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2011 Volume I: The Art of Reading People: Character, Expression, Interpretation

An Unforgettable Snapshot of Reading Character in The Help and Romeo and Juliet

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Introduction and Overview

Ah, the people we meet in life and literature are often a memorable bunch! We are riveted by their conflicts, enthralled by their secrets, saddened by their losses, and giddy over their happy endings. Yet, seldom do we stop to ponder how we are drawn into a character's life. What techniques are subtly woven into the text? Of course, characters walk hand in hand with conflict while we eavesdrop on their dialogue and scrutinize their innermost thoughts. Meanwhile, authors invite their readers to glimpse the human condition through their characters' struggles, strengths, victories, and defeats. Observing how characters behave, listening to them, and knowing their thoughts allow us to gain insights, make inferences, and appreciate the writer's craft of creating characters. Although we may not always agree with the way the characters address their conflicts, we cannot deny their ability to inform and entertain us. Think of the memorable characters that literature has produced: those who inspired us, those who are too good to be true, and those who show us the dark side of human nature, the villains. Our rich tapestry of multicultural, classic, and contemporary literature has created a cultural legacy of stories that could not exist without this memorable bunch.

This unit will introduce a cast of impressive characters from separate literary works that will become permanently etched in our minds. Even though these characters are separated by time and space they all share a common **dynamic** character trait: each one evolves radically in the face of adversity. In order to detect the characters' transformation it is necessary that readers become intimately familiar with characterization and all the methods an author uses to develop a character. However, the prerequisite to learning methods of characterization is to glean the characters' traits even when they are not surrounded by plot, dialogue, or other characters. The absence of these literary elements often stymies a reader's ability to discern a character's growth and changes as the story progresses. To counteract this obstacle I have selected characters from different historical periods, from different backgrounds, with distinctly different conflicts that do not end with happily ever after. Adolescent readers will definitely relate to these characters because of the ubiquitous and ageless nature of their conflicts. Not only will readers relate to the characters but they will also glean a character profile of the towns and families that these characters belong to. Consider the following scene from *The Help* [1] and note how the author keenly reveals the dark character of the town in what appears to be a humorous incident.

People is driving down, circling round...laughing out loud saying, "look at Hilly's house." ..... Thirty-two commodes!

Miss Skeeter done printed Hilly's toilet announcement in the newsletter alright.

They list them reasons why white folk and colored folk can't be sharing a seat.

Lottie Freeman saw a picture of the toilets in the *New York Times* and it read,

"home of Hilly and William Holbrook, Jackson, Mississippi."

An initial reading of this passage would evoke laughter from students who would fail to understand that thirty-two commodes symbolize support for segregation in the Deep South. This is the author's skillful approach to presenting Ms. Hilly's speech (via newsletter) and the townsfolks' actions (delivering commodes) to encourage the reader to draw their own conclusions. So, the students must peruse the text with an eye on the method of presentation and how they feel about the issue of segregation. This indirect characterization presents a perfect opportunity for students to experience humor while carefully reflecting on the town and Ms. Hilly's traits.

Typically, careful reflection is not the norm when students are presented a character web. The character web, also known as a graphic organizer, would be presented to analyze Miss Hilly's character traits by what she says, does, and thinks about the toilets being dumped on her front lawn. Students would also be asked to understand and analyze Miss Skeeter's motivation behind the "typo" in the DAR newsletter regarding Miss Hilly's bathroom initiative. Finally, students would be asked to use their analysis of Miss Hilly to write a character sketch of Miss Hilly and Mississippi during the 1960's as part of their writing portfolio. If students are *repeatedly* expected to analyze character, then why don't students ever encounter the character(s) *before* they read the story? Is it because a character is thought of only as an element of fiction that figures in the action of a literary work? Or is the absence of supporting elements, such as a plot (action), a narrator, a setting, or a theme compelling students to view characters as one-dimensional?

To deepen students' perspective about characters in fiction and nonfiction texts this unit will introduce them to characters *before* they read a drama, novel, or short story. Characters will be introduced by way of a prequel or backstory, film excerpts, and artifacts and key passages that directly reveal pertinent information about the character. By meeting characters before a text is read completely, students are motivated to read the entire story to learn more about characters that piqued their interest. Students will make connections among plot, setting, theme, and how they impact the character's development.

This approach to introducing William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet [2] and Kathryn Stockett's Aibileen, Miss Hillary and Miss Skeeter in *The Help* [3] will enable students to examine classic and contemporary characters from the inside out instead of only from outward appearances. It is my belief that in meeting Romeo, Juliet, Marcus Brutus, Aibileen, and Miss Skeeter outside of their stories, students will be able to transcend the hurdles of Shakespeare's complex characters and Mississippi's complex allegiance to "separate and unequal." At the end of their journey is a richly rewarding opportunity for students to discover that character is revealed not only by outward appearances but also by the way the story is told and who is telling it, and who the characters have become as a result of their experiences.

Overall, this unit will teach students that characters can be three-dimensional and are not scattered haplessly in a text—particularly, for example, in non-linear texts where characters seem to randomly appear and

disappear until they are mentioned again at a later point in the story. Students will gain a deep understanding of how and why characters are created, and the necessity of scrutinizing them from all dimensions. This understanding will result in their being able to proficiently analyze the author's use of characterization as a literary element.

Rationale

In ninth and tenth grades, respectively, English Literature & Composition students are required to read *Romeo and Juliet* [4] and *Julius Caesar* [5] in addition to parallel texts with similar themes told from different viewpoints. *The Help* [6] has been selected as a companion parallel text to these tragedies because the main characters transform during the story as Juliet, Romeo, and Marcus Brutus do. Moreover, the author, Kathryn Stockett's, approach to revealing character is punctuated with stock characters, foils, and villains just as are Shakespeare's tragedies.

To help students analyze characters and write effective character analyses it is necessary to expand their thinking beyond the character web (a graphic organizer) that asks what the character looks like, dresses like, and says, and how other characters respond to the main character. Secondary students often rely on this limited structure to analyze a character because it was taught in elementary school as an introduction to character. Although many students understand what a character is, many do not understand the technique of characterization or how to recognize its various stances employed in writing.

Students will need to learn to incorporate characterization strategies into their writing. Characterization is the use of literary techniques to create a character. Authorial techniques to create characters include: first-person, narrative voice as seen, for example, in Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* [7] and in parts of Walter Dean Myers' *Monster*, [8] ; third-person portrayal of a character's behavior by a narrator, as in C. S. Lewis's Narnia books or Jane Austen's novels; and representations of a character's internal states as seen in Edgar Allen Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* [9] and *The Cask of Amontillado*. [10] Each of these authors has used characterization superbly to reveal characters to the reader in a thought-provoking manner. It is important that students be able to distinguish between these three stances although they may overlap in some texts:

-When using direct description, the writer through a speaker, a narrator, or another character simply comments on the character, telling the reader about such matters as the character's appearance, habits, dress, background, personality, and motivations.

-In portrayal of a character's behavior, the writer presents the actions and speech of the character, allowing the reader to draw his or her own conclusions from what the character says or does.

-When using representations of internal states, the writer reveals directly the character's private thoughts and emotions, often by an internal monologue, soliloquy, an aside, or the use of first-person narration.

Another impediment to expanding students' thinking about character is their own self-concept. Poet Nikki Giovanni once wrote, "if you don't understand yourself, you don't understand anybody else." Thus comes the dilemma faced when students are asked to analyze characters they frequently encounter in novels, short stories, plays, and poetry. Since adolescents have not lived long enough to understand who they are, they

struggle with interpreting who someone else is, too. In fact, many students are often baffled when asked to explain a character's motivation, mindset, and personality in connection to theme and plot. Since these are intangible and complex character traits that are seldom explicitly stated by the author, students have to be taught strategies and methods for identifying and interpreting a character's transformation, evolution, and growth. To cue students in to recognizing well-developed, dynamic characters, it is essential that they acquire language (positive/negative) to describe characters and hear the character's intonations while reading. Secondly, a connection must be established that relates what is happening in the text to students' perceptions and subconscious knowledge of the world. Finally, students must be diligent to avoid making assumptions when confronted with familiar narratives and narrative structures. For example, many students have experienced a teen romance sometime during, high school and while reading *Romeo and Juliet*, they may be tempted to dismiss Romeo's declarations of love as mere infatuation based on their own experiences. Of course, this blind spot may cause them to miss that Romeo has changed by the end of the play as a result of being married to Juliet.

Background Information on Shakespeare's Character Types

William Shakespeare populated his plays with some of the most intriguing, vivid, and memorable characters in all of literature—hundreds of them, in fact. From ruthless kings to clever fools, with heroes, villains, nameless messengers, servants, and citizens, the differences between Shakespeare's characters are greater than their social status or their job functions. They are often defined by their depth, which makes one wonder if the characters' greatest trait defines them as complex or one-dimensional. Do they undergo change? When change is not present and the character is seen as stereotypical and one-dimensional, that is a **stock character,** which is usually **static**, meaning little if any change occurs during the course of the story. While stock characters are often **predictable**, they are also instantly recognizable and audiences tend to enjoy them for their purpose in the play, be that comic relief, a menacing presence, or just delivering news vital to the plot. One type of **stock character** often used by Shakespeare is the **fool.** These quick-witted characters entertain with silly songs, dances, riddles, and clever wordplay, often at the expense of their superiors. Sometimes the fool lends a comic touch to otherwise tense moments in the action. Some **fools** in Shakespeare's works include the citizen in *Julius Caesar* [11] and Peter in *Romeo and Juliet*. [12]

Another common **stock character** is the **villain**. Villains vary in their motivations, methods, and goals. Yet they are unquestionably wicked, evil, and usually unremorseful for their actions. Everyone loves a good villain and Shakespeare's plays are full of them, including the conspirators Cassius, Casca, and Cinna who hatch a scheme to prevent Caesar from potentially assuming the role of king. While villains tend to be disappointed when they are foiled audiences love it when the villain(s) are finally brought to justice.

In stark contrast to the **stock character** is the **dynamic character,** which is more complex than a stock character in Shakespeare's work. The **dynamic character** undergoes change through the course of the story as a result of his experience. And the type of change is partly related to the circumstances the character faces. Some **dynamic characters** evolve as they confront challenges, causing the emergence of new traits. Sometimes the resulting traits are positive and sometimes the traits are negative. A perfect example of a **dynamic character** is **Juliet** who transforms from an innocent young girl into a mature young woman during the course of the play. Then there's Brutus who devolves from being Caesar's loyal friend and dutiful servant to the republic of Rome to a gullible man who betrays Caesar and helps assassinate him.

Another kind of **character** is the **foil**. The purpose of this **character** is to provide a contrast with another character, usually the protagonist. This helps to magnify certain characteristics of that main character. For example, *in Julius Caesar [13]*, Marc Antony may be seen as a **foil** for Brutus in that the former is a persuasive and charismatic speaker whereas the latter is straightforward and less persuasive in his speech. In the creation of so many unique characters and character types Shakespeare enriched his compelling plots and left a legacy of plays and characters that have had a lasting influence on our literature and our culture.

Similar to Shakespeare in style and character development, Kathryn Stockett is a twenty-first century author who skillfully combines historical detail, dialect, and characterization to create an intimate portrait of the fragility of integration in the Deep South. Stockett tells the story of 'the help '(colored domestics) and their employers (white housewives) in the 1960's and how their lives intertwined and divided across the strict color lines that required 'the help' to raise white children but eat outside and use an outside toilet. The novel is replete with **dynamic characters**, including Aibileen (colored) and Miss Skeeter (white), who join together in a risky venture to publish vignettes about domestics' experience working for whites for thirty and forty years in Jackson, Mississippi. Aibileen's best friend is Minny Jackson, who has had nineteen jobs in nineteen years because she will not stop sassing white folk. Minny serves as the **foil** to Aibileen, in that she is vocally aggressive, distrustful of whites, and appears fearless, while Aibileen is demure and respectful, trusts many whites, and places her faith and fears in the hands of the Lord. However, at the urging of Miss Skeeter, who wants to become a writer, they manage to create an enclave where twelve domestics surreptitiously tell their stories to Miss Skeeter (Hilly Holbrook's friend since childhood) without ever being detected by the white women that appear to control every aspect of their lives.

A **staticcharacter** in *The Help [14]* is Hilly Holbrook, **a villain**, and the quintessential Southern housewife who keeps domestics in line by falsely accusing them of theft, leading the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) League Meetings, and raising money for the PSCA (Poor Starving Children of Africa) fund. Hilly, as her friends affectionately call her, wields influence and power among her peers and is known for malicious treatment of all who disagree with her, including her aging mother, Mrs. Walters and, the help. The novel parallels the epochal developments that led up to the Civil Rights Act 1965, including the murders of Medgar Evers, President John Kennedy, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s seminal March on Washington in 1963. Once the book is published bedlam breaks loose in the city of Jackson, Mississippi, as housewives read their maids' accounts of what it is really like to be "the Help" to some of the town's most prominent and ordinary families.

Objectives

Understanding text structure and reading for understanding will also support students' expansion efforts in thinking about character other than using a one-dimensional lens. In traditional narrative literature, the first person a reader meets is the main character that is also known as the protagonist. The reader next encounters a supporting character, who sometimes serves as the antagonist. Occasionally, an agonist is introduced to agitate the conflict without being invested in the outcome. Somewhere between the initial encounter and subsequent encounters the reader is implicitly asked to formulate opinions, make inferences, and refrain from judging the characters until the full story is told. Rarely are students asked to monitor "specific evidence of character" while reading the text. The results afterward are descriptions of characters as: good or bad, smart or stupid, right or wrong, black or white. In examining characters through polarized lenses

it becomes evident that students frequently rely on stereotypical thinking in their character analyses. Rather than thinking of characters as either/or, students should think, how has this character changed since his or her first introduction? Additionally, what happened to the character to ignite this change? Are the changes positive, negative, or a combination of the two? By adapting a versatile stance about character, and thinking incrementally about a character's development, students are afforded the opportunity to live through the text instead of simply carrying information away from the text.

To facilitate this next shift in thinking student- readers must be taught to pay careful attention to the concerns of the characters while, consciously, guarding against forming false impressions and making superficial connections among and between characters. A way to bridge the gap between the conscious and unconscious mental activities is to isolate the characters.

Characters that have been hijacked (isolated) from the text are perfect subjects to investigate and interrogate via character interviews, oral memoirs, and Shakespearean Audio dramas. These activities lend themselves to twenty-first century literacy and can be the spark that will stay with students for a lifetime. Why is this spark critical to student learning in the twenty-first century? This spark is critical because students are not only learning new ways of looking at characters and characterization but also new ways of looking at themselves! Regrettably, the School District of Philadelphia's scripted core curriculums require students to repress their individual interest in lieu of prescribed texts that seldom tell their stories. Since the core curriculum repeatedly asks students to analyze character and many students repeatedly fail to go deep in expressing character values...what does that say about the approach to teaching this highly demanded skill? If the district adopted a more flexible approach between the goals of the school and the experiences and goals of the students, then students might be able to answer the ubiquitous literary and personal questions, "Who am I?" and "How do I stay true to myself?" These questions are relevant because they often underscore the construction of the anatomy of a character's methods, means, and motivations. This approach of connecting with students' diverse experiences correlates with much of the past three decades of cognitive science research. In particular, to hone the art of reading people, students must see, hear, and feel characters to experience how real and fictional people face challenges when they believe in themselves and act according to their values.

This unit will enable students to further isolate characters by writing prequels. A prequel serves to illuminate the important circumstances and events that a character may experience before the story begins. Students will also create artifacts (diaries, journal entries between two characters, letters, video clips, etc.) that require them to think like the character. Students will also carefully consider newspaper accounts that reflect themes of generational rivalries, teen love, and teen suicide to connect to the characters Romeo and Juliet. [15] Similarly, students will carefully examine the Roman Colosseum, the Roman Forum, and funeral customs in ancient Rome to fully understand historical places and accounts associated with Caesar's death and Brutus's betrayal. In creating character interviews students have the opportunity to become content scene interpreters. These engaging and reflective classroom activities provide a vehicle for students to invest in the lives and experiences of fictional characters. It also allows students the perspective and experience to expand beyond information presented in a story and make reasonable assumptions about the actions and motives of characters, by bringing their experiences as well as historical context to bear. The culminating activity of this unit will be to have students write cold case histories (historical events or episodes) using the CSI approach for other students to solve.

Classroom Strategies

The CSI Approach

The CSI approach asks students to become Content Scene Interpreters. In becoming a CSI students must know **what** questions to ask, **when** to ask them, and **how** to ask them. The second part of the process requires that students know how to shape the information obtained from their investigation into a narrative like a historical detective would. To have students uncover historical information (to obtain information about literary characters) it is necessary to turn an historical episode, event, or person into a cold case.

Characters will be isolated in the sense that students will employ a CSI (Content Scene Interpreter, Williams [16]) approach to help students discover:

1.Who is the person or what was the event?

2.What was the economic influence of the person or what were the economic consequences of the episode or event?

3.What was the political influence of the person or what were the political consequences of the episode or event?

4.What was the social significance of the person or what were the social consequences of the episode or event?

5.What is the relationship of the person or event to a specific community or state?

Cold Case #258 (Adaptation Julius Caesar)

Born on the Thirteenth of July around the year 100bc into a noble Roman family. I am considered one of the most able leaders the world has ever known and my name has forever become synonymous with power and leadership. The Russian word "czar", the German Kaiser, and the Arabic qaysar, meaning king or ruler are all variations of my name. The month of July is also named after me. As a young man I left Rome to travel to the Greek city of Rhodes, where pirates captured me and did not release me until a large ransom was paid for my freedom. I retaliated by gathering a private naval force, capturing the pirates, and crucifying them. Afterward, I moved steadily up the political ladder in Rome, holding a number of important posts, which culminated in my election to the post of consul in 59 B.C. Between 58 B.C. and 50 B.C. I conducted a series of brilliant military campaigns that won for Rome all of Gaul (modern-day France) and extended Roman power as far North as Britain. Members of the nobility, or patricians, in Rome came to fear me because I commanded a large army made up of fiercely loyal troops and was much loved by the common people, plebeians, of the city. Fearing that the people would make me king and overthrow the public, the senate voted on January 1, 49 B.C. to have me lay down my command. I refused. Was my refusal a precursor to my ambition to become king? Or was the Senate insanely jealous of my relationship with the commoners? What was the true motivation of the conspirators who lured my noble friend to betray me? You decide.

Textual, image, and other sources are provided to help students craft their account of the incident. Additionally, students are encouraged to find other pieces of evidence to help with their final determination. Students' explanations should include social, economic, cultural, and political factors that have contributed to

their findings. Their findings must back up their conclusions with evidence from the crime "content" scene.

To get started with the CSI Approach, follow these steps in constructing a Cold Case:

1.Identify a person or event of local or national import, or both.

2.Establish the ESP of the person or event.

3.Select primary sources to serve as evidence for your case

4.Correlate your findings with your state content standards.

5.Begin building your case.

Text Reformulation

Text reformulation or Story Recycling (Feathers) [17] is a strategy in which students transform a text into another type of text. Whether students turn expository texts into narratives, poems into newspaper articles, or short stories into patterned stories such as ABC books, reformulating texts encourages students to talk about the original texts. In addition, reformulations encourage students to identify main ideas, cause and effect relationships, themes, and main characters while sequencing, generalizing, and making inferences.

Putting the (Adapted) Strategy to Work

1.First, introduce students to the types of texts they can use as patterns when theyreformulate a text.

-If-Then Stories: "If the dog chases the cat, the cat will run up the tree. If the cat gets stuck in a tree, you'll have to get her down…" You might use, Laura Joeffe Numeroff, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* or *If You Give a Moose a Muffin*, to read as examples of if-then stories. This pattern helps students keep events in the correct sequence as well as identify accurate cause-effect relationships.

-ABC Book Structure: A is for _____because_____. B is for_____ because_____." This structure works when students encounter a text with a lot of terms or when they need to pull out facts to remember.

-Repetitive Book Structure: In this structure, the reader sees a text structure that repeats throughout the book, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, the use of English sonnets. This structure helps students see cause and effect connections.

2.Second, model several types of text reformulations. Some students always choose to do patterned text reformulations; others students, though, begin to explore and benefit from various types of reformulations. Students might try the following reformulations:

-all types of texts into patterned texts, comic books, letters or interviews

-poems into stories or letters

-stories into plays, radio announcements, newspaper ads, or television commercials

-plays into poems or newspaper articles

-expository into narratives

-diaries/memoirs into plays, political cartoons, mini biographical sketches, or television newsmagazine scripts

3.Decide whether you or the students will choose the type of reformulation.

-It is important to achieve a balance with this strategy. Since the power of the strategy comes from deciding exactly what type of reformulation works best it is necessary to provide students options when working with specific text structures. Other times, when you want students to look at characterization, an interview reformulation would be a perfect fit.

4.Provide opportunities for practice and evaluation.

-Text reformulation works must be used repeatedly for students to realize its full benefits. These reformulations can be used to evaluate students' progress.

SPAWN

SPAWN (Martin, Martin, & O'Brien) [18] is an acronym for special powers, problem solving, alternative viewpoints, what if, and next. Each is a category of writing prompts that encourage students to move beyond the recall level of thinking. Each category is explained below:

S Special Powers: Students are given the power to change an aspect of the text or topic.

During writing, students should include what was changed, why, and the effects of the

change.

P Problem Solving: Students are asked to write solutions to problems posed or suggested

by the books and other related sources.

A Alternative Viewpoints: Students write about the topic from a unique perspective.

W What if: Similar to special powers, the teacher introduces the aspect of the topic that

has changed, then asks students to write based on that change.

N Next: Students are asked to write in anticipation of what will be covered and discussed

next. In their writing, students should explain the logic of what they think will happen

next.

Adaptation of Strategy for Romeo and Juliet

Special Powers	We have been reading about Juliet and her teenage romance that involves Romeo. You have the power to change their first encounter. What could happen as a result Of your change?
Problem Solving	In Romeo and Juliet the arranged marriage between Paris and Juliet presents many problems for her entire family. Write as many solutions to this problem as you can imagine.
Alternative Viewpoint	We have been learning about character traits and character development. Tell a story about Juliet's secret marriage to Romeo as if you were Paris, who feels deeply betrayed.
What If	In Romeo and Juliet the Montague's and Capulet's have been feuding for so long that they have forgotten the original source of the feud. What would happen if the Lords & Ladies called a town meeting to demonstrate conflict resolution? When writing think of how the people of Verona have fueled this feud over the years!
Next	We have seen how infatuation has turned to love, secrecy, and ultimately suicide between Romeo & Juliet. Write the scene in which their parents discover their deaths and plan their funeral.

These prompts are given to students on different days of the unit. Students write responses to them in electronic logs kept in emails or blogs on wikispace. These log entries are transmitted to the teacher so she can read and respond to them. This type of focused writing can help reveal a more complete picture of students' comprehension and learning.

Correspondence Enactments

Correspondence enactments (Wilhelm) [19] are any kind of composing that is undertaken in role. Correspondence enactments are powerful because they provide the student writer with a persona, a purpose, meaningful information, a situation, and an audience—all of which help him compose. Plus, writing in role requires careful reading; students know they need information from the text to advance their point of view. It also develops students' awareness of how texts are constructed, since they are to write formal letters, newspaper articles, memos, and so forth.

Correspondence Guidelines for Students

In this enactment activity, students are asked to become one of the characters from the text that is being read or a character who would have an interest or perspective on the issue at hand. The student will then compose a form of correspondence based on his or her experiences as the character.

Students may write:

-From a character in the text to a character in another text, situation, or era

-From a character in the text to an imaginary character, or vice versa

-From a major to a minor character

-From real people to characters

-From himself to a character

-From a character to the author

-From himself to the author

-Anything else they can think of....

Students must decide the purpose of the correspondence, what form the correspondence will take, the kind of stationery and envelope, the address:

formal letter	d. thank-you letter	g. advertisement	j. business contract
business letter	e. bill	h. public service announcement	k. invitation
informal letter	f. postcard	I. memorandum	l. Facebook announcement

Classroom Activities

Lesson One- Takin' It to the Street

In this opening activity students adapt the prose or poetry of a novel to an audio play.

Special consideration must be given to choosing the text, transforming literature into an audio script scene and producing the final audio scene. When choosing an excerpt to produce with students, discuss the attributes that would make a compelling audio play.

The text that has been selected for this activity is the Prologue delivered by the chorus in *Romeo and Juliet.* The scene from *The Help* used in the introduction is also appropriate for this activity.

Anticipatory Set: Students will individually answer the following questions before they read the prologue which tells the entire story in fourteen lines.

1.Identify and briefly describe three long-standing rivalries in today's world.

2.Pick one of those rivalries, and explain when and why it started.

3.How does the rivalry affect the daily lives of the people involved?

4.What happens if two people from opposite sides become friends or fall in love?

5.What would it take to resolve the rivalry?

6.What do you see as the difference between love and infatuation?

7.What does it mean to be star-crossed or to say that something is not in the stars?

8.

Direct Instruction: Categorize student responses from the above questions and rate the most frequent answers on a scale of one to three. Have students read the prologue and reformulate it into prose paragraphs. Then students will have to decide if they are going to add a narrator, add lines to the prose, include stage directions, or paraphrase their reformulation as they write a scene to turn into an audio script. With poetic language it is important to consider what is gained and lost when words are replaced and lines paraphrased. Students write the script based on their decisions of what to include and what to leave out.

Activity: Students are assigned roles in the audio play. Each group is determined by the number of characters in the script. Students record their performance of the script, enacting all of the voices in the dialogue. Next, students create original sound effects and insert them at appropriate places in the performance. Students must choose a musical clip to play at the beginning and ending of the scene, before and after the narration of the dialogue. Students use multitrack audio editing software to mix all of these audio clips together into one track (garage band). Students must cite all of their sources.

Assessment: Student rubric (see appendix). Students will also write a formal peace proposal to the Prince of Verona outlining strategies to permanently end the feud between the royal families and ordinary citizens.

Lesson Two – Has Anyone Seen Scene?

This lesson takes place after students have been introduced to key passages or film excerpts that introduce the desired character. Be sure to include the background information students have learned in the opening activity. Students are introduced to the genre of fan fiction in this lesson. Fan fiction is writing in which students write original material based on existing stories, characters, and settings. It connects to the goals of intrinsically motivating students as well as enabling them to participate in writing communities where they share ideas.

Anticipatory Set: Students will choose a fan fiction story based on a movie, graphic novel, or novel that the teacher has selected and create an original story based on the stories of others. To begin the process students will enact the segment of film or excerpted text on stage. The enactment should be no longer than five minutes. The enactment serves as the springboard for the creation of the fan fiction story types. The web is full of examples of fan fiction writing created by students.

Direct Instruction: Discuss and model with students the following fan fiction story types (Shamburg) [20] :

Missing Scene:

A scene that is not in the original story, but would make sense in the original story. The missing scene would

fill in some information that the original story left out. For example, what is the proper way to handle uninvited guests to a royal party?

Alternate Perspective:

The story is told from the point of view of another character. For example, Juliet's father may pen the beginning of his memoir with thoughts of what and how he felt when he discovered her lifeless body on the morning of her wedding. How would this information change the story?

Alternate Universe:

Characters from one story enter the world of another story. For example, what would happen if the soothsayer from *Julius Caesar* came to Juliet in a dream and predicted her death? Would this change the course of events between her and Romeo?

Sequel:

The story that happens after the original story. For example, what happens after the white women in *The Help* discover that their domestics actually wrote the vignettes that supposedly occurred in a fictitious town?

Prequel:

The story before the original story. For example, what was Brutus's position before he became a member of the Senate?

Self-Insert:

The story is rewritten with an avatar (representation of the author). For example, what would the conspirators be like if you were to join them in the story?

Activity: Each student chooses source material that he is a fan of and writes three paragraphs explaining the plot of the source material and why it is interesting. Students then create a fan fiction story based on the source material and submit a written transcript of their choice before staging, recording, or depicting their version of events. This transcript is reviewed by the teacher for appropriate language and themes. Students begin their performance with a brief (15-45 seconds) explanation of the source material using the three paragraphs they have written. Students then present the fan fiction drama that employs stage props, dialogue and narration. Students must include endnotes and cite sources of their story, including music, if it is used in their performance.

Assessment: Teacher created rubric that addresses the following areas:

Background: Clearly and concisely explains the source material to a person unfamiliar with it enough so that the listener can enjoy the original fan fiction.

Original: New story is original and substantively extends the characters in the source material.

Listener Interest: Events in fan fiction would interest both fans and those unfamiliar with the source material.

Citation of Sources: Clear credit of resources in file from audio, printed, and web sources.

Ethics: All course rules are followed consistently throughout the process

Lesson Three- Character Interview

The purpose of the character interview is for students to interpret and draw conclusions from letters, newspaper articles, advertisements, and other primary sources that relate to a character. In perusing these documents students become invested in the lives and experiences of fictional and nonfictional characters. It allows them the perspective and experience to expand beyond the information given in a story and make reasonable assumptions about the actions and motives of characters.

Anticipatory Set: Students will take the role of dynamic and stock characters in the text the class is currently studying. They will debate an issue, idea, or interesting piece of information that they deem important. For example, is *Romeo and Juliet* effective without the Prologue or Friar Laurence? To begin the role play students will have to research the following:

How does the narrator describe the character?

How does the character describe himself?

How do other characters describe the character?

What are the three biggest actions and decisions of the character? These could have happened before or during the timeframe of the story.

Direct Instruction: Provide students with a central question to explore that reveals significant information about the character. Then guide them in selecting quotations and other material that speaks to one or more dimensions of a character's role and development in a story. This information can then be used as students prepare a minimum of twelve questions they will use to interview their character. Remember that students should view and listen to interviews on the radio and television.

Activity: Assign students to pairs and have each pair choose a story with an interesting character to interview. Students should predetermine the purpose of their interview: inform, warn, or persuade others. Next, they should select a topic or two that will guide their interview. For example, a topic might be, describe Brutus' problem before he joined the conspirators or how might a betrayal affect all people involved. Depending on the topic(s) students will select certain background information to help the audience fully understand the topic. The interview questions should also be interesting since you do not want your audience to take a nap!

Guiding Questions (examples)

Interviewer:

Why did you (important action or decision)?

How do you (important action or decision)?

But (another character) says you are...

So you say (another character) is wrong when (he or she) says...

Then why do many people think you are (narrator's description)....

Interviewee:

Remember when I was described as a (other character's description)

Most people would call me (author's description)

I was like that at one point but now I'm ….

Assessment: Consider if students selected facts and decisions from text, developed questions and answers based on a careful reading of the text, enacted an engaging and credible simulation of an interview, and used the material of others effectively.

Lesson Four-Writing Prequels or Sequels

In recent years contemporary novelists have produced sequels to some of the great classics and students can create these too. A sequel to Jane Austen's *Pride andPrejudice* suggests what might have happened once Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth are married, and a sequel to Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* continues the romance of Scarlet O'Hara and Rhett Butler. This lesson will help students write a prequel or sequel to a text. Students will develop a piece of writing that demonstrates an in depth understanding of a character within the original text which may include actions that occurred before or after the story.

Anticipatory Set: Choose a character you would like to be the focus of your writing. Ask yourself the following questions and take notes:

Which part of the original story do I want to connect my narrative to?

What situation do I want to put the character into?

Which (if any) other characters will be important to my narrative?

Which key qualities of the character is it important to show?

What attitudes should the character express?

How would the character respond to this situation?

How should language be used to develop character?

Direct Instruction: In this activity students will develop a narrative around a character they know well from their recently completed text study. The story needs to show your central character behaving in a way that is typical of his or her behavior in the original text. However, the character will be placed in a new situation. Please provide exemplars for students to dissect before they begin writing. The narrative should be based on one incident. Consider the following possibilities:

Write about an event that occurs before the beginning of the original text.

Develop a story around an event that is referred to but not developed in the original text (i.e. what happens when a character goes away)

Write about in detail an event that occurs after the original text ends.

Develop a story where the character is placed in a different era and show how he might fit into a different society.

Create a planning chart that identifies a main character, his traits, his situation, imagery, and motivation, and language from the original text used to describe him.

Assessment: Consider the following: ways in which the narrative reflect the original text, are ideas developed and integrated convincingly, does the writer indicate accurate awareness of the place and time of the story, does the writing use sophisticated language appropriately to create a sense of the past, does the writer include physical gestures, language, and characteristics that link back to the original text.

Appendix

It is necessary to provide a synopsis of each text for teachers and students who may choose to only read excerpts of the aforementioned dramas and the novel.

Romeo and Juliet

William Shakespeare presents a timeless topic: young lovers from families that have a long-standing feud (Capulet and Montague) fall in love and secretly marry. Juliet is a Capulet; Romeo is a Montague. Romeo learns the difference between infatuation and love while Juliet demonstrates a rapid leap from childhood to womanhood. However, things escalate out of control as Romeo kills Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, in a duel. Romeo is banned from Verona and commits suicide when he discovers Juliet, apparently dead, by his side. He doesn't realize that she took a sleeping potion to avoid marrying Paris as her parents desired. The tragedy is that she is sleeping and awakens to find Romeo dead and stabs herself with a dagger.

Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar is a political play, with political issues at the root of a tragic conflict. It features a great general who would be king, but who, because of pride and ambition, meets a brutal death. Shakespeare's story, based on history, examines the reasons why Julius Caesar is assassinated, as well as what subsequently happens to his murderers.

The play implies that good government must be based on morality and not ambition. Caesar dominates only the first half of the tragedy; yet, his influence extends beyond his death. Caesar's ghost appears to Brutus the night before the battle of Philippi and both Brutus and Cassius refer to Caesar before dying. Despite this Marc Antony declares him the "noblest Roman of them all." Brutus keeps readers captivated as he makes mistakes that have disastrous consequences.

The Help

Twenty-two-year-old Skeeter has just returned home after graduating from Ole Miss. She may have a degree, but it is 1962, Mississippi, and her mother will not be happy till Skeeter has a ring on her finger. Skeeter would normally find solace with her beloved maid Constantine, the woman who raised her, but Constantine has disappeared and no one will tell Skeeter where she has gone. Aibileen is a black maid, a wise, regal woman raising her seventeenth white child. Something has shifted inside her after the loss of her own son, who died while her bosses looked the other way. She is devoted to the little girl she looks after, though she knows both their hearts may be broken.

Minny, Aibileen's best friend, is short, fat, and perhaps the sassiest woman in Mississippi. She can cook like nobody's business, but she can't mind her tongue, so she's lost yet another job. Minny finally finds a position working for someone too new to town to know her reputation. But her new boss has secrets of her own. Seemingly as different from one another as can be, these women will nonetheless come together for a clandestine project that will put them all at risk—because they are suffocating within the lines that define their town and their times and they believe that sometimes *lines* should be crossed.

Key Passages for Juliet

I'll look to like, if looking liking move. But no more deep will I endart mine eye. Than your consent gives strength to make it fly. *Romeo and Juliet* (1.3.103-15)

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name, Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, And I'll no longer be a Capulet. *Romeo and Juliet* (2.2.36-39)

Although I joy in thee, I have no joy of this contract tonight. It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden... *Romeo and Juliet* (2.2.123-125)

O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris, From off the battlements of any tower....

Or bid me go into a new-made grave And hide me with a dead man in his shroud....

And I will do it without fear or doubt, To live an unstained wife to my sweet love.

Romeo and Juliet (4.1. 78-90)

O, happy dagger, This is thy sheath. There rust, and let me die. *Romeo and Juliet* (5.3. 174-175)

Key Passages for Romeo

Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight, For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night. *Romeo and Juliet* (1.5.59-60)

She speaks. O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art As glorious to this night.... As is a winged messenger of heaven... *Romeo and Juliet* (2.2.28-31)

And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now... Either thou or I, or both, must go with him. *Romeo and Juliet* (3.1.129,134)

And, lips...seal with a righteous kiss...A dateless bargain to engrossing death.... Thus with a kiss I die. *Romeo and Juliet (*5.3.113-120)

Key Passages for Marcus Brutus

O, he sits high in the people's hearts, And that which would appear offense in us His countenance, like richest alchemy, Will change to virtue and to worthiness. *Julius Caesar* (1.3.162-165)

Let's be sacrificers, but not butchers.... Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully. Let's carve him as a dish fit for the Gods, Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds. *Julius Caesa*r (2.1.179-187)

It shall advantage more than do us wrong. *Julius Caesar* (3.1.267)

Marc Anthony declares, "this was the noblest Roman of them all: All the conspirators, save only he, did that they did in envy of great Caesar; He, only in a general honest thought And common good to all, made one of them. *Julius Caesar* (5.5)

Key Passages for Aibileen

Five months after the funeral, I lifted myself up out a bed.... But it weren't too long before I seen something in me had changed. A bitter seed was planted inside of me. And I just didn't feel so accepting anymore. *The Help* (p. 3)

Asking do I want to *change* things. *The Help* (p. 13)

Which reminds me what I don't want a think about, that Miss Leefolt's building me a bathroom outside because she think I'm diseased. And Miss Skeeter asking don't I want to change things, like changing Jackson, Mississippi, gone be like changing a light bulb. *The Help* (p.28)

I been in some tense situations, but to have Minny on one side of my living room and Miss Skeeter on the other, and the topic at hand be what it feel like being Negro and working for a white woman. Law, it's a wonder they hadn't been an injury. *The Help* (p.214)

Implementing District Standards

This unit addresses the following Pennsylvania State Literacy Reading/Writing Standards:

1.1.Learning to Read Independently

a.Locate various texts, media, and transitional resources for assigned and independent projects before reading.

b.Analyze the structure of informational materials explaining how authors used these to achieve their purposes.

d. Identify, describe, evaluate, and synthesize the essential ideas in text. Assess those reading strategies that were most effective in learning from a variety of texts.

g. Demonstrate, after reading, an understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction texts, including public documents.

1.2 Learning to Read in all Content Areas

b. Use and understand a variety of media and evaluate the quality of material produced.

c. Produce work in at least one literary genre that follows the convention of that genre.

1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature

a. Read and understand works of literature.

b. Analyze the relationships, uses, and effectiveness of literary elements used by one or more authors in similar genres including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone, and style.

f. Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama

1.4 Types of Writing

a. Write complex informational pieces (i.e. analysis, evaluations, and essays).

1.5 Quality of Writing

a. Write with a sharp, distinct focus

b. Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic

e. Revise writing to improve style, word choice, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed.

1.6 Speaking and Listening

a. Listen to others.

b. Listen to selections of literature

d. Contribute to discussions

e. Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.

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Stockett, Kathryn. *The Help.* New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2009. A contemporay view of a classic problem, race and racism during the antebellum South. A young white woman becomes interested in the plight of of African-American domestics and the "white" ladies they work for riright before the country explodes in a Civil Rights Revoloution. Some adult language so a parental advisory should be included before teaching in secondary classrooms.

Wilhelm, Jeffrey. *Action Strategies for Deepening Comprehension.* New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 2002. A fantastic resource to engage student's in learning to think critically about fiction and nonfiction texts. The strategies really engage students and create many authentic learning moments.

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