocks her husband's reluctance to kill the king. Macbeth is not sure the plan to assassinate Duncan when his attendants are drunk is the right thing to do. At the same time, he is beset by the devastating desire to be the next king of Scotland. Lady Macbeth plays a very important role in illustrating to him why the murder is right and necessary. I also want them to reflect on the fact that Macbeth thinks that this specific challenge, to kill the king, might be one of those things "a man" had to do to be "a man". This is another interesting point where Shakespeare can lead my students to discuss the myth of what a man's task is compared to a woman's task. Consequently, after reading the scene, I will write the following questions: Why is Macbeth afraid to proceed with the original plan? Why does Lady Macbeth mock him? How does she mock him? What words does she use to help or force him? Why? What will she gain? What will he gain? Since I also want to teach my students about the universality of certain issues that are present in Shakespeare's work as well in today's society, I will add: What actions would define the man today? Why? What is the role of a woman in a relationship? Why? Do you see any similarities or differences with the scene presented by Shakespeare? How much do our friends influence us? Why? Before passing to the next excerpt, after sharing their writings, I will ask my students to briefly add a few notes about Macbeth and Lady Macbeth on the poster we keep in the classroom to see how the characters develop in the course of our study. I will also require my students to respond to the essential question: What is Shakespeare's theory about gender? I will write their conclusions on the poster we keep in the classroom.

Before passing to the next scene, I will remind the regular students and the special education ones about the motives that lead Macbeth to order the assassination of Banquo. I will also give them a few details about how both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth start feeling unhappy and more fearful. At first Lady Macbeth helps her husband by dismissing his vision of Banquo's ghost during a dinner, but soon after she herself is haunted by the vision of the hands all covered in blood. A brief discussion of Lady Macbeth and the possible reasons that caused this major change in her character will follow. Was Lady Macbeth a strong or a weak woman? Why? I will also ask them to write a response in which they compare and contrast the causes and effects of Lady Macbeth's reaction and her husband's reaction. I also expect them to connect this situation in the Shakespearean tragedy to any actual fact in order to understand that Shakespeare's work is not disconnected

from reality. It presents and analyzes the human being and the outcomes of his/her actions. Before concluding this tragedy, I want my students to spend some time discussing the difference that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth noticed in the way they are rewarded by Duncan, their king. I also want them to analyze its consequences on the two main characters. This is an important aspect of this unit because my students need to see not only how Shakespeare identified the difference but also his teaching about the outcomes since both aspects together make his moral universal and still valid.

Soon after *Macbeth*, we will pass to *Hamlet*. As I said before, the seniors will read the entire tragedy and the juniors will watch the movie. In class, I will focus my attention on Ophelia and on her relationships with Hamlet and her father. I want a strong juxtaposition after studying Lady Macbeth because I want my students to have a complete vision of the various facets of the woman in Shakespeare's works. Since only the seniors have already read the entire tragedy whereas all the others have not, we will watch the movie by Franco Zeffirelli. At this point we are ready to analyze some scenes. I will present my students an excerpt from Act II, Scene II, lines 84-134.<sup>15</sup> In these lines, Ophelia tells Polonius about her fear of Hamlet's strange behavior. She stresses how Hamlet approached her but also underlines that she followed her father's "command" to reject Hamlet's letter and "His access" to her. Polonius's conclusion is that Hamlet is desperately in love with his daughter and that her refusal has made him insane. At this point, I expect all students to read the scene in class and start annotating the text. Since this is not the first time we do this activity, they do not need any modeling or pre-reading activities. I also want them to choose three to four words or phrases that have a specific meaning to them or that are particularly unusual or obscure. We will write these words/phrases on the board and we will start discussing and analyzing them. We will reread the excerpt again and then they will write their first response: Who is Ophelia? Who is Polonius? Is Ophelia scared by Hamlet? Why? What does the word "command" imply? Why? Visualize the same scene today: would a girl talk to her father similarly or differently? Would a father approach this situation similarly or differently? After this first response, I want all my students to read the scene again and point out any words or phrases Shakespeare used in referring to gender. They also have to determine and discuss the eventual differences or similarities with the current times (they have the current terminology still posted from our first activity).

The next scene I want to analyze is from Act III, Scene I, lines 99-175. I will write on the board the following questions: Why does Hamlet say, "if you be honest and fair, (your honesty) should admit no discourse to your beauty." What does he mean? What does Hamlet imply by "beauty" and "honesty"? What do you normally mean by beauty and honesty? Why? They will be given ten minutes to respond and then I will add: Why did Hamlet change his mind about Ophelia? What could have happened? Does this situation have any connections to today's world? Why? They will be writing for another ten to fifteen minutes and then I will write a few other questions: Why does Hamlet tell her to go to a "nunnery"? What does the term "nunnery" imply? Why? Why does he say, "If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shall not escape calumny"? What is the metaphorical meaning of "plague"? What is the effect it communicates? Why can't Ophelia escape "calumny" even if she is pure and chaste? What does Hamlet mean? Why does he urge her to eventually marry a "fool"? Does this situation have any connections to today's reality? Now, before passing to another scene, they will also have to analyze both Hamlet and Ophelia in terms of gender. Do they behave unusually? Why? Who is Ophelia? Who is Hamlet? What is Shakespeare's perspective on gender?

Soon after this excerpt, I want my students to analyze Ophelia's reactions to the play Hamlet asked the actors to perform. Specifically, we will read and analyze lines 145-160 from Act II, Scene II, and I will write the following questions: Why does Hamlet think that marriage is a mischief? What does he imply? What does he want to tell Ophelia? Is Hamlet a misogynist? Why? Who is Ophelia compared to Lady Macbeth and Lady

Macduff? Who is Hamlet compared to Macbeth? Are they different? Are they similar? Can you make any connections to today's men or women? I expect my students to analyze how Shakespeare portrays another facet of the woman - Ophelia - who is obedient, submissive, and suffering compared to the woman ñ Lady Macbeth - who is strong, decisive, manipulative, and greedy. Before concluding, I will also ask them to add their common conclusions about Ophelia and Hamlet ñ who they are and what terminology Shakespeare uses to identify them. Of course I expect them to determine whether Shakespeare uses words that are still common in our usage today or if they are not and why.

The next texts we will analyze will be *Othello*. Since we will not have the time to read the entire tragedy, we will watch the movie in order to understand the plot and the main themes. I already expect my students to quickly identify Othello with the present meaning of "race" and the racial hatred that derives from interracial marriage and social intolerance. I will explain to my students that "for Shakespeare's audiences the word Moor was an amalgam of both religious and color difference".<sup>16</sup> We will discuss how the portrayal of the "Moor of Venice" represents a complicated connection between the fact that he is a black man and the fact that he is a Muslim. In Shakespeare's times black-skinned people were seen as godless by the Christians, hence evil. However, Shakespeare's Othello has both an ignoble past and a noble lineage, a black skin and great military skills, a capacity for tenderness as well as a propensity for violence.<sup>17</sup> We will also compare and contrast these issues with today's perspective on race and interracial marriages. After this introduction, we will reread a few scenes. Specifically, we will analyze Act I, Scene I, lines 74-114<sup>18</sup> in which Iago and Roderigo wake up Barbantio with the unexpected news of his daughter's marriage to Othello, the Moor. I want my students to focus their attention on how Iago tells Desdemona's father about her marriage to Othello. Consequently, I will write on the board: What is the main issue in the lines we just analyzed? How do you know? Cite as many references as you can and discuss why you think those references support your thesis. Do you notice any difference(s) or similarit(ies) with today's world? What? Why? How? They will be given fifteen minutes to respond and then I will add: Why does Iago say, "Y'are robbed!" Why does Iago refer to Othello as an "old black man"? Does his age make Othello's blackness more negative? Is it another difference that Shakespeare notices and wants us ñ his audience ñ to reflect upon? Why does Barbantio say, "What tell'st thou me of robbing? This is Venice"? I also expect my students to notice the hatred Iago feels for Othello, and how he plans his revenge - lines 360-368, act I, Scene III. Why does he hate Othello so much? Is it because he married Desdemona or is it because he is different? What will this hatred amount to? How can we avoid similar situations today?

We will also analyze a few other statements in *Othello*. I want my students to compare and contrast lines 94-106 from act I, scene III in which Barbantio expresses his disbelief about his daughter's decision. Specifically I want my students to explain why Barbantio is convinced that it is absolutely impossible for Desdemona to fall "in love with what she feared to look on". This was "against all rules of nature" and must have been the result of "some mixtures" Othello gave her to win her love. Why does Barbantio refuse to accept his daughter's decision? Is he racist? What makes you believe that? Does this happen today? Is there any detectable difference or similarity between Shakespeare's scenario and today's reality? In the same scene, lines 128-165, Othello explains how Desdemona fell in love. He stresses both his origin and inferiority as strengths because as a result Desdemona began to show more and more interest in his calamities. This same interest brings her closer to him to the point when she falls in love. Do you think this is reasonable enough to justify this marriage? Can sympathy be enough to overcome the difference and oddity of Othello's marriage? Why? How do we overcome the prejudices towards diversity today? I will pass around a paper on which I wrote the following quotes: lines 257-276 from Act II, Scene III, lines 380-387 from Act II, Scene III, and lines 390-447 from the same scene. At the same time I will write on the board: Why does Othello use the word "black"? What is the tone and what is the purpose this word conveys? We will analyze the connotation and

denotation of the word and will compare it to how it is used today, and how it was used in the article, *Go Back to Black* by K.A. Dilday. I will write my students' conclusion on the poster we have in the classroom.

Soon after these excerpts from *Othello*, I want my students to analyze a few other quotes from *The Merchant of Venice* after watching the movie. Before we begin any analysis of the play, I will explain my students that in *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare pays attention to the relationship between commerce and race. The transformation of the early modern period has two contradictory effects: one to encourage the acceptance of money and wealth as a form to override social differences, on the other hand to make racial differences become more pronounced. Shylock and Jessica represent these contradictions.<sup>19</sup> The Jews were considered both insiders and outsiders in Europe in Shakespeare's times. They were indistinguishable, both physically and in terms of their activities, but they were marked as different and confined in ghettos. The play focuses on the economic importance of the Jews in Venice, the tension between them and the Christians, and the supposed impartiality of the Venetian law. This introduction will allow my students to discuss and compare this religious difference with the previous differences in class, color and gender we encountered in the previous works.

After that, we will start analyzing what Shylock says when Bassanio asks him to lend "three thousand ducats" to his friend Antonio in Act I, Scene III, lines 30-36.<sup>20</sup> I want my students to think: Why does Shylock refuse to have dinner with Antonio and Bassanio? What does Shylock mean when he says, "to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into"? Why did Shakespeare use the words "conjured" and "devil" in reference to the Christians? What is the tone of his response? Why? I also expect some comparisons and contrast with *Othello* as well as some connections to today's world. Before sharing our interpretations, I will add a second quote in which Shylock clearly expresses his hate for Antonio simply because he is Christian and for the fact he lends money "gratis".<sup>21</sup> I will ask them to theorize about the influence religion can have in creating barriers between people. At the same time I want my students to compare Shylock's hatred and Antonio's convictions about the "Jewish heart" ñ Act IV, Scene I, lines 70-83. Shylock's response is interesting too because he reminds the Duke that he does not ask him to free his slave or marry them to his heirs. Consequently, "mercy" itself cannot be used to solve an economic and racial problem. I will point out that "mercy" is invoked by the Duke to solve the problem that Antonio's insolvency caused. At this point, I want my students to reflect on Antonio's suggestion that Venetian law is impartial ñ Act III, Scene III, lines 26-31. However, by the end of the play, Jews are represented as aliens to Venice and this is an important aspect which will start a good discussion about law today. How impartial is today's law? How effectively does it protect all the various differences people may display?

Before concluding this unit, we will analyze *The Taming of the Shrew*. We will not read the entire comedy. By the time we are ready to start this new text, I know that some of my students will be performing this play in our own theater. Consequently, we will all watch their interpretation and we will start our analysis by discussing the two main characters, Petruchio and Kate. Since they have already been exposed to a variety of Shakespearean characters in this unit, I expect my students to determine the differences or similarities among them. At the same time, I want them to think of Shakespeare's perspective on gender. Specifically, I will ask: Does Petruchio resemble any other male characters in Shakespeare's works? Why? Why not? What is different? Does he speak the same language? Does he not? Why? Does Kate resemble any other female characters in Shakespeare's works? What is different in her? Can you see any connections to today's men and women? Why? What do you think Shakespeare wants to say about the woman specifically? What do you think is the moral of this comedy? Why? Soon after this discussion, I will hand out an excerpt from Act II, Scene I, lines 183-282 in which Petruchio and Katharina meet for the first time.<sup>22</sup> Even though Petruchio tries to convince her that he had heard excellent remarks about her, Katharina reacts rudely. This excerpt is very interesting because of the satire Shakespeare uses in the characterization of Petruchio's and Katharina's

gender. In order for my students to grasp the subtlety of Shakespeare's vision and rhetorical art, I will ask: What does Petruchio mean when he says that "Women are made to bear, and so are you"? Why does Kate call him "jade"? We will surely discuss the denotation and connotation of this word in order to understand the real intentions Petruchio and Kate have, but also to understand what is Shakespeare's perspective on gender. Since the entire excerpt presents this unusual interaction between the genders, I will then add: What do you think Kate wants to say? What kind of woman is she? What is the difference you notice in her in comparison with the other women in Shakespeare?

Before requiring my students to write any response, I want them to read and analyze Petruchio's soliloquy from Act IV, Scene II, lines 191-214 in which he proudly spells out what he intends to do to change Kate into an obedient and kind wife. I also want them to compare and contrast this speech with any other speech or dialogue in the previous excerpts where they think Shakespeare mentioned "obedience". I expect them to discuss this theme from today's perspective in order to see whether there are any similarities or any differences. They will also have to support their thesis with various text references. A class discussion will soon follow with note taking as usual. I will have to modify this assignment for the weakest students in my class and, in fact, I will write on the board: "Thus have I politicly begun my reign and 'tis my hope to end successfully." What does Shakespeare mean by "reign"? Why does Petruchio refer to his wife/marriage as a "reign"? What does he imply? I will give them seven to eight minutes to respond and then I will add: "Another way I have to man the haggard, to make her come and know her keeper's call..." What does this mean? What does Petruchio think of his wife? Why? Why does Shakespeare use the word "keeper" referring to the fact Kate must acknowledge who is in charge of everything? I will also urge them to reflect on the denotation and connotation of that word in order to understand its meaning in the speech. I will give them another ten minutes or even more to respond and then I will write on the board: "This is a way to kill a wife with kindness; and thus I'll curb her mad and headstrong humor.." What does it mean? Reflect on the phrase "kill ..with kindness". Why? Does this happen today? How? Why? What do you think Petruchio will accomplish? What do you think Shakespeare wants to tell us about gender?

The last document from this comedy will be Kate's speech from Act V, Scene II, lines 136-179. In our analysis, I will ask them to determine why Kate says: "Fie, fie!" What does she really mean? Why does she refer to the man as "thy lord, thy king, thy governor"? What is the difference between this final speech and the way she spoke to Petruchio when they first met? Apparently, Kate is no longer rebellious and feisty. She is nice and respectful of her husband's authority. Is she really? What is the difference that she apparently underlines between a man and a woman? Why did she change her mind? Did she really change her mind? What does she mean when she says: ""But that our soft conditions and our hearts should well agree with our external parts"? Is she contradicting herself? Why? Is she really referring to the women when she says "unable worm" or is she inferring something else? Why does she think that women's "lances are but straw"? Before concluding this part, I want my students to reflect once again on how Shakespeare characterizes the woman, what he specifically observes about the woman, and whether his vision is misogynistic or not. I also expect comparisons with the other women we encountered in the various plays without forgetting to juxtapose them to today's image of female gender.

The unit will be concluded with an essay ñ five to six pages in length - in which they have to state their concepts of race and gender. I also want them to support their theory with three of the sources we analyzed. The struggling students will follow the same prompt but they can prepare a Power Point presentation.



## Classroom activities

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In teaching this unit, I will implement various strategies and modifications that will take place inside the same class with the clear objective to address all the various needs of either the strongest or the weakest students with flexible grouping. I also intend to scaffold the various strategies I will teach them continuously. This is an essential component of the unit because I want my students to reach the point of real independence in approaching and analyzing any text. I will use a combination of pre-reading activities to accommodate all the differences inside a class and between classes. In fact, I will use the Quick Write activity at the very beginning of the unit and/or any new document we approach, and the Tea Party and/or Probable Passage before the reading of each document. The Tea Party strategy encourages an active participation with the text and is particularly effective in the case of struggling readers. It allows the students to predict what they think will happen in the text while inferring, comparing and contrasting, seeing casual relationships, and using their prior knowledge. The Probable Passage forces students to predict, think, infer, reach conclusions, and see casual relationships. It also offers the opportunity to comprehend the vocabulary, and can be used with those students who can read but have no real motivation.<sup>23</sup>

All the various scenes we analyze will be taught taking into account the modification I will implement for the various subgroups of students I have in most of my classes. We will always start rereading the scene and clarifying all the obscure parts they may still have. Soon after that, they will have to annotate the text. I will gradually require them to determine the tone, purpose, and the special features. I specifically expect them to focus on diction and its effectiveness in the communication of the message. The class discussion with note taking will follow. When the annotations are concluded and shared in class, we will read this scene aloud together again. This time I want them to respond to the various questions I write on the board. I generally write two or three questions and I give them eight to ten minutes to respond. Then, I write other questions and give them another ten minutes to respond before we pass to our Sharing Time with note taking both in their journal and on the board. The weakest students will be also required to form groups of three or four and spend ten minutes selecting three or more quotes, writing the commentary for each of them, and any possible connections to today's world. When they have concluded this activity, each group member will have to exchange the journal with the other partners, read the selected quotes and subsequent commentaries, and respond ñ with commentary and connection. Sharing time will follow with class discussion and note taking. After this class activity, I will ask them to write their first interpretation of the scene, taking into account the personal quotes and interpretations as well as those of other students. The College students will have to produce a 350-word essay whereas the Honors and AP students will have to write a 500-word essay. Of course, I might implement a further modification for the struggling students. This group of students will anyway start with the selection of one quote, but this task will be immediately followed by Sharing Time because I want to further help them select those quotes that are meaningful for the understanding of the excerpt.

### **Task One: Previewing**

*Quick Write activity:*

1. Write the prompt on the board (the various prompts for each document are in the Strategies section)
2. always participate to all my students' activities because it improves their engagement and makes the activity "real."
3. Sharing Time: all my students will be sitting in a circle. One of us (either the teacher or a student) will



start reading aloud and taking brief notes. Any other student can respond to the writer and/or share the writing.

4. When Sharing Time is over, I will ask them to go through their notes and determine the reasons and causes just shared in class. I will write the list of causes and effects on a Post-It board.
5. At this point, I will ask them to spend some other minutes and explain in writing whether their initial position has changed after our discussion/sharing time, and why.

*Tea Party activity* (pre-reading activity):

(I would not suggest modeling it because "not knowing how to do it" triggers more thinking.)

1. I will prepare fifteen or twenty index cards with one phrase from the document they will be reading. I can repeat those phrases two or three times, so you can have one card per student.
2. I will give one card to each student and ask them to move from student to student. While moving, they have to share their card, listen to others as they read their cards, discuss how these cards might refer to, and suggest what these cards might mean.
3. I will ask them to form groups of three or four students and write what they think about those statements in the cards and why.
4. Sharing Time: I will ask the students to read what they wrote and I take notes on the board.
5. After reading the text, we will have another Sharing Time to compare and contrast their predictions and the text.

## **Task Two: Close Reading and Analytical Writing**

For advanced grade-level readers, Honors students, and AP students, I do the following:

1. Read the passage/document again;
2. Underline interesting, important, and/or unusual/unexpected words, phrases, and language structures, and label them in the margin;
3. Determine connections and draw arrows from one part of the passage to another to mark those connections;
4. Highlight the descriptions, the reflections, the facts, or the purpose.
5. What is the main idea or subject of the text? How do you know? How is it presented? Does the author introduce it immediately? Does the author express this main idea, or do you have to infer it? How do you infer it? What clues support your theory?
6. When did this situation occur? Why? How do you know or determine the time and place this situation occurred? Is it clearly stated? Do you infer it? How do you infer it? What clues confirm your theory?
7. Who is the audience? How do you know? Is it clearly stated? How? How do you infer it? What clues confirm your theory?
8. Who is the voice that tells the story? Is it the author? How do you know? What assumptions can you make about this voice? Can you assume what age, education, social status, and other hidden reasons exist for writing this document?
9. What is/are the purpose(s) of the document? What's the reason(s) behind the text? How do you know? What reaction(s) in the audience does the writer want to achieve? Why? How do you know? What techniques does the author use to achieve this purpose? How do you think the audience will feel? What is the effect the author wants to achieve?
10. What is the tone of this document? How do you know? What word(s) or phrase(s) determine this tone? Why? What details, sentence structures, or images convey this tone? Why?

11. Sharing Time: the students share their analysis, discuss and take notes in their journals.
12. Do you notice any difference(s)/similarity(ies) between this document and the previous one(s) you analyzed?
13. Can you notice/infer any difference(s)/similarity(ies) between the author of this document and the previous one(s)?
14. Do you notice any stylistic difference(s)/similarity(ies) between this document and the previous one(s) you analyzed?

Modification:

1. Read the passage/document again;
2. Underline interesting, important, and/or unusual/unexpected words, phrases, and language structures;
3. Determine connections and draw arrows from one part of the passage to another to mark those connections;
4. Write a "Wonder Why" question for each interesting, important, unusual, or unexpected word/phrase. Write your theory(ies) and support it with clear references to the text.
5. Sharing Time: the students share, discuss their interpretations, and take notes of their peer's thoughts in their journals.

### **Task Three: Final Paper**

The Final Paper will be a synthesis essay with an annotated bibliography. This documented essay will follow various stages. In fact, we will start determining the thesis statement in response to the essential questions, "How do race and gender contribute to my individuality?" and "How do certain beliefs become transparent and obvious in the words I use?" In order to determine a strong thesis statement, the students have to:

1. Reread their journals/responses/notes and highlight the details and information you want to use to support your theory;
2. Write a possible idea/theory, share, and discuss it with the peers;
3. Write a discovery draft with a thesis statement and reasons;
4. Write a first draft containing the thesis statement, the reasons, the supports/references from the documents, and the analysis/discussion of why those references support the assertions. This draft will be followed by a group session of peer revision;
5. Write a second draft including the suggestions from the peer's revision. This will be followed by a group session of peers' editing;
6. Write a third draft followed by a conference with the teacher.
7. Write the annotated bibliography of the documents cited in the essay. They will have a model for the MLA requirements. Each source will be followed by a few lines describing the content of the source.

Modification:

1. Reread their journals/responses/notes and highlight the details, information you want to use to support your theory;
2. Write the thesis in response to the essential question and use one Power Point slide;
3. Determine and write the reasons for your theory/thesis and use one Power Point slide;
4. Find the evidences in the documents and write them in other slides.
5. Write a brief conclusion on a slide.
6. Sharing Time: each student will read the slides and discuss his/her theory and the evidence(s) with the

class.

The students who will write the documented essay will prepare the presentation (sharing time) with slides that will illustrate their theory, reasons, references to sources, connections between support and reason, and conclusion.

## **Appendix: Implementing District Standards**

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The teaching implemented in this unit reflects the requirements of the Connecticut's Common Core of Learning K-12 Content Standards. The curriculum for Language Arts in the New Haven District adheres to the state standards and each unit offers the opportunity to teach, deepen or scaffold the four essential standards: Reading and Responding, Exploring and Responding to Literature, Communicating with Others, and English Language Conventions. My unit is primarily built on either the scaffolding or teaching of the following:

### Content Standard One: Reading and Responding

Students read, comprehend and respond in individual, literal, critical and evaluative ways to literary, informational and persuasive texts in multimedia formats.

1. Students use appropriate strategies before, during and after reading in order to construct meaning.
2. Students interpret, analyze and evaluate text in order to extend understanding and appreciation.
3. Students select and apply strategies to facilitate word recognition and develop a vocabulary to comprehend the text.
4. Students communicate with others to create interpretations of written, oral and visual texts.

### Content Standard Two: Exploring and Responding to Literature

Students read and respond to classical and contemporary text from many cultures and literary periods.

1. Students recognize how literary devices and conventions engage the reader.
2. Students explore multiple responses.

### Content Standard Three: Communicating with Others

Students produce written, oral and visual texts to express, develop and substantiate ideas and experiences.

1. Students use descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic modes.
2. Students prepare, publish and/or present work appropriate to audience, purpose and task.

### Content Standard Four: Applying English Language Conventions

Students apply the conventions of Standard English in oral, written and visual communication.

1. Students use knowledge of their language and culture to improve competency in English.
2. Students speak and write using standard language structures and diction appropriate to audience and task.

3. Students use Standard English for composing and revising written text.

## **Annotated Bibliography: Resources for Teachers**

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Adamson, Jane. *Othello as Tragedy: Some Problems of Judgment and Feeling*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Excellent literary criticism of the tragedy with a special focus on how Shakespeare explores how people make sense of what happens in their lives, including what they imagine might be happening.

Beers, Kylene. *When Kids Can't Read What Teachers Can Do*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003.

An effective text with strategies for struggling readers.

Bloom, Harold. *The Merchant of Venice*. New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2008.

Most current collection of literary criticism.

Bloom, Harold. *William Shakespeare's Macbeth*. New Haven: Chelsea House Publisher, 1987.

Interesting analysis of Macbeth's obsession with time to the point when it becomes a paradox.

The Cambridge Companion to *Shakespeare Studies*. Edited by Stanley Wells. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Excellent collections of essays by various authors about Shakespeare's life, arts of language, theatrical conventions, tradition of comedy and tragedy, and his use of history.

Clark, William, G. Wright, William, A. *The Unabridged William Shakespeare*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 1989.

A complete collection of Shakespeare's works with notes.

Danson, Lawrence. *William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005.

Interesting analysis of specific contexts: Venetian socio-political-economic structure, or the Jewish community in England. This section outlines thematic connections to Shakespeare's sonnets and other texts.

Farstrup, Alan E., Samuels S. Jay. eds. *What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction*. Newark: International Reading Association, 2002.

Duke, Nell K., Pearson P. David. *Effective Practices for Developing Reading Comprehension*. Farstrup and Samuels 205-236.

A compelling chapter where the authors analyze, compare and contrast the validity of various strategies teachers use for an effective reading comprehension.

Grebanier, Bernard. *The Truth About Shylock*. New York: Random House, 1962.

Background of copious facts to understand Shylock as a dramatic entity.

Lang, Berel. *Race and Racism in Theory and Practice*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, Inc., 1999.

Interesting analysis of the concept of race in twentieth century social and political history.

Loomba, Ania. *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Excellent analysis of race in Shakespeare's works.

Nostbakken, Faith. *Understanding Macbeth*. n.p.: Greenwood Press, 1997.

Interesting historical and literary interpretation with a vision of the Shakespearean themes in contemporary events.

Edmund, Spencer. *The Fairie Queene*, in *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. J.C. Smith and E. De Selincourt. London, 1912.

Interesting collection of Spenser's works.

Yaffe, Martin D. *Shylock and the Jewish Question*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Interesting analysis challenging the widespread presumption that Shakespeare is unfriendly to Jews.

## Resources for Students

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Clark, William, G. Wright, William, A. *The Unabridged William Shakespeare*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 1989.

A complete collection of Shakespeare's works with notes.

Nostbakken, Faith. *Understanding Macbeth*. n.p.: Greenwood Press, 1997.

Interesting historical and literary interpretation with a vision of the Shakespearean themes in contemporary events.

Paul, Henry N. *The Royal Play of Macbeth*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950.

Valuable analysis of Shakespeare's life and environment to understand both the author's mind and the audience's expectations.

Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice*. Edited by Kenneth Myrick. New York: Signet Classics, 1998.

Useful publication of Shakespeare's work with notes, a revised bibliography and critical essays.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Othello The Moor of Venice*. Edited by Alvin Kernman. New York: Signet Classics, 1998.

Useful publication of Shakespeare's work with notes, a revised bibliography and critical essays.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark*. Edited by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Erstine. New York: Washington Square Press, 1992.

Useful publication of Shakespeare's work with notes, biographical information, description of Shakespeare's theater, and further information about the tragedy.

Turner, John. *Macbeth*. Bristol: Open University Press, 1992.

Interesting analysis and discussion of the main themes.

## Notes

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1. Mowat and Werstine, eds., *Macbeth*
2. Clark and Wright, eds., *The Taming of the Shrew*
3. Mowat and Werstine, eds., *Hamlet*
4. Kerman, ed., *The Tragedy of Othello The Moor of Venice*
5. Myrick, ed., *The Merchant of Venice*
6. Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, 4
7. Berel Lang , ed., *Race and Racism in Theory and Practice*.
8. Ania Loomba, 4
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 7
11. Ibid., 18
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13. Smith and De Selincourt, eds., *The Fairie Queene*, in *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser*
14. Mowat and Werstine, eds., *Macbeth*
15. Mowat and Werstine, eds., *Hamlet*
16. Ania Loomab, 46
17. Ibid., 46-47
18. Kerman, ed., *The Tragedy of Othello The Moor of Venice*
19. Ania Loomba, 141
20. Myrick, ed., *The Merchant of Venice*
21. Ibid., Act I, Scene II, lines 38-49
22. Clark and Wright, eds., *The Taming of the Shrew*



23. (Beers Kylene, *When Kids Can't Read What Teachers Can Do*)

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